

## Introduction

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It is axiomatic to state that translation studies has witnessed a phenomenal shift, particularly since the 1980s. The focus in the field (discipline, area, theory and practice) has shifted from (un)translatability to the cultural, political and economic ramifications of translation; away from concerns with translated texts (matter vs. manner), to treating translations as social, cultural and political acts taking place within and attached to global and local relations of power and dominance (Faiq, 2010). But the problem for translation studies is that it has been framed almost exclusively by and within Western discourses. With a few exceptions here and there, the discourse of translation has been largely Western-oriented—“Western” here does not necessarily refer to particular geographies, but rather to intellectual tendencies, paradigms and conceptions. There have been challenges, albeit not very vocal, to the so-called positivist take on what translation is and what it entails, but these challenges have mostly been initiated by scholars working within non-Western circles with a view to exploring the rich and diverse nature of other discourses and practices (traditions) of translation (for example, Arab, Asian and South American traditions). There are also voices within the Western discourse calling for the treatment of translation as an open concept to accommodate various traditions. The aim here is to encompass characteristics of different cultures in their representation, regulation, production and consumption of translation products as cultural goods.

It is within this context of “hearing other voices” that the importance of this Special Issue of the Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) lies. With the exception of one contribution on media translation in China (with reference to English), all contributions tackle problematics of translation between Arabic and English. The articles reflect various concerns Arab (and Chinese) practitioners deal with at both macro and micro levels of translation as communication, and fall within the following research clusters in translation studies:

- The ideological dimensions of translation
- The rhetorical/discoursal aspects of translating the meanings of the Quran as a sensitive text
- The translation of the discourses of media, law, and self-help
- The linguistic and didactic dimensions of translation, including its use as a teaching/learning tool.
- The implementation of machine translation theories to terminology in Arabic.

The articles approach thorny topics that have plagued, still do, translation studies, including the representations inherent in translating Arabic literature into English, the treatment of aspects specific to Arabic, *iltifaat* (a linguistic phenomenon considered by early Arab rhetoricians to represent “the courage of the Arabic language” in flouting grammatical norms), manipulation and media translation, the translation of the growing genre of self-help discourse, particularly since the publication and subsequent film both titled *Eat, Pray, Love*, the use and abuse of translation in teaching and learning, and terminology extraction for Arabic machine translation. Each article addresses how translation affects and is affected by different fields of knowledge (literary criticism, linguistics, (inter)cultural studies, orientalism, post-colonialism, media and communication, language pedagogy, and computational linguistics), and how its realizations are above all dictated by agendas of users (agents of translation) through and within the complex network of translation process, product and reception (Lefevere, 1992).

In a global context, the English language reigns supreme with all its signifiers and modes of signification. Through a gentle blend of theory and practice, this special issue provides the platform for voices from two locals (Arab and Chinese) vis-à-vis the hegemony of English (the global). As such, the issue will be of great interest to students (graduate and undergraduate) and researchers interested in translation as a prime site for the exploration of intercultural encounters.

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