

ARTICLE

## The Problems of Translating Classical Arabic Embedded in Saudi Novels from a Cultural Perspective

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### ABSTRACT

This essay examines the problematic issues that arise when translating classical Arabic language embedded in contemporary Saudi literature, with a particular emphasis on *Girls of Riyadh* a modern Saudi novel written. The premise of the present study is that classical Arabic has undergone semantic change through pejoration amelioration, through which their original meanings have been either completely changed or different connotations have been added. When the classical Arabic terms are used in an informal context, they may acquire new connotations, the interpretation of which is totally different from their original meaning. In most cases, these classical lexical items have been transformed into dialectal lexical items. Therefore, the present study inquires whether the translation of the classical Arabic elements embedded in *Girls of Riyadh* effectively and comprehensively captures the impact, pragmatics, style, atmosphere, aesthetics, and culture shown in the novel. A methodology based on corpus linguistics has been employed. This study engages in descriptive research by analyzing source text-target text pairs. The corpus of the study was composed of 29 examples taken from *Girls of Riyadh*. The study involved categorizing selected classical Arabic phrases from the Saudi novel as cultural indicators and examining their translation using House's covert translation idea and criteria, as well as Dickins's levels of cultural transposition. The findings of this study indicate that the translators predominantly employed a communicative approach,

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omitting classical Arabic terms or rendering them into formal English instead of employing tactics of domestication or foreignization.

**Keywords:** Covert Translation; Cultural Marks; Descriptive Approach; Najdi Classical Arabic; Modern Saudi Novels

## 1. Introduction

Translating Saudi literature into English is a complex undertaking. The meaning of a narrative is primarily determined by several environmental, social, and cultural elements that differentiate the intended meaning of the author from its formal language meaning. The Saudi Arabic language has recently undergone a significant semantic shift, with many traditional lexical items experiencing both pejoration and amelioration. The occurrence of semantic change in classical Arabic in the Najd area is a result of the rapid cultural and socioeconomic changes that took place after the discovery of oil. These changes greatly altered the previously isolated nature of the region, making it open to various world cultures. This not only attracted people from different regions of the Kingdom but also from different parts of the world. As a consequence, the classical Arabic language underwent significant transformation. Furthermore, mass communication channels, such as social media, along with a well-developed education system, have significantly contributed to the transformation of the inflexible and long-standing Classical Najdi Arabic used in the Najdi region. Hence, the classical lexical items examined in this study encompass cultural markers, idiomatic expressions, dialectal vocabulary, slang, and vernacular speech. The present study assumes that these items were originally part of Classical Arabic but have undergone semantic shifts as a result of the socio-economic changes taking place in Saudi Arabia. As such, my goal here is to reassess how classical Arabic expressions are rendered in Booth and Alsanea's translation of the novel<sup>[1]</sup>. An application of corpus linguistics methodology has been used to analyze random samples of classical Arabic phrases extracted from Saudi novels. The markers of classical Arabic elements' cultural relevance have been examined, and their textual representation has been assessed using Dickins's degrees of cultural transposition and House's idea of covert translation and its criteria. Cultural markers refer to words and word combinations that represent items, concepts, and qualities of a nation's way of life, culture,

social structure, and historical evolution, which may be unfamiliar to another nation<sup>[2]</sup>. In *Girls of Riyadh*, classical Arabic expressions as well as culturally specific items, etc., constitute such markers. Research in this field has investigated a wide range of linguistic aspects in relation to classical Arabic, covering phonology, sociolinguistics, and semantics, as well as syntax and pragmatics (e.g., Horesh & Cotter<sup>[3]</sup>, Kristiansen<sup>[4]</sup>, Trudgill<sup>[5]</sup>). The in/translatability of literary fiction has similarly been investigated. Interestingly, there is a dearth of studies examining whether the translators of the Saudi contemporary novels could manage to address the problematic issues related to the semantic change occurring to numerous classical lexical items and whether they opt for literal translation that favors literal translation over different approaches to translation. Hartman<sup>[6]</sup> emphasizes the challenge of translating the semantic shift occurring to the classical lexical items in *Girls of Riyadh* because the author of the novel manipulates register in Arabic, including examples, as numerous classical lexical items have lost their original Arabic meaning and instead acquired totally distinct connotations, which might be confusing to the Arab readers who do not belong to the Najdi region.

Farghal and Al-Hamly<sup>[7]</sup> conducted an analysis on the semiotic and pragmatic significance of using proverbs in Saudi novels. This article evaluated the efficacy of the translators of the English rendition of the novel in effectively conveying the semiotic/pragmatic significance of the proverbs employed. The study utilized a corpus consisting of twenty four proverbs taken from *Girls of Riyadh*. The translation process involved the removal of Classical Arabic terminology and culture-bound elements, employing a literal approach. This study investigates the role of context as a discursive characteristic that significantly influences the translatability of proverbs.

While previous research in translation and linguistics has distinguished Classical Arabic from dialect and vernacular speech, this study takes a different stance by asserting that Classical Najdi Arabic is not distinct from the Najdi dialect. This claim is supported by several reasons, the most

significant of which is that the Najdi dialect is a key source of Classical Arabic. Furthermore, Najdi Classical Arabic has preserved its semantic rigor till the middle of the 20th century. Consequently, differentiating between the Najdi dialect and Classical Arabic proved to be quite challenging. Nevertheless, the sociolinguistic shifts and recent economic and demographic changes in the Najdi region have resulted in linguistic changes in the usage of Classical Arabic in Najd. This has led to a significant decline in the use of Classical Arabic vocabulary, which has been replaced by vernacular and dialectal vocabulary with distinct and novel meanings. Many translators have failed to recognize the derogatory connotations of these interpretations. Furthermore, the incorporation of language into the local culture has led to significant shifts in lexical semantics. This has posed challenges for translators when dealing with classical lexical items, as they often struggle to decide between employing a literal translation approach, which results in the loss of cultural significance in the translated texts, or adopting alternative translation methods that aim to recreate a similar cultural context in the target language, albeit at the cost of accuracy and precision

So, this study is mostly about the functional correspondences between the SL and TL. It looks at how and to what extent the translation successfully achieves the same effect in the TL as it does in the SL, keeping the meaning the same and meeting the needs of the target audience. The analysis in this paper relies on the principle of covert translation<sup>[8]</sup> and Dickins et al.'s model of cultural transposition and its various degrees<sup>[9]</sup>. This study asks the following questions:

- How did the translators render the classic lexical items in the novel?
- How did they perceive them?
- How could the translators address the semantic shift occurring to the classical lexical items used in the novel during their translation process?
- When translating the novel, what translation approach did the translators use?
- Have the translators managed to capture the impact, pragmatics, style, atmosphere, aesthetics, and culture shown in the novel?
- How valid is the suggested approach in assessing the selected translation samples?

To address the previous inquiries, it is necessary to define classical Arabic and briefly discuss the Nadji classical

variant. Additionally, we will explore the similarities and differences between classical Najdi Arabic and the Najdi dialect. Moreover, we will scrutinize the sociolinguistic elements that shape Najdi Arabic and their representation in modern Saudi literature. We then conduct a literature review to pinpoint the shortcomings in the current research questions. This review assesses how previous studies addressed these questions and whether their approach adequately addressed the gaps. If the previous studies did not fully answer these questions, the current study will aim to address them comprehensively. The present study employs research approaches that provide objective and practical answers to the research issues. This study operates within a Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS) framework, providing an analysis of the source text-target text pair<sup>[10]</sup>. It critically assesses the translation's degree of correspondence to the source text in terms of accuracy, precision, comprehensiveness, cultural effect, and other factors.

### 1.1. Definitions and Terminology

Ferguson<sup>[11]</sup> asserts the division of the Arabic language into two varieties: classical Arabic and dialectal Arabic. This phenomenon is known as diglossia in the Arab world. The first type of variety is characterized by codification, standardization, association with the Holy Qur'an, and representation of a rich literary heritage. The second is a low variety, as it is used for everyday conversation and lacks codification or standardization. However, Najdi Arabic, an original form of classical Arabic, defies classification as a low variety, despite its recent vulnerability to specific changes due to significant cultural and socio-economic changes. In this context, I have to quote extensively Abboud's writing<sup>[12]</sup> on this issue:

Classical Arabic and All modern Arabic dialects show a clear perfect-imperfect distinction in their verb forms; the latter, in both forms of Arabic, differs from the former in that it has, in addition to a stem, suffixes as well as prefixes, while the former has suffixes only. In the imperfect, Classical Arabic has two stems for certain types of verbs, while the modern dialects, with at least one known exception, have only one stem for the imperfect for all verb types, which also serve as the stem of the im-

perative. *The exception is the group of dialects spoken today in the Najd of Saudi Arabi (henceforth referred to collectively as Najdi Arabic), which exhibit impetrative stems which are different from those of the imperfect and have this maintained ancient features that remarkably similar to Classical Arabic.*

An initial definition of a “dialect” might be a less important form of a language that is commonly spoken in rural areas. However, Najdi dialect cannot be considered a low form of classical Arabic because it maintains the same semantic and syntactic features across time and space. The discovery of petroleum in Saudi Arabia has primarily driven the transformation of Najdi Arabic, bringing about significant social changes. Various socio-economic factors have influenced these changes, leading to the emergence of hybrid societies that now accommodate migrant laborers from different parts of the world. As a result, the Najdi tribes’ long-standing isolation has crumbled<sup>[13–15]</sup>. The location and social interactions of the speakers influence Classical Arabic. Therefore, the meanings of classical Arabic terms have evolved over time and space, manifesting in both negative and positive connotations, bolstered by social and geographical factors. Diverse geographical locations give rise to language variations, leading to various communication challenges. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that geographical space alone is insufficient to explain this diversity<sup>[16]</sup>. Therefore, it is crucial to acknowledge the influence of socioeconomic factors on the emergence of linguistic disparities and variances in classical Arabic. This research specifically examines the challenges that come while translating the Najdi Classical Arabic language. Therefore, the study has chosen its corpus from novels written in Najdi dialect, whose lexical items are originally Classical Arabic. *Girls of Riyadh*, a Saudi novel, serves as an example. Its fictional story unfolds in Riyadh, located in the Najd region, the central region of Saudi Arabia. The Najdi Classical Arabic has experienced substantial linguistic transformation. The geographically secluded position of the Najdi region within the Arabian Peninsula has significantly shaped its historical development. The inner Najd region was isolated, resulting in limited interaction with neighboring Arab cultures. As a result, the inhabitants of Syria, Iraq, and Egypt had little knowledge about the classical Arabic spoken by the people of Najd. This lack

of knowledge was due to the Najd population’s infrequent visits to the outer lands, which prevented the exchange of information. Saudi Arabia’s discovery of oil led to significant population and social transformation in the Najd region. The region has undergone a transformation from a remote area inhabited by nomads with few natural resources, education, and widespread poverty to an urbanized region with globally significant corporations and a well-established international school system. The socioeconomic transformation has had a substantial influence on the development of Najdi Classical Arabic. The region has attracted international workers from numerous countries. These workers have exerted the most significant influence on the development of the Najdi Classical Arabic language. The extensive exchange of words and communication among different ethnic groups has led to the phenomenon of “language maintenance, bilingualism or multilingualism, or language shift”<sup>[17]</sup>. Over the past few decades, a significant number of Saudi citizens have traveled overseas for the purposes of tourism and education. The Najdi dialect has evolved from a rudimentary form spoken by desert nomads to a sophisticated urban dialect, influenced by several factors. This technique falls within the broader field of socio-dialectology. Socio-dialectology refers to the use of sociolinguistic analysis in dialectology, which is traditionally concerned with dialect geography<sup>[4]</sup>. In this instance, the emphasis of the dialect has shifted from secluded rural villages to communities characterized by immigration and movement<sup>[18–21]</sup>. Analyzing the Najdi dialect from a sociolinguistic standpoint enables us to demonstrate its intricate relationships with its surrounding circumstances. The evolving socioeconomic conditions in the area have impacted how people perceive language and have led to altering assessments of meaning, resulting in unique interpretations assigned to formerly stable words. According to Spolsky<sup>[16]</sup>, all languages undergo changes over time due to the addition of new words to express new ideas, as well as phonological adjustments resulting from contact with other languages and phonetic drift.

## 1.2. Literature Review

The majority of previous studies focused on computational analysis of the evolution of Saudi Classical Arabic embedded in Saudi literature, as demonstrated by Alahmary et al.<sup>[22]</sup> and Alshahwan et al.<sup>[23]</sup>. Several studies have exam-

ined Saudi Classical Arabic from various linguistic perspectives, including sociolinguistics, pragmatics, semantics, and syntax. These studies include works by Al Ammar<sup>[24]</sup>, Al Bohnayya<sup>[25]</sup>, Alqahtani<sup>[26]</sup>, Behnstedt<sup>[27]</sup>, Binturki<sup>[28]</sup>, Cotter and Horesh<sup>[29]</sup>, Eldakhs<sup>[30]</sup>, and Hussain<sup>[31]</sup>. Previous studies have focused on the problematic issues arising from translating the dialectal expressions and terms embedded in Saudi dialects. Ismail<sup>[32]</sup> makes the case that the Najdi dialect used in modern Saudi literature can't be translated because his study was prescriptive rather than descriptive; it only shows the problems that come up when trying to translate dialectal expressions in Saudi literature, which is similar to many other studies that look at the problems of translating dialects around the world. That is to say, there is a scarcity of research on the translation of the Najdi Classical Arabic in contemporary Saudi fiction. Only a small number of these studies have focused on this topic, such as Alwazna<sup>[33]</sup>, Ayoub<sup>[34]</sup>, and Ismail<sup>[35]</sup>. Moreover, the analysis of the translation of Saudi novels into English has received little attention, as evidenced by the limited number of studies conducted on this topic (e.g., Alsiary<sup>[36]</sup>, Salwa<sup>[37]</sup>). Evidently, there is a notable dearth of scholarly research about the challenges associated with translating Saudi literature from Arabic to English. Moreover, the issue of examining Najdi Classical Arabic expressions for translation remains partially unexplored. Therefore, it is necessary to expand our research to include a broader variety of studies that investigate the challenges associated with translating classical Arabic language found in narrative and fictional works. The objective is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the various obstacles that arise in the translation process.

This section primarily reviews the translation approaches available for translating Arabic fiction into English. In the field of translation, strategies for translating classical Arabic are scarce and have a limited scope. These strategies also struggle to manage the cultural and linguistic diversity of classical Arabic terms and idioms. In translating Classical Arabic terms and expressions, one approach seeks to decode the source language meaning of Classical Arabic expressions before their translation into the target foreign language, which includes three distinct categories of translation: 1) translating inside a mother tongue. The earliest type of translation, known as interlingual translation, involves using two or more languages to express the same meaning.

3) Intersemiotic translation is the second kind; it is based on the use of sign systems other than language to express meaning<sup>[38]</sup>.

When using an intralingual technique, translating classical Arabic terms in the same source language becomes a simple process of rewording, which can lead to translation difficulties. According to Dickins et al.<sup>[9]</sup>, in intralingual translation, there is a high risk of reformulation leading to distortion. This can happen when the translator misunderstands the source text (ST) or when the reader misinterprets the target text (TT), or both. Shamma<sup>[39]</sup> examines the translation strategies for classical Arabic that involve the reductive process of transcoding one linguistic variety into another. Nevertheless, the translation of classical Arabic language is a comprehensive process that surpasses the act of transcoding. This is due to the fact that classical Arabic expressions possess their own unique linguistic characteristics, rendering them an integral component of a well-established cultural system that necessitates formulation in a manner that accurately conveys its context and significance. Classical Arabic lexical items are frequently polysemous in nature, meaning that one lexical item may connote several different interpretations. As a result, they are challenging for translators—with texts full of classical Arabic terms, it is often difficult for the translator to find equivalent intralingual terms that can successfully bridge the gap that occurs between lexical items in the source language and their different interpretations. One classical lexical item may take on different interpretations due to its association with a metaphor. Ismail<sup>[35]</sup> argues that these metaphorical and metonymical differences rest on creating new connotations and unprecedented significations appropriate for the time. For instance, the Arabic language uses the word *rass*, which literally means 'head', metaphorically in two ways: *ras al-jabal*, which refers to the top of the mountain, and *ras al-sharaka*, which denotes the head of a company. According to Newmark, metaphor has two purposes: cognitive and aesthetic<sup>[40]</sup>. Both intralingual and interlingual translation approaches cannot fully fulfill the dual purpose of metaphor. The intralingual approach emphasizes the dictionary meaning of a lexical item, while the interlingual approach decodes the dictionary meaning of the source text, thereby reducing the pragmatic effect and referential purpose of the translation. Therefore, the translation process must assess the "macro-level mappings (i.e., concep-

tual metaphors) and micro-level metaphorical expressions” of metaphor<sup>[41]</sup>.

It is extremely hard for a translator to successfully transfer cultural elements between the source and target languages while staying true to both the metaphorical and literal meaning of the original text. To seek to do otherwise may result in the oversimplification of significant cultural information in translation. However, if the translator solely concentrates on maintaining the authenticity of the cultural dimension, without any strategy for adaptation or linguistic and cultural compromise, the result could be a strange or exotic text in the target language. Bassnett<sup>[42]</sup> emphasizes the importance of retaining cultural facets over linguistic specificity. Thus, the translator should utilize a hermeneutic circle in handling a culturally rich text, moving focus from the whole to its constituent parts and back. Retaining and formulating the overall meaning of a text may lead to the loss of important lexical items, classical Arabic terms and expressions, and culturally-bound components, thereby depriving the target language text of the style, message, and aesthetic effect of the source language text. Similarly, retaining source language components that appear strange or exotic in the target language text may result in a “hybrid text” and reduce the understandability and naturalness of the translated text. Thus, the text may naturalize this kind of exoticism and strangeness or reject it. The idea of a hybrid text does not appear to be relevant in cases of translating a text between two completely different cultures, such as that of translating between Arabic and English cultural norms. In reference to this approach, Vermeer<sup>[43]</sup> has proposed the idea of the “bicultural translator.” Furthermore, one can either translate literally or leave out culture-bound elements that lack cultural or conceptual equivalence in the target language<sup>[44]</sup>. However, both approaches face challenges when dealing with fictional texts rich in classical lexical items, where culture-bound elements shape their pragmatic and aesthetic impact. Removing these cultural elements from these texts diminishes their uniqueness, reducing them to commonplace language, and potentially stripping a target language text of its unique aesthetic and literary style.

As a result, the idea of formal equivalence appears unsuited to dealing with culturally, geographically, temporally, and socially specific texts<sup>[45]</sup>. House<sup>[46]</sup> suggests dividing translation strategies into two overarching approaches: overt

and covert. In an overt translation approach, the translated text directly focuses on the addressee; in this way, the goal is to translate the original text. Conversely, covert translation targets both the addressees of the source and target texts. As such, it seeks to create an original text in the source language. In this scenario, the source text and its covert target text are of equal concern for both source and target language readers. The source and target texts display equivalency of purpose in relation to the textual audience and their desires in both the source and target cultures.

Ultimately, it is critical to preserve the original text’s purpose in the translated version whenever possible. According to House<sup>[8]</sup>, the translator should adopt the perspective of the target culture recipients and examine the source text from their point of view. Furthermore, she suggests that the translator must subjectively decide whether to use a covert or overt technique when translating a particular text. If the translator considers a fictional work to have cultural specificity, it is preferable to use an overt translation technique. On the other hand, if the translator should employ a hidden translation method if they believe the work is significant for the intended audience. The decision of whether to employ a covert or overt translation style is contingent upon the specific objective of the translation, dictating when and how a translator makes this choice.

## 2. Methodology

This study uses descriptive research to analyze source text-target text pairs. We used samples from the original Arabic text of the Saudi novel, *Girls of Riyadh*, as well as its translation. We chose *Girls of Riyadh* because it serves as a rich source for the transformation and semantic changes in Najd Classical Arabic, a language that remained unchanged until the mid-1900s. The samples accurately reflect the recently modified Najdi Classical Arabic. It also highlights how modernization in the Najd region has resulted in significant changes to the local Arabic classical Arabic, allowing us to problematize the translation process. The study’s corpus consisted of 29 examples from *Girls of Riyadh* (refer to **Tables 1–5**). We then compared them to their English translations. We conducted an analysis of the corpus using House Covert’s translation criteria<sup>[9]</sup> and Dickins et al.’s cultural transposition criteria. The criteria for covert translation are:

1. Identify the translated text's function.
2. Adapt culturally specific elements to the target text.
3. Avoid omissions in translation.
4. Adapt the cultural setting to the target text and fulfill the reader's expectations.
5. Pay attention to the naturalness of expressions.

Dickins' concept of cultural transposition, along with the criteria outlined in the translated text, guided the analysis of the Najdi Classical Arabic corpus.

We investigated the Tonal Register and Social Register in the target language text. Tonal register concerns the affective meaning of the language and can fall into one of four categories: vulgar, familiar, polite, or formal. We analyze source text expressions in relation to the Tonal Register based on their level of politeness in the source language and how closely they align with an equivalent degree of politeness in the target language. The social register is concerned with the speaker's style and social stereotyping. It highlights the speaker's social class, social persona, and level of education. This register's data always concerns the text's style and jargon, and this varies between texts. As a result, the translator must determine suitable elements of style and jargon that meet readership expectations. Therefore, the translator needs to adjust the target language register to compensate for the loss of connotative meanings from classical Arabic expressions in the source text during the translation process.

1. Exoticism: Utilizing foreign words and sentence structures that differ from the original text makes the resulting text seem exotic and influences cultural foreignness. This case minimizes adaptation, highlighting the unique characteristics of the source culture and its cultural peculiarity.
2. Calque: We formulate a calque using words and syntax from the target language, but it lacks idiom in the target language.
3. Cultural transplantation: this is an adaptive process, but different from exoticism. The process involves rewriting the text to align with the target culture's cultural context. For Dickins, this is a drastic approach. Dickins generally only applies it to literary works.
4. Cultural borrowing involves introducing a foreign element into the target text. On occasion, over time, a cultural borrowing can turn into an established expression in the target language.

5. Communicative translation: People typically use this when working with traditional cultural expressions and when a word-for-word translation would not be appropriate.
6. Compensation: Rather than employing either, the translator pursues an intermediate position between exoticism and cultural transplantation. Consequently, the translator is occasionally required to make alterations.

### 3. Results

The text of *Girls of Riyadh* contains multiple instances where a literal translation approach has been employed. Literal translations have altered the intended meaning of the source language, hindering the conveyance of the intended purpose and practical impact. Below are a few instances extracted from the text of *Girls of Riyadh*.

The translated line "...that every weekend for the rest of your lives will be a total loss—not to mention the rest of the week" is provided as the translation of the source text phrase "*Wlkl min yry an al-nās khybthā al-Sabt wa-al-Ḥad wāḥnā khybtnā mā wrdtsh 'Alī ḥa*" ما وردتش علي حد ولكل من يري أن الناس خيبتها السبت والحد واحنا خيبتنا<sup>[1]</sup>. In the source language, the vocative is a culturally informed metaphor. The author's intention is to convey an implicit message to the reader. The author's objective is to evoke empathy and unity with Saudi women who are enduring persecution. The proverb "خيبتها السبت والحد واحنا خيبتنا ما وردتش علي حد" is in the author's idiolect, which manipulates the classical Arabic language and serves a pragmatic purpose. In the original language, it effectively conveys the author's goal to the reader. An English literary translator expertly translated this novel in collaboration with the female Saudi novelist. Therefore, there should have been no problem in handling the dialect traits and non-linguistic aspects of the text. However, the translator used a verbatim translation, ignoring the figurative nature of the original text in the source language.

The source language text employs a stock metaphor, which is a highly effective and succinct way of describing a physical and/or mental condition with both referential and pragmatic implications<sup>[41]</sup>. The idiomatic term conveys its meaning on a larger scale by mocking the verse:

Table 1. Examples of literal translation.

	SL	Claque
1	Wkl min yry an al-nās khybthā al-Sabt wa-al-Ḥad wāhnā khybtā mā wrdtsh ‘Alī ḥadd ولكل من يري أن الناس خيبتها السبت والحد واحنا خيبتنا ما وردتش علي حد	“That every weekend for the rest of your lives will be a total loss—not to mention the rest of the week”
2	S’lt ‘anhā al-‘Āfiyah FNJZÜŋZü ÜšN KZÖB	“May good health knock her door”
3	Min takūn : mā shā’a Allāh milḥ wa-qublah من تكون : ما شاء الله ملح وقبلة	“Ma shaa Allah, God willing, no envy touch her, she’s so pretty”
4	Min bidāyat al-‘urs wa-hiya tadūr wtbāshr shāyhl al-‘urs ‘Alī rās’hā من بداية العرس وهي تدور وتباشر شايبة العرس علي راسها	“It looks like she’s carrying the whole wedding on her shoulders”
5	Tu’minu Umm Qamrah bnzryh almrā’h al-Zubdah wa-al-rajul al-shams تؤمن أم قمره بنظرية المرأة الزبده والرجل الشمس	Gamrah’s mother was a firm believer in the theory that “woman is to man as butter to sun”
6	Aşbaḥtu Qamrah tstm‘ ilā aḥādīth wāldthā ‘an “‘amalīyat al-zawāj” bldhh shāb yuqaddimu la-hu Abūh syjārh lydkhnā amāmh li-awwal marrah أصبحت قمره تستمع الي أحاديث والدتها عن "عملية الزواج" iiÜC ٤٤ -ح Yla  عÜġi ÜšN KZÖB pDZi  Z 3ÖTlj	“As for Gamrah, she started listening to her mother’s anecdotes and treatises on ‘the enterprise of marriage’ with heightened enjoyment and sense of a pride of a young man whose father offers him a cigarette to smoke in front of him for the first time”

“Not (the path) of those who earn Thine anger nor of those who astray”<sup>[47]</sup>. To clarify, the phrase “*al-Nās khybthā al-Sabt*” الناس خيبتها السبت is a metaphorical reference to Jews, whereas “*al-Nās khybthā al-ḥadd*” الناس خيبتها الحد is a figurative reference to Christians. From a strictly religious standpoint, the classical idiomatic term conveys the notion that unexpected disappointment and misfortune will come upon us. Newmark argues that a stock metaphor should produce a comparable image in the translated text while also maintaining its relevance and appropriateness in the target language. However, the translated text portrays an insulting image that lacks ideological and dogmatic validity. This is because English perceives Christianity and Judaism as sources of salvation and purity, not as symbols of misfortune or disappointment. According to Newmark<sup>[40]</sup>, the incorporation of extended stock metaphors into proverbs, often influenced by culture, tends to alter their imagery. In accordance with Newmark’s position, the translator has the option to employ Nida’s notion of dynamic equivalence instead of rigidly striving for accuracy. Therefore, the translators’ dependence on the literal translation distorts the original meaning of the source text.

The translators of *Girls of Riyadh* have predominantly employed a literal methodology, while also omitting numer-

ous Classical lexical terms, and Classical idiomatic expressions, and certain brief paragraphs. By doing this, the accuracy of the text has been diminished. Although the original text contains many Classical lexical items, these have hardly been reproduced in the translated text, resulting in a diminished sense of closeness and camaraderie present in the original language text. The work derives a significant portion of its potent impact and cultural importance from the usage of the Najdi Classical lexical items in the original text. The elimination of these parts has caused distortion and damaged the integrity of the target language text. The expressions included in the original work contribute to the development of a culturally diverse ambiance. Consequently, the absence of cultural indicators and characteristics specific to a particular culture in the translated book has altered both its influence and its category.

Although this short paragraph has an obvious cultural impact, *حظنا من بعدك , أي يالتعاسة الحظ, وأظن التعبير وانبطاحه المستمرين, أو هو من حشرة القردة كما يقول ويا قرد حيوان القرد لكثرة تطنطنيه, الذي يشبه الحظ في عملية وقوفه* , it was completely omitted from the translation.

The preceding paragraph is written in the Najdi Classical Arabic and carries considerable significance. Further-



Table 2. Examples of omission.

	SL	TT	Type of Omission
7	wa-Yā qrd, ḥznā min ba'dak, Ayy yālt'āsh al-ḥazz, w'zn al-ta'bīr al-Najdī mushtaqq min Ḥayawān al-qird lkthrh ttntnyh, alladhī yushbihu al-ḥazz fī 'amalīyat wqwfh wānbṭāḥh almstmryn, aw huwa min ḥshrh alqrādh kamā yaqūlu ويا قرد ,حظنا من بعدك , أي بالتعاسة الحظ , وأظن التعبير النجدي مشتق من حيوان القرد لكثرة تطنطنيه, الذي يشبه الحظ في عملية وقوفه وانبطاحه المستمرين, أو هو من حشرة القردة كما يقول	It is completely omitted	Complete omission
8	Yaqūlūn ṣdyqthā min Zamān yabdū lī annahā sn'h wdbhrh يقولون صديقتها من زمان يبدو لي أنها سبعة ودبرة	“The bride’s sisters”	The translator has omitted دبره being a colloquial Najdi word that means “a clever housewife”
9	Ṣaḥḥa shyz swkyr fī Bass ybghy la-hā tnhf Shīwī wtl'b Riyādat mithlik صح شيز سوكير في بس يبغي لها تتحف شوي وتلعب رياضة مثلك	“I think she really needs to ditch a few pounds and work out like you do”	The translator has omitted “سوكير صح شيز”

more, this serves as a notable illustration of how speakers employ code-switching. Specifically, the dialect adage “wa-Yā qrd, ḥznā min ba'dak” ا قرد ,حظنا من بعدك is immediately succeeded by the usage of Modern Standard Arabic. In this scenario, code-switching is employed to adapt the speaker’s social identity to align with the contextual circumstances depicted in the literature. To illustrate, this piece of literature chronicles the personal lives of four well-educated Saudi females who belong to a Saudi social elite that has adopted American customs and values. The emergence of this social group has predominantly been propelled by socioeconomic transformation in Saudi society. Code-switching is employed to depict the contradictory identities encountered by the four fictitious heroines. They lack a strong sense of belonging and their identities are strained by the conflict between the traditions of their historical nomadic culture and the rapid modernization occurring in Saudi Arabia. According to Al Wer and De Jong<sup>[48]</sup>, there is a distinction between “Bedouin” and “sedentary” dialects in the Arabic speaking world. The Classical Najdi Arabic, being influenced by both Bedouin and sedentary dialects, reflects a contrast between tradition and modernity. In this context, it is used to emphasize the inner psychological turmoil that the protagonists are going through. Therefore, accurately translating Classical Arabic expressions utilized in the text is essential for showcasing the novel’s artistic dimension and effectively conveying the author’s message and aims. Excluding the Najdi Classical Arabic from the target language text has a detrimental effect

on the quality of the translation. In the modern Najdi dialect, Saudi women residing in Riyadh have started using English terms in their speech. This reflects the ongoing linguistic and cultural changes in Saudi culture. For instance, I propose that excluding صح شيز سوكير hampers the functionality of the work and diminishes its faithfulness to the original language.

The translators of *Girls of Riyadh* have predominantly employed a literal methodology, while also omitting numerous classical lexical terms, classical idiomatic expressions, and certain brief paragraphs. This approach has reduced the text’s accuracy. Despite the original text’s abundance of classical lexical items, the translated text barely replicates them, which diminishes the sense of closeness and camaraderie inherent in the original language. The use derives a significant portion of its potent impact and cultural importance from the usage of the Najdi Classical lexical items in the original text. The elimination of these parts has caused distortion and damaged the integrity of the target language text. The expressions included in the original work contribute to the development of a culturally diverse ambiance. As a result, the absence of cultural indicators and characteristics specific to a particular culture in the translated book has altered both its influence and category.

Although this short paragraph has an obvious cultural impact, ويا قرد ,حظنا من بعدك , أي بالتعاسة الحظ , الذي يشبه الحظ في عملية وقوفه وانبطاحه المستمرين, أو هو من وأظن التعبير النجدي مشتق من حيوان القرد لكثرة تطنطنيه

حشرة القردة كما يقول , it was completely omitted from the translation.

Written in Najdi Classical Arabic, the preceding paragraph holds significant importance. Furthermore, this serves as a notable illustration of how speakers employ code-switching. Specifically, the dialect adage “*wa-Yā qrd, ḥznā min ba’dak*” اقرد،حظنا من بعدك is immediately succeeded by the use of Modern Standard Arabic. In this scenario, the literature employs code-switching to adapt the speaker’s social identity to the contextual circumstances. To illustrate, this piece of literature chronicles the personal lives of four well-educated Saudi females who belong to a Saudi social elite that has adopted American customs and values. Socioeconomic transformation in Saudi society has predominantly propelled the emergence of this social group. We employ code-switching to depict the contradictory identities encountered by the four fictitious heroines. The conflict between the traditions of their historical nomadic culture and the rapid modernization occurring in Saudi Arabia strains their identities, leaving them without a strong sense of belonging. According to Al Wer and De Jong<sup>[48]</sup>, there is a distinction between “Bedouin” and “sedentary” dialects in the Arabic-speaking world. Both Bedouin and sedentary dialects influence Classical Najdi Arabic, reflecting a contrast between tradition and modernity. In this context, it underscores the protagonists’ internal psychological turmoil. As a result, accurately translating classical Arabic expressions used in the text is essential for showcasing the novel’s artistic dimension and effectively conveying the author’s message and goals. Excluding the Najdi Classical Arabic from the target language text has a detrimental effect on the quality of the translation. In the modern Najdi dialect, Saudi women residing in Riyadh have started using English terms in their speech. This reflects the ongoing linguistic and cultural changes in Saudi culture. For instance, I propose that excluding صح شيز سو كير hampers the functionality of the work and diminishes its faithfulness to the original language.

The translators primarily utilized a communicative translation approach to address the challenges posed by the extensive usage of Najdi Classical lexical items in the text. The novelist utilizes Najdi Classical Arabic to affirm her identity and emphasize her viewpoint on the oppression experienced by Saudi girls in a patriarchal society. Put simply, the inclusion of the Najdi Classical Arabic in literary works

has a specific and significant impact on life, ideology, thinking, values, and social reality. Eliminating the Najdi Classical items while translating the novel could undermine the narrative’s fictional power, turning it into a basic and lifeless prose disconnected from its original cultural roots. When translating the Najdi Classical Arabic embedded in the novel, it is crucial to take into account the influence on the many levels of language employed in a fictional piece, especially at the level of linguistic style. Furthermore, it diminishes the essential essence of the target language material being discussed. The elimination of casual style and simplification at various levels of discourse not only impairs the effectiveness of the original language in the translated text, but also modifies and distorts it. To illustrate, the translators often fail to faithfully maintain the tonal register in the translated text, a vital aspect for conveying the speakers’ individuality and emotional significance. The fact that the tonal register influences the emotional significance that reflects the speakers’ identity emphasizes the failure<sup>[9]</sup>.

*Girls of Riyadh* explores how language shapes or challenges the Saudi female identity. The original text highlights the characteristics of the Najdi Classical Arabic, which reflect the feeling of seclusion experienced by Saudi women, leading to a sense of detachment from their own society<sup>[49]</sup>. Therefore, the intended audience may struggle to understand the true nature of the portrayed hidden world if the translator fails to accurately express the subtle variations in tone from the original language to the translated language. In essence, the translation is no longer capable of faithfully capturing for the target audience the original context, essence, and distinctive allure of this universe. On the contrary, the translation offers a different portrayal of reality that seems strange and unknown to the original language. The integration of the informal Syrian phrase “*Wdkhyllk*” into Najdi Classical Arabic, where it becomes “please” and serves as a formal marker of politeness, is a clear example of this phenomenon. The Arabic equivalent of “please” is “*Min fdlk*,” however, it is hardly employed in regular discourse. In addition, while certain expressions like “*هالعك، للشينة “ماربزين، الحش*” مراهب، ليش، سياستها، جابت العيد M’rbzyn, alḥsh, Mawāhib and “*Laysh, siyāsatiḥā, jābt al-‘Īd, hāl’k, llshynh*” are translated into English for the purpose of communication, they are not precisely assessed on the politeness scale of the original language. This is because the English translation does not

**Table 3.** Examples of communicative translation and the lack of the Tonal and Social Register in the TT.

	SL	Communicative Translation
10	Wdkhyll Qūlī lqmwrh mā šāra Shay’ ودخيلك قولي لقمورة ما صار شئي	“Please, tell Gamrah to calm down, it is nothing to worry”
11	Lsātwn al-nās m’rbzyn Hūn mā Ḥaddā Falla لساتون الناس مأربزين هون ما حدا فل	“No one is going to leave”
12	‘Mrkw, mā ḥtt’lmw ušūl alḥsh, al-muhimm Shawfi al-bint Hādī ... Ammā ‘alayhā Mawāhib’ عمركو، ما حتتعلمو أصول الحش، المهم شوفي البنت هادي ... أما عليها مواهب	“You will never gossip lol. Anyway, check out that girl—she’s got talent, all right”
13	Adhā hiya Samrā Laysh yḥtwn la-hā Fāwindīshan Abyaḍ Dhī alḥyn mkhlynhā ṭāl’h Zarqā’ wa-fi firaq Wāḍiḥ bayna wajjahā wrqbthā Z y’“ ..... إذا هي سمرا ليش يحطون لها فاونديشن أبيض ذي الطحين مخلينها طالعة زرقاء وفي فرق واضح بين وجهها ورقبتها ز يععب.....	“By God, her make-up is painful! Her skin is too dark for such a chalky foundation. They have made her practically blue—and look at the contrast between her face and her neck. Ewwww... so vulgar”
14	Yārythā rāht llmshghl Illī khytt ‘ndw sdwmh bdāl hāl’k Illī ‘āmltwn bnfshā ياريتها راحت للمشغل اللي خيطت عنده سدومة بدال هالعك اللي عاملتو بنفسها	“I wish she had gone to the dressmaker who made Sadeem’s dress instead of this mess she came up with herself”
15	Tṣdqyn Anā sami’t an al-Rasūl da’ā llshynh? تصدقين أنا سمعت ان الرسول دعا للشينة؟	“Can you believe it; I heard that Prophet Mohammed used to send up prayers for the unlovely one”
16	Fihā ‘Araq? byāḍhā Bayāḍ Shawām mhw byāḍnā almswhb فيها عرق؟ بياضها بياض شوام مهو بياضنا المشوهب	“Is her blood pure? Her father’s mother was Syrian”
17	Ayy wāḥidah fihim? al-Daf’ al-Imāmī Wālā al-Khalafī? أي واحدة فيهم؟ الدفع الأمامي والا الخلفي؟	“Which ‘talent’—front bumper or back?”
18	al-Khalafī yā ḥawlah – twmtsh الخلفي يا حولة -تومتش	“Are you cross-eyed? Back, of course”
19	Aḥly Mawāhib finā Ḥaqq sadīm أحلي مواهب فينا حق سديم	“The most ‘talented’ of all of us is Sadeem”
20	Yā Layta ‘indī Mawāhib zyḥā min warā يا ليت عندي مواهب زيها من ورا	“I wish I had a back bumper like hers”
21	Siyāsatiḥā jābt al-‘Īd سياستها جابت العيد	“The policy of withholding had decidedly backfired in this case”

employ terms that closely align with the politeness level of the target language. Preston<sup>[50]</sup> argues that the relationship between language attitude and locality perception is important in determining the features of a dialect and its external impacts. As an illustration, the translators exclude the Levantine lexical item “مأربزين” “*m’rbzyn*,” which denotes an unwelcome guest, and instead offer a more general interpretation as recompense. The translators are unable to faithfully convey the essence and atmosphere of the original language in the translated text. The difference between English culture and Arabic culture presents difficulties in harmonizing the original language text’s tonal and social registers with the

substance of the translated language.

The use of tonal registers in languages obfuscates rather than elucidates, and the translation process aims to capture the overall meaning of the source language in the target language text. Cultural transplantation, which involves completely rephrasing the entire text to fit within the cultural framework of the target audience, can achieve this. Nevertheless, the adaptation process must not be arbitrary, since the translator must meticulously consider the tonal register of the target language text to align with the desired audience. The original text’s cultural allusions should align with the most similar cultural symbols in the target language, and the

translated text should accurately convey the cultural background.

The translators have utilized a communicative translation strategy, which negatively affects the transmission of the social register from the source language to the target language text. The social register includes information about the speaker's education, social image, occupation, and professional standing<sup>[9]</sup>. Therefore, the translator must meticulously select the appropriate specialized language and mode of expression in order to fulfill the requirements of the social environment. Choosing an inappropriate social register ultimately undermines the fictional characters' social reputation and results in misunderstanding. The novel intentionally employs Najdi Classical Arabic to establish cultural prejudices that define the characters. These characters symbolize societal classifications that are distinctive and paradoxical, illustrating the tension between the modernity of Saudi society and the enduring impact of tradition and culture. We can discern this by analyzing their vocabulary selection, tone, and utilization of social cues. In the novel, the complex amalgamation of languages is omitted, resulting in the target language text losing its emotional depth, purpose, and vivid portrayal.

The translators have not utilized cultural borrowing extensively. In this case, the practice of cultural borrowing typically involves religious terms and expressions, which are justified due to the conceptual inconsistency between the religious equivalencies in the target culture. Despite the involvement of two translators—the author, a Saudi woman and a Muslim, and a professional British literary translator—in the translation of this novel, numerous religious terms remain mistranslated. For example, *ما شاء الله* is presented as “God’s will be done.” However, this may be a mistranslation, as the translators may have confused the meaning of “Inshallah,” which is equivalent to “God’s will be done,” with “Mashaa Allah,” which is equivalent to “May Allah protect you from envious and jealous people.”

The translators have rarely used cultural transplantation to translate the Najdi Classical Arabic in the novel, despite its high effectiveness in maintaining the overall effect and style. It is possible for meanings to be transferred between languages that come from different cultures through a process called “cultural transplantation.” In literary works, where a speaker’s speech is shown in a certain dialect, the trans-

plantation might also be justified in showing this in a dialect form<sup>[9]</sup>. As such, cultural transplantation is often a useful translation strategy when dealing with dialect terms and expressions in a literary text. In the preceding examples, the translators used linguistic, stylistic, and idiomatic adaptation practices to the target language culture. For example, Arabic expressions like *يا يالله ترقصين*, *الله الله بالعقل والتقل*, *ياالله تتحركين*, *ياالله يالله تمشين* have been adapted into the target language culture as *ياالله*, which translates as “barely.” Furthermore, *تبارك الله* is translated as “So-o-o gorgeous,” also representing a kind of cultural adaptation.

## 4. Conclusion

Analyzing the English translation of *Girls of Riyadh* with reference to House’s idea of covert translation and Dickins’s concept of transplantation, the present study would suggest that the translators have not used strategies of domestication or foreignization in the target language text but rather have made excessive use of a communicative translation strategy. The translation of Najdi classical terms and expressions through a process of cultural transposition with an occasional addition can often assist the translator in retaining the features, vividness, realism, and sense of intimacy, literary imagination, creativity, and aesthetic effect of the source language in the target language text. A number of translation theorists have stated opposition to the rendering of Arabic classical terms into English classical forms, which involves a process of compensation in both time and place. On occasion, translators accept that there will be a certain amount of translation loss when translating fictional works across pairs of languages belonging to distant cultures. The idea of occasionally adding to the text (as a means of compensating) can aid in translation, as the translator incorporates appropriate expressions that maintain the impact of the source language in the target language text. When translating a literary text, such as *Girls of Riyadh*, leaving out all the Najdi classical lexical items appears to be an extreme approach. As a result, losing so much in translation can have negative consequences, undermining the aesthetic effect and distorting the text’s message. Furthermore, using a communicative translation strategy can result in a harsh and soulless translated text with limited cultural impact. Using such a communicative translation strategy can shift the genre

**Table 4.** Examples of cultural borrowing.

22	سياسة ال بالله بمد البائين مد حركتين , أن ال بالكاد هي أضمن الطرق في مجتمعنا المحافظ مثل ما تبين Siyāsāt al yāllh bmd alyā'yn Madd ḥrkty'n, an al bālkād hiya aḍmn al-ṭuruq fī mujtama'inā al-Muḥāfiz mathal mā tby	“The strategy of Yaalla, Yalla, which means ‘get going, but just barely’ is the most fool proof path to a quick marriage proposal in our conservative society”
23	اية والله, الشيون هم اللي سوقهم ماشي Āyat wa-Allāh, alshywn hum Illī swqhm māshī	“E Wallah, must be true, I swear, the ugly ones seem to be in demand these days”
24	انا اللي الحمد لله مهما أكلت ما أسمن فمرتاحة Anā Illī al-Ḥamad lillāh muhimman Akaltu mā asmn fmrtāḥh	“Alhamdu lillah, thank God, I never gain weight no matter how much I eat, so I’m not worried”
25	والله ما شاء الله wa-Allāh mā shā'a Allāh	“Mashaa Allah, God’s will be done”

**Table 5.** Examples of cultural transplantation.

26	بالله يالله تمشين , بالله تتحركين , بالله ترقصين. الله بالعقل والتقل , لا تصيري خفيفة. الكلمة بحساب واللفتة بحساب Yāllh yāllh tmshyn, yāllh tṭhrkyn, yāllh trqsyn, Allāh Allāh bi-al-'aql wālthql, lā ṭsyry khafifah, al-Kalimah bḥsāb wāllfth bḥsāb	“You barely walk, you barely talk, you barely smile, you barely dance, be mature and wise, you always think before you act, you measure your words carefully before you speak and do not behave like a child”
27	تبارك الله Tabāraka Allāh	“So-o-o gorgeous”
28	طول الزفة وأنا أذكر الله عليك- Ṭūl alzfḥ wa-anā adhkur Allāh 'lyk-	“The whole evening I’ve been praying to God to take good care of you”

of the translated text and transform it into bland and lifeless prose that fails to take into account any of the contextual realities that are relevant to the target language text. Therefore, the translator should fully assess the register and develop a text that retains, as far as reasonably possible, the tonal and social registers of the original. The strategy of cultural transplantation is one way of ensuring that an appropriate register is used in the target culture without misrepresenting the source culture. Translating Najdi classical items in literary works can also benefit from the application of the House translation model. The translation process should follow several steps: (1) identify the function of the translated text; (2) adapt any culturally specific elements to the target text culture; (3) avoid excessively omitting such terms in translation; (4) adapt the cultural setting of the source text to that of the target text to align with the target reader’s expectations; and (5) seek to render such expressions natural.

## 5. Limitations and Future Research

This study thoroughly examined the challenges associated with translating dialect phrases and expressions, with

a particular emphasis on the effects of cultural transfer on the Najdi Classical Arabic translation. Several additional challenges arise when translating Najdi Classical Arabic, encompassing phonological, pragmatic, semantic, and syntactic complexities. These issues have not been resolved or examined in this particular study. This essay has primarily examined the Najdi Classical Arabic from a socio-dialectological standpoint. However, certain aspects have not been discussed, including the historical semantics and evolution of the Najdi Classical Arabic the correlation between dialect terms and Classical Arabic, and the influence of foreign expressions on the Najdi dialect. Ultimately, the suggested translation method is suitable exclusively for rendering the Najdi Classical Arabic found in fictional literature.

## Author Contributions

This paper has been written by S.M.I. and G.N.J.A. S.M.I. has written introduction, review of literature and discussion and formal analysis. G.N.J.A. has written the methodology, the questions of research, review of literature. Both authors contributed equally in reviewing and editing

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## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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