

Gender Creative Translation: Which is better? A Case Study of Saudi Learners

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Abstract

This study is an attempt to investigate gender differences in the translating of creative writings. The researcher hypothesizes that Saudi female learners tend to perform better than their male counterparts in poetry translation. To test this hypothesis, 30 (15 male, 15 female) students of the Creative Translation course at the English Language Department, King Faisal University were selected and participated in the experiment. The test included 5 questions; it was designed based on 5 different creative translation tasks. A Consensual Assessment Technique (CAT) and a set of ACNCS criteria were used to assess the quality of the translated texts. The discussion of the results and quantitative and qualitative analysis of the poetic extracts unilaterally used in this paper indicated that female learners performed better as well as seemed to be more creatively disposed than their male counterparts. Although this study has some limitations, it can be applied by teachers of other non-literary texts.

Key Words: gender, creative translation, Consensual Assessment Technique, ACNCS criteria, Monolingual Arabic Language Specialists (MALS).

1. Introduction

Gender differences tend to be physical and mental. There have been many studies conducted to explore these differences in many fields of studies such as psychology, biology, medicine, education, management, marketing, etc. (Golavar, I, 2009). Translation studies are no exception where gender studies have received a considerable attention. In her comprehensive, book ‘Gender in Translation’, Sherry Simon (1996) establishes a feminist theory in juxtaposition of the traditional view of masculine authority in translation. She argues her case in the context of history, society, politics and ideology allowing women translators to be literary activists and to use translation as “to open new axes of communication, to create new subject positions and to contribute to the intellectual and political life of their times” (ibid.:39).

In her article “Gender and the Metaphors of Translation”, Lori Chamberlain (1988:455) looks at the distinction between the writing/production of the text and translation and reproduction of the text as governed by culture values. Metaphorically put, she viewed the act of writing and translating in terms of ‘paternity and authority’ that is the author of the text is masculine / husband and the translator of the text feminine/ the wife. This distinction between the role of the original producer of the text and that of the re-producer would seem to act as a trigger for women translators to rebel against such a status in terms of expressing their feelings, emotions, and even power of language during the process of translating a creative piece of writing, such as poetry. In their article “Gender differences in personality traits across cultures”, Costa jr.etal (2001:322) confirm that “differences are broadly consistent with gender stereotypes, where women, for example, tend to be more ‘open to feelings’ than men but gender differences varied across cultures”. This could possibly explain why Saudi female learners tend to be more expressive in their emotions and maybe more creative in their writings! Ali and Morad (2016:28), discussed the gender role differences in the performance of a translated version of the “The Sandbox” play on a Kurdish theatrical stage context. They claimed that the translator faced a gender problem where female actresses, unlike male actors, were not supposed to play a role in a sensitive play like that of “The Sandbox” due to “fear of their social prestige and dignity, which is very problematic in the Kurdish society”. Instead of using old actresses, the translator solved the problem by choosing young actresses in spite of their lack of experience.

As for gender differences in creativity, there have been many studies before and after Kogan 1974 made an extensive review of these studies. In their article 'Gender differences in Creativity', Baer and Kaufman (2008:75-105) presented a comprehensive review of literature on gender differences in creativity up to the present day. They presented research studies conducted on gender differences in creativity ranging from "creativity test scores, self-reported assessment of creativity, assessment of creativity of individuals by others, creative personality tests, assessment of creative production to gender differences in authorship". They pointed out that these studies have been conducted in different environments and in different domains. Their review, however, does not seem to include any study conducted to find out the differences in creativity between males and females in the creative translation domain in general, or studies conducted in the Arabic language and Arabic culture specific environment. Bart et al. (2015) investigated the gender differences in creative thinking abilities among 8th and 11th grade students using the Torrance Creative Thinking Test. The sample consisted of 996 8th and 748 11th grade students. They found that females had a significant advantage over the males on the majority of the creative thinking subtests among both the 8th and 11th grade students. As for gender and creativity in translation, Sherry Simon (1997:46) points out that "*Translation offered women an involvement in literary culture, as both producer and consumer. It provided a camouflage for involvement in text production and an opportunity for some degree of creativity.*"

When it comes to the issue of assessing creativity in general and creativity in translation in particular, the assessment proves to be challenging and extremely difficult (Baer & Mckool, 2009). They, however, suggest the "Consensual Assessment Technique as a powerful tool to be used by creative researchers in which panels of expert judges are asked to rate the creativity of products such as stories, collages, poems and other artefacts." (ibid:1) With regard to the criteria governing the translation of poetry, Susan Bassnett, in her book on Translation Studies (1980), gives a brief survey of the approaches, methods and strategies used by the translator when translating creative writings such as poetry.

Moreover, for evaluating literary translations in general and poetry in particular, terms like 'accuracy' (Bassnett, 2014:108) 'clearness', (Fadaee, 2011:200), 'naturalness' (Newmark, 1988:75) and 'communicative purpose' (Nord, 2006:44) have been used as criteria that would guide translators in their processing and producing of the translated poem. In his article 'the Teaching of Poetry Translation' Halimah (2015) suggests a structured set of criteria for assessing the quality of literary translated texts, which will be used in this paper. (See Appendix No.1) As a working definition, 'creative translation' is used here to refer to the process of transferring a literary text in one language with the utmost accuracy, clarity, naturalness, communicative effects and stylistic features of the source text into a target literary text in another language (henceforth ACNCS criteria).

1.1 Research Questions

The following questions were formed to investigate whether gender makes a difference in creative translation, with special reference to the translation of English poetry into Arabic.

1. Do female Saudi learners perform better in creative translation than their male counterparts?
2. Do female Saudi Learners tend to be more creative in translating poetry than their male counterparts?

2. Methodology

To achieve the aim of this study, a group of 30 undergraduate students, 15 males and 15 females, were selected and taken through a rating procedure which assessed the quality of their translated texts through two stages. This procedure was the follow up of hard work done in a 15 week course where both male and female groups received the same instruction and academic treatment leading up to their final exams the tests of which were marked, evaluated and then compared with the opposite group's work so as to see, which gender truly has the upper hand in creative translation.

2.1 Participants

An aggregate of 30 undergraduate students (15 males and 15 females) majoring in English Language and Literature at King Faisal University formed the participants for this study. In accordance with the bylaws of the University, female students were segregated from their male counterparts in terms of place and time of course delivery. Arabic is the native language of all those participants and their goal was to translate given texts from English into Arabic, and vice versa, under exam conditions.

These were students of the seventh academic semester that had already passed all prerequisites to Creative Translation Course No.472 Level 7, which is a one term long, two-hour session per week, for 15 weeks course, taught to a 15 student group with resources prepared by the author who designed and taught the course for three years. Overall, they all had the same level of theoretical and practical foundations, principles and guidelines of translation in general and creative translation in particular. Throughout this study it has been assumed that the subjects use Arabic in their everyday conversation and written communication and that they are comparatively capable users of Standard Arabic (SA). Nevertheless, the languages of instruction in the classroom were both English and Arabic.

2.2 Rating Procedures

The rating of the translated products of this study went through two stages:

Stage 1: The author, a bilingual and bicultural in both British English and Arabic, assessed the end of term exam papers which included the 5 questions (2 questions ‘translate from English into Arabic’, 2 questions ‘translate from Arabic into English’ and one ‘discuss theoretical question’ (see Appendix No.2 for exam questions) used in this experiment. The total achievement of the students in the exam was used to answer research question no. 1. The grading criteria of ACNCS were used being more appropriate to assess the quality of literary translated texts in general.

Stage 2: A panel of ten monolingual Arabic Language and Literature experts participated in the assessment of the participants’ translated texts. They were asked to rate the translated Arabic poem of the highest scoring five of the 15 male students along with their highest scoring five of 15 female counterparts for “creativity”, on a 1-10 scale. To be consistent with the CAT approach, the ten experts were then asked to rate the ‘creativity’ implied in the Arabic translated poem, using ‘linguistic goodness, poetic aestheticness and style’ as guidelines and creativity grading criteria and working independently. The topic of the translated poem was ‘In the Valley of Roses’, which was chosen to answer question no. 2. This poem was chosen because it was simple and new. It relates to the field of English Literature, contains a descriptive and expressive nature and is challenging and revealing of the set of the three aspects in the participants’ performance in creative translation.

2.3 Treatment of the experimental group

Students in both male and female experimental group received the same instruction using extracts of poetry as the main part of their creative translation 15 week long course. This course was ranked as level 7 out of 8 levels to be mastered as a prerequisite for graduating. The major aim of the course was to move them away from using a literal translation approach and to take them towards developing a creative approach to translating literary texts such as poetry. In other parts of the course, students translated literary works in class such as short stories, drama and orations as main literary genres. The creative translation lectures were each two-hours long.

Students were asked to take into account the following governing criteria: ‘Accuracy, Clarity Naturalness, Communication and Style’ while translating a literary text such as poetry (Halimah, 2015). (See appendix No 1. for more details about these criteria). Due to the bylaws of the University, limited time and the space and scope of this paper, samples of only two groups of the first five highest student achievers from each group will be selected, discussed and analysed.

Unfortunately, the researcher could not use a control mixed group of students against which the performance of the other two groups could have been measured. This was due to the educational system in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia which would not allow mixed education at all stages of education, even at the University level, with the exception of Medicine. Although this could be considered as a shortcoming in the validity of the experiment, this study is yet worthwhile for it would give some indication of the positive effect of a segregated educational system in the study field of creative translation.

2.4 Material

Upon the completion of the 15 weeks of provision of literary translation, the participants sat an end of term exam which included 5 questions, 2 ‘translate from English into Arabic’ questions, 2 ‘translate from Arabic into English’ questions and one ‘discuss theoretical question’ (see Appendix No.2 for exam questions) used in this experiment. The total achievement of the students in the exam was used to answer question No. 1. To translate a poem ‘In the Valley of Roses’ was chosen to answer question 2. This poem was chosen because it was simple and new. It relates to the field of English Literature, contains a descriptive and expressive nature and is challenging and revealing of the set of the ACNCS criteria in the participants’ performance in translation.

2.5 Procedure

The participants, in both groups, were asked to separately take a two-hour end of term translation examination. Monolingual dictionaries were allowed to be used during the exam. The exam papers were collected, marked and evaluated by the present researcher. The final results were compared across the two groups and then the first 5 highest achievers from each group were also compared across the two groups. To compare the level of creativity across the two groups, only Question one (i.e. Translate a poem into Arabic question) was taken for analysis and discussion.

3. Results and Discussion

To be able to answer research question no. 1 above, and obtain a panoramic view of gender differences in translating creative writings in general, only scores of the final examination are used, excluding term work results (50%), as they do not accurately reflect the students' translating ability so much as attendance, participation and results in instructor's class quizzes. It should be pointed out that the five questions used cover various creative translation genres such as poetry, novel/story, drama, a Hadeeth (ie. a Prophet's saying) and an excerpt of an oration. The fifth question was theoretically oriented to find out about their understanding of the theoretical framework of creative translation. In evaluating the gender differences of creative translation genres in general, an independent-samples t-test was conducted by comparing the mean scores of the two groups. Table 1 shows the source of data and male and female results in the End of Term creative translation examination.

Table No. 1: Gender Comparison between the Total Scores of both Male and Female Students in the End of Term Creative Translation Examination.

Serial No.	Male Score out of 50	Percentage	Female Score out of 50	Percentage
1	46	92	46	92
2	44	88	46	92
3	42	84	46	92
4	41	82	44	88
5	41	82	42	84
6	36	72	41	82
7	36	72	39	78
8	34	68	37	74
9	32	64	37	74
10	31	62	36	72
11	29	58	36	72
12	28	56	35	70
13	28	56	35	70
14	26	52	35	70
15	26	52	34	68
	520	69.33	589	78.53
Mean	34.66		39.26	

As can be seen in the *t*-test results, Table 2 shows a significant difference in the means between the achievement of female and male students in translating creative genres in general. The mean difference between female and male students is more than 9 percent in favour of females. The standard deviation is also higher in male's achievement in translating creative genres in general. This takes the argument to the fact that female Saudi learners tend to perform better in creative translation than their male counterparts.

Table No. 2: Means, and Standard Deviation and the Independent t-test of Gender Creativity in Translating Creative Genres in General

Variables	Number	Mean	SD	Std Error Mean	t-value	df	sig
Female	15	39.2667	4.49550	1.1637	2.188	28	.037
Male	15	34.6667	6.78935	1.75300	2.188	24.297	.039

However, to answer research question no. 2 above, and find out who tends to perform better in translating poetry, female learners or their male counterparts, 'gender creativity' in translating our sample poem 'In the Valley of Roses' written by Judie Halimah, was measured and evaluated using a Consensual Assessment Technique (CAT). Table 3 displays the results of the ten expert evaluators of the translated Arabic poem of the highest scoring five of the 15 female students along with their highest scoring five of 15 male counterparts for "creativity", using 'linguistic goodness, poetic aestheticness and style' as creativity grading criteria, on a 1-10 scale.

Table No. 3: CAT Measurement and Evaluation of Gender Creativity in Poetry Translation

Example 1	Rater1	Rater2	Rater3	Rater4	Rater5	Rater6	Rater7	Rater8	Rater9	Rater10	Total	Mean
Female	9	9	9	8	8	7	7	6	7	6	75	7.5
Male	8	7	7	7	7	6	6	5	4	4	61	6.2
Example 2	Rater1	Rater2	Rater3	Rater4	Rater5	Rater6	Rater7	Rater8	Rater9	Rater10	Total	Mean
Female	9	8	8	8	8	6	5	7	7	7	73	7.3
Male	7	6	5	8	7	5	5	5	5	2	55	5.5
Example 3	Rater1	Rater2	Rater3	Rater4	Rater5	Rater6	Rater7	Rater8	Rater9	Rater10	Total	Mean
Female	9	8	8	7	8	4	8	7	7	6	72	7.2
Male	8	7	7	6	7	5	6	5	7	2	60	6.
Example 4	Rater1	Rater2	Rater3	Rater4	Rater5	Rater6	Rater7	Rater8	Rater9	Rater10	Total	Mean
Female	9	8	7	6	7	6	8	7	7	5	70	7.0
Male	7	7	8	6	6	4	6	6	5	3	58	5.8
Example 5	Rater1	Rater2	Rater3	Rater4	Rater5	Rater6	Rater7	Rater8	Rater9	Rater10	Total	Mean
Female	7	8	7	7	7	6	6	7	8	6	69	6.9
Male	7	7	6	6	7	5	6	6	7	5	62	6.2

As can be seen in the t-test results, Table 4 shows a significant difference between the achievement of female and male students in translating poetry. The mean difference between female and male students is more than 12.5 percent in favour of females. The standard deviation is also higher in male's achievement in translating poetry. This proves that the researcher's hypothesis, that female Saudi learners tend to perform better in poetry translation than their male counterparts, is correct.

Table No. 4 Means, and Standard Deviation and the Independent-test of Gender Creativity in Translating Poetry Genre

Variables	Gender	Number	Mean	Std Deviation	Std Error Mean	t-value	df	sig
Creativity	Female	5	71.8000	2.3874	1.06771	7.697	8	.000
	Male	5	59.2000	2.7748	1.2409	7.697	8	.000

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

This study has determined that there exist significant differences between the achievement of Saudi female and male students in translating creative genres in general, primarily in favour of the translational creative skills of females the mean score of which was 39.2 (78.5%) which was higher than that of the male's 34.66 (69%). This indicates that there is an urgent need for providing opportunities for both males and females to develop their creative translational abilities. This could be integrated in other specialised translation courses such as commercial, religious, media, legal, political and military, scientific and technical and Medical translation courses. In designing such a plan, the differences between males and females in their creative translational abilities should be taken into account, and male's students should be given ways to improve their creative thinking skills and translational abilities. Another important finding of the present study was that female's performance in translating poetry was better than that of male students. The mean difference between female and male students was more than 12.5 percent in favour of females. This could be due to females being segregated from boys and taught in a non-pressurised setting where there is a barrier between the teacher and the students. Moreover, females tend to find poetry as a way to unleash their feelings and emotions without being suppressed by the teacher or any other male students in the classroom. There were two limitations to this study; firstly, it has only examined the data collected from only 15 Saudi males and 15 female students studying at the English Language Department, College of Arts, King Faisal University. The findings of this research may not be generalised to other students in other settings. Secondly the segregation in gender teaching may have affected the performance of gender in creative translation.

The experiment in this part was regrettably not possible due to the bylaws of the university which determine that the two sexes should be separated in the teaching and learning environment. It is hoped that this study would give some insights for those who are interested in finding out about the creativity of their students in different settings, languages and cultures.

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Appendices

AppendixNo 1:

The Five Criteria Model for evaluating translation of poetry

The following checklist is given to the student translators to refer to while they are engaged in the process and product of the translation.

The students’ translations are to be graded on five-point scale areas. This represents the range of approximate equivalence with the highest degree of ‘adequacy and validity’ of grading a translation from being a poor translation to being a highly skilled poetry translation. In order of importance, they are as follows:

- 1.Accuracy** is the most important criterion to assess the quality of a translated text. To be accurate is to represent something in accordance with the way it actually is. It refers to the conveyance of the exact and precise meanings of the source text to the target text. To be certain to achieve ‘accuracy’ in translation, the following questions could be asked: Has the translator been faithful in rendering the exact meanings of the ST to the TT? Has any information mentioned in the ST been missed or omitted? Has any new information been added to the TT? Is there any shade of meaning missing? Has the overall meaning of the ST been transferred successfully to the TT? etc.

- 2. Clarity** in translation is an integral part of the comprehension process of the TT reader. To be clear is to be intelligible without causing the TT reader to exert extra mental effort to understand the content of the TT. In other words, clarity in translation means that the reader can understand the text without any difficulty or need to refer to any off-site explanation whether inside the text or in the form of a footnote. To be certain to achieve 'clarity' in your translation, the following questions could be asked: Is the TT easy to understand? Does it require from the target reader any extra exerted effort to comprehend it? Does it read smoothly and comfortably? Has the ST Message been communicated clearly to the reader of the TT? etc.
- 3. Naturalness** in translation refers to the ability of the creative translator to apply appropriate natural forms and norms of the Target Language to the source text, which he /she is translating; be these forms and norms linguistic, sociolinguistic, psychological, sociocultural, communicative or other. To achieve naturalness in your translation the following questions should be asked: Does the TT sound and read like an authentic English text? Does it have the dynamisms and idiomaticness normally used in an authentic English text? Does it have the 'natural wow factor?' etc.
- 4. Communication** in translation in general and in creative translation particularly involves transferring not only the meaning but also the emotional aspects of the ST to the TT readers as effectively and faithfully as they are communicated to the ST readers in the first place. In other words, a creative translator has to ensure that they understand the communicative purpose of the ST and endeavour to achieve it in the TT, be it poetry, novels, short stories, drama, oratory or any other type of literary text. The following questions should be asked to check for this criterion: What is the main communicative purpose of the ST? For example, is it to persuade, to entertain, to delight, to instruct or to inform? Does the TT carry the same meaning and emotional force of the ST?
- 5. Style** in literary texts refers to the linguistic choices the author makes in his/her writing to tell a narrative, to describe events, objects and characters or to voice out his/her ideas and views in a manner of his /her choosing, be it formal, informal, casual or archaic. The author's style in literary texts tends to influence how we interpret the facts and information. Therefore, a creative translator needs to be aware of these features and be able to transfer the stylistic features of the ST to the TT with the same stylistic force used by the ST writer or speaker. In other words, you need to identify the historical, geographical, and cultural dimensions of the style used in ST and endeavour to apply it to the TT with utmost accuracy, clarity, naturalness and communicative force.

Appendix No. 2

472 First Term Final Exam Paper

Answer the Following Questions:

1– Translate the following into Arabic

(10 Points)

In the Valley of Roses

In the valley of roses,
Where the river smoothly flows,
The birds chirp and sing,
And the wind softly blows.

* * * * *

A small breeze at dusk,
Where two lovers stand,
By the growing roses,
Always hand in hand.

* * * * *

A secret love story,
Locked in the heart,
A hidden flame,
They stand never to part.

* * * * *

Forever in a magical pose,

