

## *Paremiology of Palestinian Month-Related Proverbs: Inimitability and Translatability*

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**Abstract:** Proverbs are deemed to be the products or by-products of the culture, a predominant type of which is, what we may term, Month-Related Proverbs (MRPs). The present article examines sociolinguistic (MRPs) utilised by the doyen(ne) of Palestinians, consisting of a corpus of thirty MRPs which are drawn from *ṣahīfat al-Quds* (Al-Quds Daily Newspaper), *Dictionary of Palestinian Proverbs* (1999) by Lubani and A *Dictionary of Modern Lebanese Proverbs, with conflated Arabic proverbs with English translation by Freyha* (1995). The article shows the functions of MRPs are mainly (1) to take great pride in their cultural heritage that seemed to have passed from one generation to the next; (2) to recapitulate various aspects of peasant life— memories of a bygone age; (3) to warn against unfavourable weather conditions over a year. The article examines the translations in view of Nord's (1991 and 1997) documentary translation and instrumental translation. The findings of the article show that documentary translation seems to be considered the most appropriate translation method opted for to inculcate the values of Palestinian culture in Target Language (TL) audience.

**Keywords:** Paremiology, Palestinian month-related proverbs, Inimitability and translatability, documentary, instrumental, domesticating, foreignising, ecology, Palestinian Arabic.

الملخص: تعد الامثال نتاجا للثقافة وما يعرف "بالأمثال المتعلقة بالشهر" نوع سائد في المجتمع. ويسلط هذا البحث الضوء على جانب من جوانب الممارسات الاجتماعية واللغوية في الثقافة الفلسطينية، من لدن كبار السن الفلسطينيين، وتناولت الدراسة عينة مكونة من ثلاثين مثالا متعلقا بالشهر جمعت من صحيفة القدس الفلسطينية ومعجم الامثال الفلسطينية المعاصرة للوباني (1999) ومن معجم الامثال لفريحة (1995)، وتظهر الامثال المتعلقة بالشهر بصورة واضحة وظائف اتصالية في السياق الاجتماعي واللغوي لأفكار وممارسات ثقافية متنوعة تعبر عن ارث ينتقل من جيل الى جيل وعن ذكريات من الماضي التليد ترسمها حياة الفلاح الفلسطيني وعن التحذير من سوء الاحوال الجوية على مدار العام، ودرست الامثال المتعلقة بالشهر المترجمة الى اللغة الانجليزية من جانب فريحة (1974)، وفقا لمنهج نورد (1991 و 1997) الذي يصنف الترجمة إلى صنفين: اولهما، الترجمة التوثيقية، والتي ترمي لتوثيق اللغة والثقافة المنقول منها والترجمة الوظيفية التي تبدي تحيزا ثقافيا واضحا للغة والثقافة المنقول اليها وما ينطوي على ذلك من استخدام عدة استراتيجيات في الترجمة. وخلصت الدراسة إلى لجوء فريحة

(1974) للصف الاول في الترجمة، وهذا لا يعني ان الصف الثاني غير ملائم، بل ان الصنفين يمكن استخدامهما وفقاً لمعايير تتعلق بغرض الترجمة والجمهور المتلقي للترجمة.  
الكلمات المفتاحية: الترجمة: دراسة الامثال، الأمثال الفلسطينية المتعلقة بالشهر، تفردتها وطواعية ترجمتها، الترجمة الوثائقية، الترجمة الوظيفية، التوطن، التغريب، البيئة، اللهجة الفلسطينية.

## 1. Introduction

Translation can, to start with, be defined as the transference of meanings from the Source Language (SL) into the Target Language (TL), with two contiguous and/or overlapping layers of meaning: denotative and connotative. The former, characteristically with *a fait accompli* refers to a fixed reality belonging to an external world (i.e., referential meaning) whilst the latter is usually swamped by various emotive overtones. For a translation activity to be carried out more effectively and efficiently, the translator should invariably be *au fait* with the two layers of meaning.

Translation in inverted commas has been a perfectly cogent reason for the evolution of civilisations and people's minds from time immemorial and, by means of its most essential components, i.e. language and culture. It tangibly demonstrates incessant intercultural communication as well as acculturation in Kouider's terms (2004). We shall, for the sake of convenience, offer a glimpse of these components— metaphorically, they are two sides of the same coin, and are further considered as inseparable as the two sides of a piece of paper. This implies taxing challenges both linguistically and culturally. Nida (1964, p. 147-163) puts it that translating “*can never be discussed apart from the cultures of respective languages, since languages are themselves a crucial part of culture*”. The translator is likely to encounter myriads of difficulties in decoding cultural signs which, according to Gonzalez (2004, p. 123), “*can be more problematic for the translator than semantic or syntactic difficulties*”. It ensues, therefore, that the translator should be bilingual and bicultural to have the translation activity done as successfully as possible in its own terms. At this juncture, it may be helpful to offer a definition for language and culture. As for language, it can be roughly defined as a vehicle for human thoughts and, more interestingly, for ingenuity to make intercultural exchange highly possible. For culture, Goodenough (1964, p. 36) offers the following definition:

A society's culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members, and do so in any role that they accept for anyone of themselves. Culture, being what people have to learn as distinct from their biological heritage, must consist of the end product of learning: knowledge [...]; it is not a material phenomenon; it does not consist of things, people, behaviour, or emotions. It is rather an organi[s]ation of these things. It is the forms of things that people have in mind, their models for perceiving, relating, and otherwise interpreting them. As such, the things people say and do, their social arrangements and events, are products or by-

products of their culture as they apply it to the task of perceiving and dealing with circumstances.

Perhaps one of the most cultural specificities in a given culture is its proverbs which are thought to be products or by-products of the culture. Proverbs, in the words of Manser (2007, p. IX), express “*a general truth about life. [...] give advice, make an observation, or present a teaching in a succinct and memorable way*”. The knowledge and belief of members of a society of proverbs should come to socio-linguistic practices, readily acceptable and comprehensible to those members. Proverbs reflect ineluctable moral lessons to be learned from any situation that the members have experienced before. They actually whip their language into shape in a way that is usually appreciably different from other languages, thus a patchwork of cultures come to the fore. Precisely true, proverbs have accumulated over years of experience in politics, economy, ecology, etc. and are akin to language and cultural systems of a society.

In terms of translation, we suggest, the intricacies of translating proverbs are likely to be attributable to linguistic differences and cultural diversities among languages, so they are context-sensitive. Translation as Hatim and Mason (1990, p. 23) point out, “*involves overcoming the contrasts between language systems: SL syntactic structures had to be exchanged for TL structures; lexical items from each language had to be matched and the nearest equivalents selected*” because of “[w]hatever can be said in one language can be said equally well in any other language” (Kachru, 1982, p. 84). It is true that “*the disparities between languages are a matter of asymmetric equivalence or resemblance*” (Farghal and Almana, 2015, p. 19) which, according to Shehab and Daragmeh (2015, p. 66), might be quite tremendously unattainable: “*proverbial expressions can be used to express more than one meaning; in fact, these meanings are sometimes contradictory*”.

In point of fact, non-equivalence is much observed in unrelated languages (e.g., Arabic and English) in terms of syntax, semantics, culture, etc., thus, “*one of the commonest strategies for dealing with many types of non-equivalence is using a more general word (superordinate), if the TL lacks a specific term (hyponym)*” (Baker, 1992, pp. 23–26). This can be shown in Proverb 17 below in which *kūz* (lit. ‘jug of clay’) is an obvious primitive hyponym with a more specific semantic field than, say, today’s invention of ‘cylindrical container’.

Baker (1992) also argues that most common problems of non-equivalence is usually shown at the word level, beyond the word, the grammatical level, text level, and pragmatic level. On word level, the shades of meanings observed in Proverb 17 below are missing in the TL. On the grammatical level, the verbless Arabic utterance in Proverb 18 below can be shown in English in a copulative structure (e.g. August is blazing). At the text level, the thematic progression and cohesion of Proverb 3 is perhaps unmatched in the TL. Finally, at the pragmatic level, the implicatures in Proverb 10 are one-of-a-kind as can be seen in the use of the noun *ḥabal* (lit. ‘getting pregnant’) to indicate that pollination occurs in April (for more elaboration on the pragmatic level, see Shehab et al., (2020).

## 2. Month-Related Proverbs (MRPs)

A point relevant to the discussion of proverbs is ecology, usually referring to “*the study of the relationships between plants, animals, people, and their environment, and the balances between these relationships*” (Collins Cobuild 2003, p. 448). Ecology is thus linked up to immutable habits of mankind. The intricate network of relations between these components yields a great number of ecology-related proverbs exploited by language users for various communicative transactions. These proverbs normally differ from one geographical area into another as Newmark (1988, p. 96) succinctly puts it: “*Geographical features can be normally distinguished from other cultural terms in that they are usually value-free, politically and commercially. Nevertheless, their diffusion depends on the importance of their country of origin as well as their degree of specificity*”. Translation-wise, Nida as cited in Newmark (1988, p. 97) points out “*that certain ecological features—the seasons, rain, hills of various sizes [...] where they are irregular or unknown may not be understood denotatively or figuratively, in translation*”.

Having taken extravagant leaps along the way, we can claim that picturesque proverbs have been circulated around in Palestinian culture throughout history as is certainly the case with other cultures, and they have never been uncharted territory. It is taken for granted that proverbs semantically impinge on various fields, *inter alia*, science (e.g. “A mind is a terrible thing to waste”), politics (e.g. “You can’t beat somebody with no body”), religion (e.g. “You can’t build a church with stumbling blocks”), health (e.g. “The best doctors are Dr. Diet, Dr. Quiet, and Dr. Merryman” (Manser 2007). Proverbs can also be ideologically-motivated as Thawabteh and Abu Radwan (2020) claim.

As a point of departure, it is perhaps useful to elucidate what we exactly mean by MRPs. Here, MRPs are primarily intended to mean proverbs in a general sense, but they differ in terms of the word concepts embedded in a proverb—at least a month word concept exists (e.g. March, April, May, etc.), i.e., one-off month word. By way of illustration, in Proverb 3 below, *ishbāt il-labbat* ‘in shabat win labat khabat wrīhit iṣ-ṣayf fī’ (lit. ‘whipping February whips severely, but it has summery smell’), the month word *ishbāt* (‘February’) is in tandem with other lexico-grammatical features in the making of the proverb. It is also possible to have homonymous MRPs. On occasion, three-month word concepts may be involved in a proverb as in Proverb 30 below (e.g. February, March and April, etc.), i.e., three-tier MRPs.

The month word concept is manifestly not recalcitrant in the composition of the proverb, but exceptionally valuable and significant insofar as the overall meaning is concerned. For example, in Proverb 3 below, the co-text sound /āt/ in *ishbāt* (‘February’) and following constrained by rhyme *il-khabāt* (‘whipping’), and /uṭ/ in *byushbuṭ* (‘whips’) and following rhyming *wi-bykhubuṭ* (‘severely whips’) all make a phonetic structure that can be conducive to emotive overtones.

Literature on MRPs is thin and unsatisfying insofar as Arabic context is concerned, to the best of our knowledge. In an ethnographic study on Turkish culture, Özcan (2015, p. 179) states that:

The role of difficult living conditions has been determinant in the behavior[s], diet, clothing and economic activities of the Turkish communities. Especially the effects of the climate and weather events on lifestyle and the climate elements in our proverb are

clearly apparent with the existence of the seasons and months potently.

By the same token, harshness of Palestinian living conditions is an obvious determinant of socio-cultural practices of MRPs. It is perhaps true that (in)hospitable climate encourages Palestinian to develop their own linguistic practices by means of proverbs, for instance, to describe how good or bad the climate is.

The condition of the atmosphere in the Mediterranean (normally with balmy weather) is different from that, say, England whereby it is usually bitterly cold. Weather clichés and proverbs commonly used by Palestinians are likely to be a far cry from those used by the British. The proverbs are used by language users to record a moving experience, anecdote, etc. often with highly affectionate, patronising and emotive overtones. Therefore, they are ecology-restricted.

### 3. Methodology

Translation Studies, to put it mildly, is a ‘chameleon-like’ discipline as it “*has been increasingly influenced (and will probably continue to be so) by new emerging disciplines such as sociology, ethnography, psychology, and communication theory*” (Shaheen 1991, p. 2). The present article is thus a two-pronged approach: Ethnography and Translation Studies. This approach might be considered suitable as MRPs fall within the ambit of ethnography and the data from which these are drawn showed translation proper. As far as ethnography is concerned, Steiner (1975) claims that ethnography is included under literary translation, the aim of which is to “*explicate the cultural background and anthropological significance of ST*” (Shuttleworth and Cowie 1997, p. 53), an aim that might also be crucial to explicate the differences in meaning hold between languages, and would perhaps be appropriate for the analysis of MRPs as can be shown in the analysis and discussion of the examples below.

The present study is restricted to proverbs dealing with ecology (e.g., the sun, storms, winds, rain, snow and the environment), traditionally employed in Palestine to perform several communicative functions. In other words, it encapsulates both eco-cultural discourse and eco-cultural practices. The Palestinian peasantry have showed strong ties to ecology and particularly to the land which has become a spiritual signifier by the many eco-cultural practices envisaged in the use of MRPs.

### 4. Data of the Study

The present article comprises a corpus of thirty MRPs in Arabic drawn from *ṣahīfat al-Quds* (Al-Quds Daily Newspaper) along with ancillary proverbs commonly used by Palestinians (extracted from Dictionary of Palestinian Proverbs (1999) by Lubani), and carefully examines the translations by Freyha (1995). Where no translation is offered by Freyha, our own formal translation of MRPs is also enclosed in brackets. Opting for formal translation strategy, the ‘flavourings’ of the SL can hopefully be ensured. To examine the nature of translation of MRPs, Nord’s (1991 and 1997) two-method approach to translation (i.e., documentary translation and instrumental translation) is adopted. It should be noted that the Freyha’s translations of Lebanese proverbs is so relevant to our study as Lebanese and Palestinian proverbs share the same locus—

Occupied Palestine and Lebanon have some geographical contiguity. It can then be possible to spark further discussion insofar as translation is concerned. The proverbs are formally presented in Arabic and are then glossed in English.

### 5. Significance of the Study

Translating proverbs has received much attention in Translation Studies (see Baker 1992; Farghal and Shunnaq 1999; Shehab and Daragmeh 2015), but the translation of MRPs is yet a neglected area of study, to the best of our knowledge. The present article is likely to be so particularly relevant to the ethnographical context because it studies MRPs as a socio-cultural practice within Palestinian culture. The study may also be accorded a significant status in a wider academic context as it encourages an interdisciplinary study, and looks at its interplay with Translation Studies. Most importantly, the article closely examines translation strategies in light of Nord's translation methods which may help bridge the cultural gaps between English and Palestinian cultures in the course of translating MRPs. The present study finally sheds light on a research path that will bring some implications which may be of importance insofar as the translation is concerned.

### 6. Discussion and Analysis

The following discussion will dissect Arabic MRPs in order to see their innate and flexible nature. To corroborate and diversify our argument, we present a taxonomy of these proverbs *vis-à-vis* the socio-cultural context in which they occur, in a possible chronological order of Western calendar. To understand the proverbs in their cultural habitat, it seems necessary to unravel the ethnographical context of the SL proverbs, with their interpretive complex knots of meaning. Our data includes most MRPs with one-off month word, homonymous MRPs, or Three-Tier MRPs.

#### 6.1 January

Proverb 1 below is a perfect record of communicative transaction in a Palestinian context with a view to ameliorating the unfavourable weather conditions of last December and January itself.

*ba'id kānūn ish-shita bi-hūn* (Al-Quds Daily Newspaper)  
(After January, the weather becomes mild)

It is usually the month of freezing cold with the lowest temperatures of the year, but it is a prelude to more deliciously balmy weather in subsequent months whereby temperatures continue to rise gradually, e.g., February, March, April, etc.

#### 6.2 February

Following freezing weather in December and January, February can be described as a month of an alternation of sun and snow. It ensues, therefore, that several proverbs are used by Palestinians to show how this month is extremely cold on the one hand, and is relatively hot on the other.

*ishbāt ma 'a kalāma ir-rbāt* (Al-Quds Daily Newspaper 2016)  
"February is not to be bound by its words" (Freyha, 1995, p. 361)

In Proverb 2 above, February is personified as ‘a month which eats its words’, as it were. In other words, there should be a deep mistrust of the weather forecast of February. People should be pessimistic, always expecting the worst. When it is cold, it could be hot in a split-second, and the otherwise may be quite true. With reference to Proverb 2 above, people should be well-prepared for damnable climate (often severe, turbulence, with winds and blizzards) by readying themselves for obtaining some comfort e.g., gas fire, hot-water bottle, long johns, overcoat, quilts, scarfs, etc.

As Proverb 3 below shows, they nevertheless should feel comfortable about this month as a pleasant weather in which convivial features of summer can be sensed, e.g. a cool summer breeze, blistering summer days, scents of summer herbs (e.g. thyme, clusters of mauve flowers), among other things.

*ishbāt il-labbat 'in shabaṭ win labaṭ khabaṭ wrīhit iṣ-ṣayf fī* (Lubani, 1999, p. 435)

“Rebellious February, through it may strike and kick, the smell of summer is in it” (Freyha, 1995, p. 361)

Proverb 3 above fulfils more or less the same function observed in Proverb 2, but it has some more intrinsic complication of structure, interwoven in subtle and intricate ways, perhaps ascribable to geographical factor and idiolectal use of language.

In addition, the aged people may not survive wintry weather of February because means to warm on cold days were missing in underdeveloped Palestine a few decades ago as is the case in most countries. In fact, only primitive means for heating were habitually used (e.g. braziers). Proverb 4 below shows how an old woman might fall victim to unbearable weather conditions of February.

*ishbāt 'adaw al-'ajāiz*

“February is the enemy of old women” (Freyha, 1995, p. 361)

Other socio-cultural values are also noticeable in this pragmatically multi-purpose proverb— it acquires new illocutions, namely to advise someone to get prepared for February by wrapping up warmly, for instance in this month.

On occasion, the proverb may be used figuratively, i.e. departing away from its ordinary literal meaning. One figure of speech is metonymy in which a word or expression is used as a substitute for something or someone with which it is closely associated as shown in Proverb 5 below:

*ishbāt ghaymuh wahawā khairun min shamsu wshitāh*

“February’s clouds and winds are preferred to its sunshine and rain” (Freyha 1995, 361)

When February is hot, it is advisable for people not to sit in the sun to avoid possible unhealthy intense sun. Blazing sunshine may be harmful to people in February— the sun bleaches one’s face due burning sun.

### 6.3 March

March marks the beginning of spring in Palestine; nevertheless, cold weather and low temperatures are normally noticeable in this month. A glimpse of the proverbial tradition below shows the function this month is intended to perform in various social occasions.

*āthār fīhi sabi‘ thaljāt kbār ghair azzghār* (Al-Quds Daily Newspaper)  
 “March ... seven big snows, not including the little” (Freyha, 1995, 2)

Proverb 6 is employed by language users to display systematic recurrence in their speech behaviour in which communicative intentions are basically designed to express the idea that March changes unexpectedly. A heavy dose of snow may fall (perhaps seven snows in total)—blinding snow, indeed. Therefore, another advice is offered in another proverb performing more or less the same function observed in Proverb 6 above, but with different lexicons. Take Proverb 7 below:

*khabī faḥmataḥ libbār la‘amak āthār* (Al-Quds Daily Newspaper)  
 (Hide your charcoal for Uncle March)

However, it may also be gloriously sunny in March to the point that sunshine-filled days could be beautiful as Proverb 8 below states:

*ādhār biṭla‘ ir-rā‘ī ‘ala-l-jabal bitumṭur ‘alay wi biyyinshaf bila nār* (Lubani, 1999, p. 3)  
 (In March, the shepherd climbs upon a mountain, getting soaked standing out in the rain, but his body dries without fire).

In March, the shepherd may trudge up the mountains; bareheaded in view of the fact that March is deceptively sunny, rain suddenly begins to lash him, but his body dries, however. Performing almost the same function— March is a month of capricious weathers, Proverb 8 displays a different formula.

### 6.4 April

Atrocious weather conditions almost diminish in April. It becomes a glorious month, i.e. sunny and sultry as well. Farmers get a hankering for rain. The soil might have already settled and compacted by April. April rain, both intermittent showers and even a sudden downpour of rain may churn up the waterfall into the valleys. In Palestine, the growing season is usually in April. Take Proverb 9 below:

*nisān bala shita mithl ‘arūs bala jili* (Lubani, 1999, p. 838)  
 “April without rain is like a bride who has not been dressed up for her wedding” (Freyha, 1995, p. 712)

The significance of rain in April for plantations is as important as a bridal gown. The bride is painted and decked out with a wedding gown which makes her look more beautiful. Similarly, April rain brings about a bountiful harvest of fruits and vegetables. Being the case so, no one would starve as is further shown in Proverb 10 and Proverb 11 below:



*nisān sab ‘a ḥabal sab ‘a sabal wsab ‘a ydur ad-dajan* (Lubani, 1999: 838)  
 (Pollination occurs in seven days in April, sheaves of corn or wheat occurs in seven days in April and in seven days in April, they become ripe)  
*nisān ḥabal wayār sabal* (Lubani, 1999, p. 838)  
 (Pollination occurs in April, sheaves of corn or wheat occurs in May)

### 6.5 May

In May, Palestine is teeming with birds and the wealth of birdlife will be given a new lease of life. Birds become fully-fledged in this month.

*fi ayār abu al- ‘umar tayār* (Lubani, 1999, p. 183)  
 (In May, birds become fully-fledged)

Due to unfavourable weather conditions in May, proverbs are put to warn farmers from possible damaging effects on the harvest. For example, the sheaves of corn or wheat may rustle in the wind. In addition, farmers harvest crops in May. It is the month of the start of the harvest as can further be illustrated in Proverb 13 below:

*ayār, tūt wmishmish wikhyyār* (Al-Quds Daily Newspaper)  
 (May is the month when raspberries, apricot and cucumber ripe)

Other than very bad weather conditions in May, some proverbs are utilised to describe how breezy the weather is to that extent that people can fall into a deep ‘dreamless sleep’ on the roofs of their houses. Take Proverb 14 below:

*fi ayār, nām ‘ala saḥ id-dār* (Al-Quds Daily Newspaper)  
 (In May, you can have sleep on the roof of your house)

### 6.6 June

It is now due time for fruits like apricot to ripe and pomegranate to grow, and to treat crops like corn when its stalks have already started to elongate as the proverbs say below:

*fi ḥuzayrān btṣīr idhurah mithl il-khayzarān*  
 (In June, corn stalks grow as long as bamboos)  
*buhuzayrān binzil il-mishmish wibikbar ar-rumān* (Al-Quds Daily Newspaper)  
 (June is the month of luscious apricot and when pomegranate grows)

### 6.7 July

The weather is sweltering to the extent that water is likely to boil due to extremely high temperatures which may soar to above 40 degrees centigrade. In order not to swelter, it is then highly recommended to avoid direct exposure to boiling temperatures during July. Consider Proverb 17 below:

*fi tamūz btghlī il-mayah fil-kūz* (Al-Quds Daily Newspaper)  
 (In July, water boils in a jug of clay)

### 6.8 August

August is the hottest month, with sizzling summer temperatures, too much for human

beings to bear as Proverb 18 below shows, but is yet considered useful for crops like grapes and figs to ripe as Proverb 19 further puts it:

*āb il-lahhāb* (Al-Quds Daily Newspaper)

“Blazing August” (Freyha, 1995, p. 1)

*āb 'iqṭa' il-'inib wla ithāb* (Al-Quds Daily Newspaper)

(In August, hand-pick grapes and figs as they are already ripe)

Hot sun of August with extremely high temperatures enables the grapes and figs to reach optimum ripeness so that people can eat them. Palestine is famous for these two fruits. The structure of social interaction is neatly manifested in the use of the proverbs, that is to say, distinctive social customs are characteristically displayed in the proverbs.

### 6.9 September

The rainy season in Palestine starts at the end of September. Proverb 20 shows that rain is highly possible at the end of this month.

*'aylūl ṭarafuh bi-ishshita mablūl* (Al-Quds Daily Newspaper)

“The latter part of September is sure to be rainy” (Freyha, 1995, p. 153)

The socio-cultural practice of Proverb 20 does not aim to infringe the instruction to prepare for winter and all that ‘aggro’, something like preparing the fireplace, for instance.

Additionally, Proverb 21 below bears witness to another possible communicative event in which the semantic and prosodic features in the proverb are not merely put together mechanistically, but carefully considered to make a successful performative perform. That is, olives are steeped in a surfeit of olive oil in September for which farmers should get themselves or a ‘posse’ olive pickers ready to pick olives.

*'in hal 'aylūl binzil az-zayt fi iz-zatū* (Al-Quds Daily Newspaper)

(In September, olive oil steeps in olives)

### 6.10 October

It is hot sun that makes figs and grapes ripe. Clouds blot out the sun in October so the growing season is off. As can be noticed in Proverb 22, the translator functionally opted for (‘October’) to render *tshrīn* (lit. ‘October/November’), perhaps presupposing the predominant cultural context.

*fī tshrīn waddi' il-'inib wi tīn* (Al-Quds Daily Newspaper)

“In October, bid grapes and figs farewell” (Freyha, 1995, p. 476)

### 6.11 November

People are sundered by deep-rooted distrust in November that it can rain anytime in this month as Proverb 23 reveals:

*tshrīn ith-athāni ma fī lal maṭar amānh* (Al-Quds Daily Newspaper)

(People are left with a profound distrust in November)

### 6.12 December

Proverb (24) below describes how the land becomes dry and bare and how there will be

very few plants and trees during this month so that people can be aware of harmful effects and take every precaution.

*kānūn al'awal al 'ajrad bikhalli ash-shajar 'amrad*

“Barren December makes trees barren” (Freyha, 1995, p. 510)

## 7. Hybrid of Month-Related Proverbs

A proverb may be a composite of one, two or three month words, with predominant attitudinal meanings in mind.

### 7.1 Homonymous MRPs

#### 7.1.1 October and November

Only one-month word in the proverb is used to denote two separate months, e.g., *tshrīn* (‘October/November’). Proverb 25 below is exploited to mean both *tshrīn il-'awal* (‘October’) and *tshrīn il-'ath-athāni* (‘November’).

*fī tshrīn biṭṭayir il-'inib wi tīn* (Al-Quds Daily Newspaper)

(In October and November, grapes and figs finish up)

*bard tshrīn biqaṭṭi 'il-maṣarīn* (Al-Quds Daily Newspaper)

(Bitterly cold in October/November splinters intestines)

Unlike Proverb 22, above the item *tshrīn* (‘October/November’) in Proverb 26 is most likely meant for *tshrīn il-'ath-athāni* (‘November’) rather than *tshrīn il-'awal* (‘October’) as the former *per se* brings biting cold to Palestine. The communicative slant here should necessarily entail coldness of November to the point that ones’ intestines may not function properly.

#### 7.1.2 December and January

The last and first months of the year are always referred to in Arabic as a monolexical item, that is, *kānūn* (December or January) in which *kānūn al'awal* goes for December and *kānūn ath-thāni* goes for January. For the sake of brevity as it is a distinct feature of a proverb, Palestinians only refer to both December and January as *kānūn* whereby the ordinal number is omitted. It is perhaps important to indicate that Proverb 27 below warrants a socially symbolic action. A close look at the proverb shows a kind of consensus amongst Palestinians to use the proverb to set off wintry season preparations.

*aja kānūn lif il-fahim wil-kanūn*

“In December and January, put plenty of charcoal in the brazier” (Freyha, 1995, p. 477)

When December and February approach, get the coals and firewood heater ready, again, for freezing cold.

*'urs il-majanīn fī kwanīn* (Al-Quds Daily Newspaper)

(Only mad people organise their weddings in December and January)

Enjoyable events organised by people are tied in with weather conditions, something that might sound ostentatious and outlandish to some cold countries. Winter

weddings are odd as the proverb above puts it.

*kānūn faḥil al-'ard*

“December and January are the stallions of the earth” (Freyha, 1995, p. 510)

Palestinians are on the threshold of months which bring with them frigid temperatures— weather conditions are normally appalling indeed. They are extremely cold with inclement weather and biting wind to the point that people feel chilled to the bone. Palestinians are especially amenable to modes of MRPs to register their horrendous or pleasant experiences of life during these months as Proverb 29 above may show.

In Proverb 29 above, the informative meaning is that after December and January end, there will be very mild winter climate. This proverb is employed by language users as a strong wish for a warmer life. Weather conditions after *kānūn* are likely to be fair. In Proverb (29), Freyha (1995, p. 510) states that: “*the earth does not produce well unless enough rain falls during these two months*”.

### 8. Three-Tier Proverbs

Proverbs may comprise of a three-month word, phrased in a chronological order based on a calendar year as can be shown in Proverb 30 below *shams ishbāṭ* (lit. ‘February sun’) occurs first, *shams āthār* (lit. ‘March sun’), in the middle and *shams nisān* (lit. ‘February sun’) at last.

*shams ishbāṭ li-kintiwa wa shams āthār li-bintī wshams nisān 'ili wlashaybti*  
 “I would rather have the sun of February for my daughter-in-law, the sun of March for my daughter, the sun of April for me and for my old age” (Freyha, 1995, p. 361)

In Palestinian culture, the verifiable fact is that mother-in-law and daughter-in-law are in dispute over even trivial matters. Proverbs tend to be part and parcel of the natural expressiveness of such tug-of-war relation. The sun comes out briefly in February and the alternation of sun and rain usually continue for the rest of the month. Palestinians long for the sun in winter, but have only some of it in February. Based on a turbulent relationship with daughter-in-law, people wish her to enjoy only hour-round sunshine of February. Pragmatically speaking, a daughter-in-law is the victim of vituperative remarks. However, when it comes to one’s daughter dearly loved by members of a family, people wish her to enjoy more brilliant and bright sunshine. Mainly concerned with herself, the speaker wishes herself to enjoy the sun of April which may be the be-all and end-all to her old age, very mindful of the consequences of ‘living through’ February, for instance, which is “the enemy of old women” as Proverb 4 above shows.

## 9. Results

### 9.1 Translatability

Van Den Broeck and Lefevere as cited in Samuel (2007, p. 376) speak of laws of translatability: (1) translatability is greater when there is a degree of contact between the SL and the TL; (2) translatability is greater when the SL and TL are on an equal cultural level of development and; (3) translatability can be influenced by the expressive possibilities of the TL. The fact that Arabic and English are two languages of little linguistic and cultural affinity is likely to pose the question of translatability as clearly

shown in MRPs. The first law can be illustrated in terms of the translation provided by Freyha in Proverb 9 in which there is a high ‘degree of contact’ between the SL and the TL, thus translatability is highly possible; the bride would be dressed up for her wedding” in both cultures of the SL and the TL. As for the second law, Proverb 6 displays more or less symmetrical climate, something that may be “on an equal cultural level of development” in both SL and TL; translatability is then possible. The last law can be explained in Proverb 18 in which *āb il-lahhāb* (lit. ‘August is inflammable’) cannot be formally rendered into ‘August is inflammable’, but rather functionally as can be offered by Freyha. The translation falls within the ambit of one of the “expressive possibilities” of the TL whereby ‘blazing’ is employed to describe the weather of August.

It would perhaps be useful to address untranslatability. Catford (1965, p. 94) speaks of two types. *“In linguistic untranslatability the functionally relevant features include some which are in fact formal features of the language of the SL text. If the TL has no formally corresponding feature, the text, or the item, is (relatively) untranslatable.”* Proverb 2 and Proverb 4 above illustrate the point. Freyha’s translations are too formal, i.e., the “functionally relevant features” in the SL are not so in the TL. Yet they may be understood by target audience.

In cultural untranslatability, *“[w]hat appears to be a quite different problem arises, however, when a situational feature, functionally relevant for the SL text, is completely absent in the culture of which the TL is a part”* (Catford, 1965, p. 99). The proposed translation for Proverb 28 seems to have not catered for the situational feature in the TL. Weddings can be arranged all year round, rather than on a season basis. Culture has undoubtedly held sway the patterns of thought of the Palestinians. A corollary to this, translating proverbs seems to be a deep-seated problem because they “deal directly with societal customs that might not translate directly to certain other societies” (Khodorkovsky 2008, Tips for translating Proverbs). Needless to say, translating proverbs could be an abject failure, should it be carried out carelessly.

## 9.2 Translation Methods and Strategies

To make the theoretical discussion of translation strategies more down-to-earth, it would be a good idea to research the issues of Arabic-English translation, translating culture, and translation strategies in general. Nida (1964) says that careful consideration of translating from Arabic into English or vice versa should be the aim of the translator because both are likely to suffer from deep-seated linguistic, pragmatic, cultural, etc. problems.

The methods followed might be discussed in what Nord termed as ‘documentary’ versus ‘instrumental’ translation. Whilst the former *“serves as a document of a source culture communication between the author and the ST recipient”* (Nord as cited in Munday, 2012, p. 126), the latter *“serves as an independent message transmitting instrument in a new communicative action in the target culture, and is intended to fulfil its communicative purpose without the recipient being conscious of reading or hearing a text which, in a different form, was used before in a different communicative situation”* (Nord as cited Munday, 2012, p. 126).

Proverb 24 can be used here to explain the former whereby al *’ajrad* (‘barren’) and *’amrad* (‘barren’) are employed to document *“a source culture communication between*

*the author and the ST recipient*". To illustrate the latter, take Proverb 22 in which homonymous *tshrīn* (October/November) has been rendered functionally into a "new communicative action", i.e., 'October'.

Categorically, documentary translation consists of four forms: (1) interlinear or word for word translation in which the focus is on syntax, morphology or the lexical features of the SL; (2) literal translation aims at reproducing the SL form, by the lexical units of ST; (3) philological translation happens with literary texts in which an explanation for some ambiguities in a footnote or glossary to reproduce the ST form, content and syntactical units occurs; and (4) exotic translation, e.g., modern literary works aims at reproducing the source text form, content and situation, by means of preserving the source text's textual units without changing the source culture, thus being alien for the target audience (Nord, 2001). For example, in Proverb 6 above the images *āthār*, 'bu sabi' *thaljāt kbār* are formally translated into 'March' and 'seven big snows' respectively. Though awkward and does not meet the TL audience (English-speaking audience) expectations, this translation (can also be described as documentary translation) may be an optimal way for intercultural exchange whereby the TL audience is likely to be introduced to SL culture.

To create a natural TL text that better meets the expectations of TL readers, Proverb 7 can be functionally translated into 'capricious weathers', 'as the day lengthens, so the cold strengthens', 'March comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb' or "March many weathers" Manser (2007, p. 184) clarifies the "*month of March often begins with wild, stormy weather and ends with mild, fair weather*". He further states "The coldest part of the winter often occurs in the period following the shortest day, as the hours of daylight begin to grow longer: We usually get our worst frosts in January and February" (ibid.).

Other functions can be further observed in the translation of the proverbs consisting of April. Totally different images are employed in the translating this proverb. As can be uncontroversially noted, 'April' is used to express the idea of having a good harvest of crops in Palestinian culture as in Proverb 10 above, but 'June' and 'May' are utilised in English as "a dripping June sets all in tune" and "a wet May brings plenty of hay" (see Manser, 2007).

Finally, it is oft-truism that any translation task involves multifarious problems for which more elegant and less confusing strategies are needed. A translation strategy can be roughly defined as a tool devised in the course of translation to solve inevitable translation problems caused by linguistic, stylistic, cultural, etc. remoteness between the language pairs. Scott-Tennent et al., (2000, p. 108) define translation strategies as "*the steps, selected from a consciously known range of potential procedures, taken to solve a translation problem which has been consciously detected and resulting in a consciously applied solution*". Two types of strategies are observed: formally-based as can be illustrated in Proverb 6, and functionally-based as can be shown Proverb 22.

## 10. Conclusion

The discussion has shown that among many types of proverbs, e.g. political, religious, social etc., MRPs are multi-faceted. MRPs consist of a rainbow of syntactic, semantic, phonetic and cultural characteristics, different from other types of discourses. That is,

they comprise delicate ecological features with such a relationship underlying between plants, animals, snow, rain, sun, etc. e.g. *ish-shinār* (birds); *thaljāt* ('snows'); *shmaysah* ('sunny'); and *mṭār* (rainy). The proverbs are purposefully employed to reflect an intimate connection between language users and nature, i.e., psycholinguistically-motivated. The connotations of the MRPs are hard to fathom because of hidden nature. They have affective connotation with an aura of personal feelings, astounding layers upon layers of connotations with various overtones imprinted on the language users' memories. The ecology of Palestine is conducive to the phraseology of MRPs. For example, June is the month when corn stalks grow as long as bamboos and August is time for picking grapes and figs, so that the proverbs are formulated to cater for such socio-culture occasions.

Culturally speaking, there has been something of a misnomer. In Palestinian culture, April *per se* "sets all in tune" in which, for example, "corn stalks grow as long as bamboos", rather than "a dripping June" as utilised in English culture. Due to such cultural gulf between Arabic and English, intervention on the part of the translator is called for. This intervention is mainly prompted by the "inevitable tug of war between *Form* and *Function* in the translating process [which] should [be] always be informed by text type, that is, in a reader-[centred] text, priority should be given to function, whereas in an author-or text-[centred] text, priority ought to be given to form at the risk of sounding awkward and/or unnatural" (Farghal and Shakir 2015, 110; emphasis added). Thus, it is based on opting for either formally-based equivalence or functionally-based one. The former necessitates the use of formal strategies, e.g. literal translation, which are crucial to build up a tacit knowledge system and promote SL cultural values insofar as the TL audience is concerned. The latter requires the use of functional strategies, e.g. cultural adaptation in which a kind of cultural substitutions for the SL images (with a view to performing more or less the same function) are made in the course of translation. As far as MRPs are concerned, it is obvious that only functional equivalence-based strategies are likely to be solutions for predominance of emotive overtones emerged from the phonetic structure of the proverbs, recurrent in almost all proverbs, as is the case with the consonance of the successive words *ḥabal* (lit. 'pollination') and *sabal* (lit. 'sheaves of...') in which they rhyme. This rhyme can be better observed in functional translation, something like "April showers bring May flowers" whereby 'showers' rhymes with 'flowers' and functions more or less the same as the Arabic one does.

More general strategies, namely 'foreignisation' and 'domestication' are predominant in any translation activity, including proverbs (see Abderraouf 2019). These strategies are ideologically-motivated. When the translation purpose is to highlight SL cultural values, formal strategies are employed. Functional strategies can be utilised when the emphasis is laid on the TL cultural values. For example, Venuti (1995) as cited in Hatim (1997, p.121) "*shows how the predominant trend towards domestication in Anglo-American translating over the last three centuries has had a normali[s]ing and neutrali[s]ing effect, depriving source text producers of their voice and re-expressing foreign cultural values in terms of what is familiar (and therefore unchallenging) to the dominant culture*".

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