The Translatability of the Colloquial Arabic Dialogue into English: A Case Study of three Arabic novels translated by Marilyn Booth: *The Open Door*, *Celestial Bodies*, and *As Though She were Sleeping*

by

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ABSTRACT

This study aims at investigating the strategies employed in translating Colloquial Arabic (CA) dialogues and dialects within three contemporary Arabic novels into English. The study selects three novels: one each from Egypt, Lebanon, and Oman. A unifying factor among these novels is their use of CA dialogue. Furthermore, all three novels were translated by the same translator: the American translator and academic Marilyn Booth. The rationale behind the selection of these three novels in relation to the fieldwork methodology is justified by the initial assumption that the three novels reflect three main geographical and dialectal regions: the Levant, Egypt and the Gulf states.

The research adopts a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative elements to maximize the comprehensiveness of the findings. This entails a case study analysis of the three novels alongside a questionnaire distributed to 50 professional literary translators working between Arabic and English. The literary translators highlighted in this study are practitioners specializing in translation between Arabic and English. These translators possess substantial expertise and a record of published works in the field of literary translation, particularly focusing on contemporary Arabic novels and contemporary English-language novels, with specific attention to the handling of dialectal variations. The questionnaire serves the purpose of gathering the participants' insights and opinions on the translatability of CA dialogues and dialects into English.

This study establishes its originality by offering a rare platform for literary translators between Arabic and English to voice their perspectives on translating CA dialogues and dialects in contemporary Arabic novels. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, this represents one of the few instances where such literary translators have been directly consulted within academic research. The theoretical framework underpinning this research draws upon Skopos Theory and Christiane Nord's translation-oriented Model of Text Functions, providing a foundation for the analysis.

The research findings unveil that translating CA dialogues and dialects into formal English often obscures many character details within the source text. Consequently, the cultural, social, and educational standing of characters in the target text loses some nuance compared to the source text. The research holds the potential to benefit a diverse range of stakeholders,

including literary translators, scholars of translation studies, and readers of translated contemporary Arabic literature in English. Furthermore, it paves the way for parallel studies exploring the translatability of other dialects in other languages.

This research opens doors to a fruitful exchange of knowledge between translation studies and other disciplines, including dialectology, discourse analysis, and social media communication. By highlighting the significance of context and culture in shaping the translator's perspective, the research emphasizes the importance of accurately conveying these elements in the final translated text, particularly when dealing with sections rich in CA dialogue and dialects employed by contemporary Arab novelists in the source text.

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TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS

BCLT	British Centre for Literary Translation
CA	Colloquial Arabic
DTS	Descriptive Translation Studies
LID	Literary Informal Dialogue
LDD	Literary Dialectal Dialogue
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MSA	Modern Standard Arabic
P	Participant
PIS	Participant Information Sheet
RQ	Research Question(s)
SL	Source Language
ST	Source Text
TL	Target Language
TT	Target Text
UCLan	University of Central Lancashire

TRANSLITERATION

ALA-LC Romanization System for Arabic[1]

Vowels and Diphthongs

ى ◌ِ	ī
وْ ◌َ	aw
يْ ◌َ	ay
ا ◌َ	ā
ى ◌َ	á
و ◌ُ	ū
◌َ	a
◌ُ	u
◌ِ	i

Letter	Romanization
ا	omit
ء	’
ب	b
ت	t
ث	th
ج	j
ح	ḥ
خ	kh
د	d
ذ	dh
ر	r
ز	z
س	s
ش	sh
ص	ṣ
ض	ḍ
ط	ṭ
ظ	ẓ
ع	ʿ (ayn)
غ	gh
ف	f
ق	q
ك	k
ل	l
م	m
ن	n
ه	h
و	w
ي	y

[1] ALA-LC stands for American Library Association-Library of Congress. This service can be used online by following this link: https://romanize-arabic.camel-lab.com/

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rationale for the study

Translating Arabic dialects presents challenges to translators due to the insufficiency of data resources on this topic (Zbib *et al.*, 2012). These challenges are further exacerbated by culturally bound expressions and idioms, which may lack equivalents in other languages (Homeidi, 2004; Oualif, 2017). Some scholars argue that the political and linguistic obstacles to translating Arabic literature contribute to the complexity of the task (Creswell, 2016). Despite these difficulties, the use of small amounts of dialectal data has been shown to significantly improve translation quality (Zbib *et al.*, 2012).

The present study takes as its point of departure the recognition of Colloquial Arabic (CA) dialogues as a literary device in three contemporary Arabic novels, each employing dialogue written in distinct regional dialects of Arabic. There are many Arab novelists who have used Arabic dialects in their novels. However, this study focuses on the translation of those sections of dialectal dialogues used in the three novels where the narration language is formal Arabic (*al-Fuṣḥá* or Modern Standard Arabic (MSA)). Having said that, the focus of this study lies outside the scope of the hot debate in the Arab world on the use of dialects or informal Arabic in contemporary Arabic literature. Colloquial Arabic (with its many variations) is spoken everywhere in the Arabic-speaking countries and beyond. Given its realistic presence in the lives of millions of Arabs, this linguistic variation has been used by many Arab novelists as a written dialogue for what is supposed to be a spoken form of language in real life.

The focus will be on the translatability of CA dialogues in three novels written by three different Arab novelists. The common factor between these three novels is that they use both MSA (al-Fuṣḥá) as the narration language and CA as the language of the dialogues exchanged between the characters. Another common factor between these three novels is that they were translated by a literary translator who is non-native speaker of Arabic. The rationale for selecting three novels translated by the same translator is threefold: (1) to trace the evolution of the translator's stylistic and strategic choices over time; (2) to ensure a consistent standard of translation quality, as focusing on a single translator minimizes the interference of varying stylistic approaches; and (3) because Marilyn Booth is recognized for her selective engagement with

literary Arabic works, which represent diverse cultural regions within the Arab world. This makes the task of translating two variations into English even a more daunting task.

The three novels selected for this study were chosen because they represent three major dialectal regions of the Arab world: the Levant (comprising Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, and Palestine), the Gulf states (including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the Emirates, Oman, Qatar, and Bahrain), and Egypt, the most populous Arabic-speaking country. Egyptian Arabic holds a significant position in the broader Arab world, as it is widely recognized and understood by speakers of other Arabic dialects due to the pervasive influence of Egyptian cinema and television dramas.

This study does not aim to explore Booth's characterization of dialect use as 'contentious,' but her assertion that dialect is 'impossible to translate' warrants critical examination of the validity of such a claim. Nonetheless, Booth often adopts a pragmatic tone when outlining her strategies for translating Arabic dialects in contemporary Arabic novels into English. One strategy she proposes involves 'trying to find an informal voice' (Booth, 2017), a concept relevant to the present research, which investigates the feasibility of translating dialect into another dialect—essentially, into another 'informal voice,' borrowing Booth's terminology. However, caution is necessary before advocating for the translation of CA dialects into English colloquial dialects. Reaching such a conclusion requires careful consideration, particularly given that translating dialects into formal English is not always an appropriate or effective choice, as this study will argue.

Therefore, the rationale for this study is based on the observation that there are controversial opinions among scholars of translation studies on the translatability of dialects in general. For example, some studies maintain that the translatability of dialects in contemporary novels is a complex issue, influenced by factors such as gender, global markets, and the portrayal of marginality. Robinson (2022) explores the use of dialect in the works of the Italian novelist Elena Ferrante (1943 -). Robinson (2022) highlights the absence of Neapolitan dialect in Ferrante's novels as a refusal to engage with dialectal delinquency. Additionally, Segnini (2021) discusses the use of dialect to construct marginality in transmedia storytelling and attempts to answer the question: Does the relation between fiction and the socio-linguistic reality represented change in the translation process? Another study by Cooper (1994) argues that the representation of dialect in Thomas Hardy's novels is a complex intersection of contemporary rules of dialect definition. It is found that literary translators adopt different

strategies to deal with colloquial dialogues and dialects when translating contemporary literature. However, there seems to be a gap in studying such strategies used by literary translators when facing CA dialogues and dialects in contemporary Arabic novels. One of the convenient methods to investigate the translatability of CA dialogues in contemporary Arabic novels is to conduct a case study on selected novels translated into English. In addition, the opinions of literary translators between Arabic and English were sought in the form of a questionnaire.

Recent studies have increasingly focused on the role of CA in contemporary Arabic literature, underscoring its rising prominence and cultural significance. Abdel-Daem (2022) traced the evolution of Egyptian-Arabic slang in novels over the past century, identifying a marked shift towards the integration of everyday speech in prose since the early 20th century. I can argue here that many Arab novelists (including the three novelists whose works are selected for this study) used CA only for the dialogue between characters. Furthermore, Alhashmi (2023) examined the phenomenon of diglossia in Arabic science fiction, illustrating how authors strategically blend standard and colloquial Arabic to reflect sociopolitical turbulence and engage with contemporary issues. These studies indicate an emerging trend toward the normalization and broader literary acceptance of CA, challenging conventional perceptions of literary language while mirroring the dynamic realities of Arab societies.

In this study, the term 'translation strategies' is employed to denote the techniques applied in addressing the translation of CA dialogues and dialects in contemporary Arabic novels into English. These strategies are derived from the results of the questionnaire which was conducted in the framework of this study. They are proposed and shared by the 50 literary translators who took part in the questionnaire. Pym (2004) speaks of the performative effect that highly specific variants can have. They manifest certain first-person values (such as the identity and social location of the speaker) and solicit second-person responses (identity or distance) (Pym, 2004). Pym's 'variants' are here the colloquial and dialectal dialogues used by the three novelists as a dialogue tool in the source text. In addition to the translation strategies of CA which were elicited from participants, seven themes were created based on the research questions to deeply discuss the effects of these themes on the translatability of CA dialogues and dialects in contemporary Arabic novels into English.

Another rationale for this study is the growing interest in using Arabic dialects in social media whether in a written or spoken form (Diab, 2016 and Shamsi and Abdallah, 2021). Some recent

studies have focused on the utilization of Arabic dialects on social media, emphasizing their identification and classification. To achieve this, researchers have developed comprehensive datasets derived from various social media platforms, including Twitter and Facebook, to ensure a diverse representation of Arabic dialects. The process of dialect identification, however, presents considerable challenges, primarily due to the lack of standardized orthographic systems and the substantial regional variation inherent to these dialects (Hejazi & Khamees, 2022). While extensive studies have been conducted on widely spoken dialects such as Saudi, Egyptian, and Gulf Arabic, many other varieties remain significantly underrepresented in the literature (Hejazi & Khamees, 2022).

In addition to that, I am a literary translator and have been dealing with many translations of Arabic dialects on YouTube on different topics (https://www.youtube.com/@cappuccinotalkshow) and (https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLw7AlJ_kkc7AvfCe-72qctbLpbaMtmAM3). It is observed that there is a scarcity of resources addressing the translation of Arabic dialects, as some literary translators tend to translate any Arabic dialect into formal English as a matter of course. The significance of Arabic dialects in shaping emerging literary and media genres should not be underestimated. Literature serves as a mirror of real life, and dialects, along with colloquial expressions, form an integral part of daily existence. Consequently, they represent essential elements of the cultural identity of any nation.

The underlying motivation for this study stems from the ongoing debate among literary translators regarding the translation of Arabic dialects into English. Scholars have offered diverse perspectives on this issue, highlighting both challenges and strategies in preserving the linguistic and cultural nuances of the source text.

Aubed (2022) emphasizes the inherent loss of dialectal elements in English-Arabic translation. According to his analysis, this loss can significantly impact the text's communicative, stratificational, cultural, and semiotic dimensions, thereby diminishing its overall value. Aubed's study sheds light on the intricate interplay between linguistic variation and meaning in translation, calling attention to the delicate balance required to convey the depth and richness of dialectal expression.

Al Mutairi (2022) examines the specific challenges posed by translating Arabic dialectal dialogues from contemporary Arabic novels into English. Her research highlights the prevalence of a compensation approach among translators, whereby the conversational tone of

the original dialogue is retained, but the dialectal variation is rendered as informal literary dialogue in English. This strategy underscores the complexity of reconciling the informal register of Arabic dialects with the expectations and conventions of English literary norms.

Mousa and Alhwamdeh (2020) adopt a broader perspective, advocating for the preservation of the overall effect, cultural ambiance, and pragmatic intent of the source text. Their study underscores the importance of maintaining the immersive and authentic qualities of the original work, ensuring that the translated text resonates with the same depth and cultural significance as its source. Therefore, the lack of explicit strategies for translating CA dialogues and dialects in contemporary Arabic novels motivated this research into evaluating current practices by literary translators between Arabic and English. It is hoped that the results should inform future research on setting strategies and guidelines for translating CA expressions and dialects not only to English but also to other languages.

The questionnaire administered as part of this study constitutes the core of the research project. It is important to highlight that the participants in this survey are literary translators with substantial experience in translating literary works between Arabic and English. In addition to the insights provided by the 50 participants, I have drawn extensively on my own professional experience as a literary translator. Having embarked on my career at the end of 2017, I have since translated more than 20 novels and autobiographies from English into Arabic. Among these are *Dracula* (2020) by Irish author Bram Stoker (1847-1912), *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* (2020) by British novelist Christy Lefteri (1980-), *The Devil All The Time* (2019) and *The Heavenly Table* (2020) by American novelist Donald Ray Pollock (1954-), *Look Homeward, Angel* (2024) by American author Thomas Wolfe (1900–1938), *Hope Not Fear: Finding My Way from Refugee to Filmmaker to NHS Hospital Cleaner and Activist* (2024) by British-Syrian writer and filmmaker Hassan Akkad (1990-), *Station Eleven* (2022) by Canadian novelist Emily St. John Mandel (1979-), *How to Find Love in a Bookshop* (2019) by British author Veronica Henry (1963-), *The Aspern Papers* (2021) by American-British writer Henry James (1843-1916), and *Butterfly Burning* (2021) by Zimbabwean author Yvonne Vera (1964-2005).

Additionally, I have translated several works from English into Arabic that were originally written in other languages. These include *Mario and the Magician* (2018) by German writer Thomas Mann (1875-1955), *Recipes for Sad Women* (2018) by Colombian author Héctor Abad Faciolince (1958-), *Kalocain* (2021) by Swedish novelist and poet Karin Boye (1900-1941), and *The Pianist* (2021) by Polish musician Władysław Szpilman (1911-2000). One of my early

translation projects was *The Neighbourhood* (2018) by Portuguese writer Gonçalo M. Tavares (1970-). I have since translated six books from Tavares' series, including *Mr. Henry*, *Mr. Juarroz*, *Mr. Valery*, *Mr. Walser*, *Mr. Kraus*, and *Mr. Calvino*.

1.2 Aims of the study

This study aims to explore the translatability, or possible untranslatability, of Colloquial Arabic (CA) dialogues in their English translations within three contemporary Arabic novels. The issue of translatability is further examined through a questionnaire, wherein participants are asked to assess the translation of selected CA dialogues extracted from the three novels chosen for this research. This is done in the framework of a case study of three Arabic novels from three different dialectal regions in the Arab world. These three novels were translated into English by the American translator and academic Marilyn Booth. These three novels are *The Open Door* (2015) by the Egyptian novelist Latifa Al-Zayyat, *As Though She Were Sleeping* (2007) by the Lebanese novelist Elias Khoury and *Celestial Bodies (2019)* by the Omani novelist Jokha Al-Harthi. The original title of Al-Harthi's novel is *Sayyidat al-qamar* but it is rendered by Booth as *Celestial Bodies*.

The Open Door by the Egyptian novelist Latifa Al-Zayyat (1923-1996)

Originally published in 1960, this novel marks a pivotal milestone in the evolution of realistic fiction authored by Egyptian women writers. Latifa Al-Zayyat is widely acknowledged as a prominent figure within the realist movement in Egyptian literature during the 1950s. The narrative captures the period between 1946 and 1956, illustrating the Egyptian populace's resistance to British colonialism, culminating in the Battle of Port Said. In addition to its engagement with political themes, the novel addresses pressing social concerns of the time, particularly emphasizing the necessity of women's participation alongside men in the defense of Egypt. It advocates for the emancipation of women from the constraints imposed by entrenched societal customs and traditions.

Al-Zayyat adeptly intertwines political, social, and cultural dimensions, emphasizing the crucial role of intellectuals in elevating national consciousness. She posits that the central themes of the novel extend beyond the political sphere to encompass broader societal issues impacting Egypt during this tumultuous period. Through the narrative arc of the protagonist, Layla, the novel culminates in the Port Said demonstration, reinforcing the themes of solidarity and collective action within Egyptian society—uniting men and women, intellectuals and workers, as well as the elderly and the youth in their shared struggle for national liberation. In

recognition of its literary significance, *The Open Door* was awarded the inaugural Najīb Maḥfūẓ Medal for Literature in 1996.

As Though She Were Sleeping by the Lebanese novelist Elias Khoury (1948-2024)

Published in 2007, this novel commences its narrative in 1946 and centers on the life of Milia Shaheen, a young Lebanese Christian woman who courageously defies the authority of her devout family by marrying a Palestinian man from Jaffa in the mid-1940s. Following their marriage, Milia relocates with him to Nazareth, just prior to the onset of the Palestinian Nakba. The novel skillfully navigates multiple layers of dream and reality as experienced by Milia and her husband. While Milia is deeply engrossed in her dreams, her husband recites poetry, and together they inhabit Nazareth—a city imbued with religious significance as the site of Christ's miracles—where the boundaries between reality and prophecy become increasingly indistinct.

Through its intricate narrative structure, the novel elucidates the fundamental 'truth' that human existence unfolds within two interconnected realms: the material world of reality and the ethereal world of imagination. It posits that achieving genuine balance in life necessitates active engagement with both dimensions. Although the timeline of the novel primarily focuses on the first—and ultimately final—year of Milia's marriage to Mansour, it expands to encompass the broader historical context of the region, particularly concerning the history of Christian families. The narrative draws upon Christian religious heritage, culminating in Nazareth, where the couple eventually establishes their home. In this city, Milia becomes pregnant with a child she will never meet, tragically succumbing during prolonged and arduous labor. The newborn, introduced in the novel's final scene, symbolizes the inception of a new life destined to seek its narrative—shaped by the identity and history intertwined with Milia's existence and her family's legacy.

Celestial Bodies by the Omani novelist Jokha Al-Harthi (1978 -)

Set in the village of al-Awafi in Oman, this novel portrays the lives of three sisters: Mayya, who embarks on marriage following a period of heartbreak; Asma, who marries out of a sense of duty; and Khawla, who steadfastly rejects all suitors while awaiting a reunion with her beloved, who has emigrated to Canada. The narrative unfolds the experiences of these three women and their families, capturing their losses and loves against the backdrop of a rapidly transforming Oman—a country transitioning from a traditional, slave-owning society to its multifaceted contemporary form. Through the perspectives of the sisters, readers gain insight into the societal spectrum, encompassing the most impoverished local slave families alongside

those benefiting from newfound wealth. The novel was awarded the 2019 Man Booker International Prize and previously won the Best Omani Novel Award in 2010.

Through the interwoven destinies of the characters, which explore themes of love and deprivation, the narrative provides profound insights into the diverse classes of Omani society—from its most impoverished individuals to the newly affluent emerging in Muscat. The story begins in a confined space and gradually expands into a broader, more inclusive world. Moreover, the author addresses the issue of slavery in Oman, presenting it as a peripheral yet significant dimension of the narrative.

This study aims to examine the varied strategies adopted by literary translators when addressing the translation of CA dialogues and dialects in three contemporary Arabic novels into English. The research contends that translation into formal English often obscures key cultural, social, and educational attributes that characterize the source text's characters. Through a case study of three translated Arabic novels, coupled with analysis of participants' responses from a questionnaire, the study concludes that formal English is not always the most effective strategy for translating Arabic dialects in literary works. By analysing selected excerpts from the novels and their English translations, this research explores the strategies used by Marilyn Booth in translating CA dialogues. These novels were chosen due to their bilingual structure: Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) for narration and CA for dialogue. The dialogue in each novel exemplifies a distinct regional dialect within the Arab world, with *The Open Door* featuring Egyptian Arabic, *As Though She Were Sleeping* employing Lebanese Arabic, and *Celestial Bodies* presenting Omani Arabic.

While this study does not claim to serve as a formal evaluation of Booth's translations, it introduces what could be described as a 'literary translation evaluation scale'. This scale is employed to examine the translation of colloquial Arabic dialogues in the three novels by analyzing six selected excerpts. These excerpts, along with the evaluation scale, were shared via a questionnaire with 50 literary translators working between Arabic and English. The aim was to gather their perspectives on the translatability of colloquial Arabic dialects in the three novels and, more broadly, into English. Research on literary translation evaluation reveals various approaches and challenges. Wang & Wang (2020) compared error analysis and scale-based methods, finding both reliable for English-Chinese translations, with scale-based showing slightly more consistency. However, for Chinese-English translations, error-based methods demonstrated greater rater consistency. El-Haddad (1999) explored the preservation

of style and culture in Arabic translations of Hemingway's work, highlighting the debate between subjective and objective evaluation approaches.

As a literary translator, one of my goals in this study is to address the broader challenge of translating dialects, extending beyond just colloquial dialogue in novels to find effective strategies for dialect translation. It is also essential within translation studies to clarify the terminology associated with dialect translation, especially in the context of contemporary Arabic literature. This clarification gains particular importance given that the questionnaire results reveal that many literary translators misunderstand terms such as dialect, colloquialism, slang, diglossia, and register, among others.

In essence, this study aims to investigate the diverse strategies employed by literary translators when rendering the dialect of characters, such as that of an Egyptian farmer in a contemporary Arabic novel, into English. A core inquiry is whether the target text reader perceives the translated dialect as authentically as the source text reader does in the original. Accordingly, the research questions are formulated around this fundamental consideration.

One of the key objectives of literary translation, particularly when dealing with dialectal sections in contemporary Arabic novels, is to convey to the target text reader that the dialogue in the source text was originally written in a colloquial dialect rather than in formal Arabic. This approach not only preserves the linguistic diversity and cultural richness of the original text but also highlights the nuanced interplay between formal and colloquial language in contemporary Arabic literature.

In the context of translating CA, the challenge lies in striking a balance between fidelity to the source text and ensuring accessibility for the target audience. CA often carries cultural, regional, and social connotations that may not have direct equivalents in the target language. Thus, the translator must adopt creative strategies to maintain the authenticity of the dialogue while making its essence comprehensible to readers unfamiliar with the linguistic and cultural intricacies of Arabic dialects.

This research area opens avenues for exploring the complexities of translatability, such as the potential loss of meaning, tone, or regional identity when rendering CA into other languages. It also raises critical questions about the role of the translator as a mediator of culture, the preservation of linguistic diversity in global literature, and the extent to which dialectal Arabic enriches the narrative voice and character development in contemporary Arabic novels. By

addressing these issues, the study seeks to contribute to the broader discourse on literary translation and the representation of linguistic variation across languages.

Biographies of the three novelists

Latifa Al-Zayyat (1923 – 1996): She is an Egyptian novelist and academic. She was a professor of English literature at Ain Shams University, Egypt. She struggled all her life for noble causes like national integrity, the welfare of the poor, human rights, and freedom of speech. *The Open Door* (al-Bāb al-Maftuḥ) is one of her most important novels and was awarded the Najīb Maḥfūẓ Medal for Literature in 1996.

al-Bāb al-Maftuḥ (1960/2003)/ *The Open Door* (2004): al-Bāb al-Maftuḥ is a novel by Latifa al-Zayyat that was published in 1960. The novel is one of the works that supports and continues the realist movement in novels in the 1950s. The story revolves around young Layla and her brother, who are involved in university activism and call for popular resistance. al-Bāb al-Maftuḥ is set in Egypt between 1946 and 1956. It discusses the resistance of the Egyptian people to English colonialism, the importance of national unity and the call for independence. The novel covers an important period in the history of modern Egypt and draws attention to political issues as well as to other social issues. One of the social issues that the novel addresses is the importance of the participation of women in activism. To reflect the power of youth and to highlight the social issues at that time, Al-Zayyat chose to write the dialogue in the Cairo dialect. The work was translated into English by Marilyn Booth with the title *The Open Door*.

Elias Khoury (1948-2024): He is a Lebanese novelist, editor and journalist. He was born in Beirut, into a Christian middle-class family, he was the son of Adèle Abdelnour and Iskandar Khoury, who worked for Mobil Oil. He came of age in the 1960s and early 70s, when the city had become a flourishing intellectual and artistic regional capital. However, this was against a backdrop of sectarianism and profound economic inequality, deeply influenced by regional tensions. While studying history at the Lebanese University in Beirut, in 1967 Khoury travelled to Jordan to work in a Palestinian refugee camp, then joined the Palestinian Liberation Organisation.

His best-known work, *Gate of the Sun* (1998), translated into English by Humphrey Davies, is both an epic love story between a husband and wife, and one of the first novels to describe the 1948 Palestinian Nakba, giving faces, names and histories to the voiceless.

Jokha Al-Harthi (1978 -): She is an Omani writer and academic. She was born in 1978 and educated in Oman and the UK. She obtained her PhD in classical Arabic literature from Edinburgh University and works as professor in the Arabic department at Sultan Qaboos University, Muscat. She is the author of many books, including two collections of short stories, two children's books, and three novels. Her 2016 novel *Narinjah* won the Sultan Qaboos Award for culture, art and literature. Her first novel, *Celestial Bodies*, translated into English by Marilyn Booth received the 2019 Man Booker International Prize.

1.3 Research questions

This study aims to address the following Research Questions (RQs):

RQ1. Where is the line between what can and cannot be accurately translated when converting Colloquial Arabic dialogues in contemporary Arabic novels into English?

RQ2. What changes occur when colloquial language in Arabic is translated into a more formal style in English?

RQ3. Does translating regional or colloquial Arabic into formal English change how the original characters in contemporary Arabic novels are understood by readers?

RQ4. What practical strategies can be recommended to translators working on literature when translating Colloquial Arabic into English?

1.4 Background

On May 20th, 2019, *Sayyidat Al-Qamar*[2] by the Omani novelist and academic Jokha Al-Harthi won the Man Booker International Prize. According to the official website of the prize, it is awarded annually for 'the finest single work of fiction from around the world which has been translated into English and published in the UK and Ireland'. The prize celebrates the vital work of translators, with the prize money divided equally between the author and translator. The novel was translated into *Celestial Bodies* by Marilyn Booth. The judges heralded the book as 'a richly imagined, engaging and poetic insight into a society in transition and into lives previously obscured'. The novel was the first book by a female Omani author to be translated into English. Moreover, *Celestial Bodies* marks the arrival of a major international writer. The novel was awarded the best Omani novel award in 2010.

[2] The literal translation of Jokha Al-Harthi's title into English would be *Ladies of the Moon*. However, Marilyn Booth changed the title in the English translation to become *Celestial Bodies*.

Marilyn Booth was born in 1955. She holds the Khalid bin Abdallah Al-Saud Chair for the Study of the Contemporary Arab World, Oriental Institute and Magdalen College, Oxford. She is a prominent American translator, scholar, and academic specializing in Arabic literature and gender studies. She is highly regarded for her contributions to the field of Arabic-to-English literary translation and her research on Middle Eastern literature and cultural studies. In addition to academic publications, she has translated many works of fiction from Arabic, including:

Safe Corridor, by Jan Dost (*Mimarr amin,* al-Qayrawan and Tunis, 2019). London: DarArab, forthcoming.

Honey Hunger, by Zahran Alqasmi (*Jaw' al-'asal*, Ottawa, 2017). Cairo: Hoopoe, forthcoming 2025.

Sa'iba; or *Verity,* by Alice al-Boustany (*Sa'iba,* Beirut, 1891). Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, forthcoming.

Silken Gazelles, by Jokha Alharthi (*Harir al-ghazala,* Beirut, 2021). New York: Catapult, 2024.

Bitter Orange Tree, by Jokha Alharthi (*Narinjah*, Beirut, 2016). New York: Catapult; London: Simon and Schuster, 2022. As *Narinjah: The Bitter Orange Tree,* Toronto: House of Anansi/Anansi International, 2022.

Voices of the Lost [Night Post], by Hoda Barakat (*Barid al-layl,* Beirut, 2018). London: Oneworld, 2021.

Celestial Bodies, by Jokha Alharthi. (*Sayyidat al-qamar,* Beirut, 2012). Dingwall, Ross-shire: Sandstone Press, 2018; New York: Catapult, 2019; New Delhi: Simon and Schuster India, 2019; Sydney and Auckland: Allen and Unwin, 2019; Toronto: Anansi, 2019; Whole story Audiobooks, 2019; large-print edn, Rearsby: W.F Howes Clipper, 2019.

No Road to Paradise, by Hassan Daoud (*La tariq ila al-janna,* Beirut, 2013). Winner of the Najīb Maḥfūẓ Prize, 2015. Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2016.

The Penguin's Song, by Hassan Daoud (*Ghina' al-batrik,* Beirut, 1998). San Francisco: City Lights, 2014.

As Though She Were Sleeping, by Elias Khoury (*Kannaha Naema,* Beirut, 2007). Brooklyn, NY: Archipelago Books, 2012.

The Loved Ones, by Alia Mamdouh (*Al-Mahbubat,* London and Beirut, 2003), Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2006; New York: The Feminist Press, 2007; London: Arabia Books, 2008. Winner of the Najīb Maḥfūẓ Prize.

Thieves in Retirement, by Hamdi Abu Golayyel (Lusus mutaqa'idun, Cairo, 2003). Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2006; Cairo, Egypt: American University Press, 2007. Runner-up, Saif al-Ghobashi Banipal International Arabic Translation Award (U.K.) 2007.

Disciples of Passion, by Hoda Barakat (Ahl al-hawa, Beirut, 1993). Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2005. Cairo, Egypt: American University Press, 2006.

Leaves of Narcissus, by Somaya Ramadan (Awraq al-narjis, Cairo, 2001). Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2002. Winner of the Najīb Maḥfūẓ Prize.

Children of the Waters: Short Stories by Ibtihal Salim. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002.

The Tiller of Waters, by Hoda Barakat (Harith al-miyah, Beirut, 1998). Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2001, 2004. Winner of the Najīb Maḥfūẓ Prize.

The Open Door, by Latifa Al-Zayyat (al-Bab al-maftuh, Cairo, 1960). Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2000. Winner of the Najīb Maḥfūẓ Prize. Republished, Cairo and London: Hoopoe Books, 2017.

Points of the Compass: Stories by Sahar Tawfiq. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1995. Winner of the University of Arkansas Press Arabic Translation Prize.

My Grandmother's Cactus: Stories by Egyptian Women. London: Quartet Books, 1991; Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993, as *Stories by Egyptian Women.*

The Circling Song, by Nawal al-Sa'dawi *(Ughniyat al-atfal al-da'iriyya,* Cairo, n.d.). London: Zed Books, 1989.

Memoirs from the Women' Prison, by Nawal al-Sa'dawi (*Mudhakkirati fi sijn al-nisa'*, Cairo, 1984.) London: The Women's Press, 1986; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994; London: Zed Books, 2020.

Following are some of her ongoing research projects:

- Arabic conduct literature, gender polemics, translation, and education, 1860s-1920s
- Feminism and backlash in Cairo and Beirut, 1894-1914

- Translation, adaptation and circulation of texts in the eastern Mediterranean and beyond, 18th-early 20th centuries
- Vernacular poetry and satire in the 10th-century Egyptian press.

Marilyn Booth's scholarship frequently interrogates the representation of women in Arabic literature, critically analysing their roles within narrative frameworks. Her work delves into feminist themes and the complexities inherent in translating gendered language and cultural subtleties. Booth has contributed extensively to the theoretical and practical dimensions of translation studies, with a particular focus on the cultural politics underpinning the translation of Arabic literature into English. She is deeply invested in examining how translation functions as a medium for cultural exchange, shaping the global reception and interpretation of Arabic literary works.

Her academic contributions engage with critical discourses on identity, colonial legacies, and modernity in Arabic literary traditions. A foundational figure in the field of Arabic literary translation and criticism, Booth's endeavours have not only elevated the voices of Arab authors on the international stage but also enriched the global appreciation and understanding of Arabic literature and culture.

I read Al-Harthi's novel in Arabic, and it fascinated me as a reader. As a literary translator, it provoked my curiosity to wonder how the colloquial Omani dialogue was translated into English. The translation of dialects from Arabic to other languages has always been a hot topic among the community of translators of Arabic on social media platforms on different levels. As the title of my MA in translation studies was about the problems resulting from translating a dialect into formal language, I have already known that Booth had translated another novel from Arabic into English; that is *Al-Bab Al-Maftuh* (*The Open Door*) by the Egyptian novelist Latifa Al-Zayyat.

When I submitted my PhD proposal to the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan), Preston, the UK, I intended to conduct a case study on the translation problems and strategies in these two novels. But at the start of my actual study, my supervisor suggested to add one more novel to my study. Then I found another novel translated by the same translator from Arabic into English. The third novel is *Kannaha Naema* (translated by Booth as *As If She Were Sleeping*) by the Lebanese novelist Elias Khoury. The common factor between the three novels is that they all use two forms of Arabic: CA and MSA. The three novelists use MSA as the medium for writing their novels. However, the dialogues between characters in the three novels are

written in three different Arabic dialects. The characters in Latifa Al-Zayyat's novel speak Egyptian Arabic; the characters in Elias Khoury's novel speak Lebanese Arabic and the characters in Jokha Al-Harthi's novel speak Omani Arabic.

This study focuses on the strategies and techniques used by a literary translator who does not speak Arabic as their first language (a 'non-native speaker') to translate three distinct Arabic dialects. It explores the challenge of conveying informal, everyday language (known as 'low register') from Arabic into English while retaining the dialect's nuances. Specifically, the study investigates how CA dialogues can be translated into appropriate forms of English, such as regional dialects, formal English, or a 'hybrid' style. This hybrid style would aim to reflect the original text's informal tone in a way that English-speaking readers can understand and appreciate as a translation of spoken Arabic.

The presence of various CA dialogues and dialects in the three novels selected for this study resonates with Eagleton when he says: 'the idea that there is a single 'normal' language, a common currency shared equally by all members of society, is an illusion. Any actual language consists of a highly complex range of discourses, differentiated according to class, region gender, status and so on which can by no means be neatly unified into a single homogenous linguistic community' (2008: 4). I may say that this is quite true in the case of Arabic dialects. The presence of Arabic dialects as a dialogue tool in the novels reflects Eagleton's notion in many aspects. Arabic dialects reflect regional, social, and cultural differences between the speakers of these dialects. This is inevitably reflected in contemporary Arabic novels which depict real life as it is: with its customs, habits, norms and dialects.

Acknowledging the presence and significance of CA dialogues and dialects in the three contemporary Arabic novels selected for this study, it can be noted that the novel as a genre is inherently intended to be experienced by readers in written form. Simultaneously, it must be recognized that dialogues between characters are primarily designed to emulate spoken language. When such dialogues are translated from a dialectal, colloquial register (low register) into formal English (high register), the resulting translation inevitably distorts the authenticity of the portrayed reality.

The act of translating from a low register into a high register necessitates re-evaluation within the framework of Arabic diglossia and requires alignment with a translation theory or reconsideration of translation methodologies. Translators must critically assess whether the translated text successfully conveys the intended meaning in the target language. Indeed,

translations between fundamentally divergent linguistic registers often result in alterations to the original characterizations, leading to the addition or omission of certain character traits. It can be contended that such shifts compromise the integrity of the characters, as their essence may be diminished or altered when dialogues are translated from a colloquial dialect into a formal linguistic framework.

1.5 Statement of originality

The originality of this research lies in its approach to understanding the dilemma of translating CA dialogues and dialects in three contemporary Arabic novels into English and its potential to generate new knowledge in this area. This study offers an original contribution to the field of translation studies when it observes the fact that, based on the researcher's knowledge, no studies of Arabic dialects have yet involved the participation of literary translators as a primary source of information. There are of course some studies that approached the issue of translating Arabic dialects into English. Translating Arabic dialects into English presents a really multifaceted challenge, as referred to by Ismail (2017), Mubarak (2017), and Al-rubai'i and Al-ani (2004). These intricacies encompass the profound comprehension of the dialect's cultural and historical milieu, alongside its rapid evolution and potential semantic distortions (Ismail, 2017). Idiomatic expressions further complicate the process, necessitating a thorough examination of cultural, sociolinguistic, and stylistic nuances (Mubarak, 2017). When translating dialectal dramatic dialogue, a delicate equilibrium must be struck between preserving authenticity and achieving literary merit (Al-rubai'I and Al-ani, 2004). In essence, these studies illuminate the inherent complexities of rendering Arabic dialects into English. They also highlight the necessity for a nuanced approach that integrates cultural, linguistic, and contextual considerations. Another study by Baawaidhan (2016) discusses the use of foreignization and domestication strategies in translating Arabic dialectal expressions into English. There are also some studies which concentred on the translation of one dialect into English. For example, Alfadly and AldeibaniFull (2013) identify specific linguistic problems faced by Yemeni English majors in translation. These studies underscore the complexity of translating Arabic dialects into English and the need for a nuanced approach that does not only consider linguistic and cultural factors but also other factors such as the cultural, social, and educational standing of the characters in the source text when compared with the target text.

Another aspect of originality in this study lies in the selection of three CA dialogues representing distinct Arabic dialects—Egyptian, Lebanese, and Omani—each embodying unique linguistic and cultural characteristics associated with their respective regions: Egypt,

the Levant, and the Gulf. The inclusion of multiple dialects within this case study provides an expanded framework for examining the complexities of translatability and potential untranslatability of Arabic dialects into English. While prior research has broadly explored these dialects, the findings of this study are distinguished by the nuanced insights contributed by literary translators through the administered questionnaire.

A third aspect of originality of this study is that it develops a literary translation evaluation scale. Though limited to evaluating the translation of the CA dialogues in the three novels, the evaluation scale, which is based on the previous works of Anthony Pym (Pym, 2015) (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GKbMwltm_f0) and Jeremey Munday (Munday *et al*., 2022 and Farias de Souza, 2015), is an attempt to pave the way for more evaluation scales in literary translation and translation studies in general. The literary translation evaluation scale is entirely new, yet it draws upon foundational insights from the work of Pym and Munday.

A fourth aspect of originality in this study is the application of a questionnaire to directly engage literary translators, a method particularly valuable in the field of translation studies. Unlike traditional interviews, which may limit the number of participants due to logistical constraints, a questionnaire allows for the collection of diverse perspectives from a larger pool of literary translators. This broad inclusivity is essential in translation studies, where diverse insights help reveal trends, preferences, and challenges across different linguistic and cultural contexts. Moreover, questionnaires offer a structured yet flexible approach, enabling translators to thoughtfully reflect on specific issues without the pressures of a live interview setting. In this study, the questionnaire has the added advantage of being globally accessible; it was distributed through various digital platforms, allowing participants from a wide geographical range to contribute their views on translation practices involving colloquial Arabic. This global reach enhances the robustness of the findings, ensuring they reflect a wide spectrum of professional backgrounds and cultural insights, ultimately offering a richer understanding of translation strategies in addressing dialectal nuances in literary texts.

A final aspect of originality in this study lies in its methodological approach, which involves analysing three novels originally composed in two linguistic variations: Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and Colloquial Arabic (CA). Each novel was translated by the same translator, providing a unique opportunity to examine the evolution of this translator's strategies and techniques over time. *The Open Door* was first translated by Booth in 2000, followed by *As Though She Were Sleeping* in 2012, and *Celestial Bodies* in 2019. This study thus spans nearly

two decades of Booth's work in translating contemporary Arabic literature into English. By tracing the development of Booth's translation techniques across these works, this research offers insights into the evolving nuances of her approach. This progression culminates in Booth's receipt of the 2019 Man Booker International Prize, awarded annually to the most distinguished work of fiction translated into English and published in the UK and Ireland, as judged by an expert panel.

1.6 Impact of the study

This study will remarkably contribute to the field of literary translation in general and to the translation of CA dialogues and dialects into English in particular. It will also fill a gap in the field of dialect translation as far as other languages are concerned. This study has the potential to make a significant impact on (a) literary translators; (b) scholars of translation studies and (c) readers of translated Arabic literature. Its impact extends to be applicable to other literary genres and daily communication platforms that use Arabic dialects as the medium of communication. It will encourage translators in general to apply its recommendations in their daily translation work. There is indeed a relatively great amount of content on social media that is presented in Arabic dialects. This content might need to be translated into English for many reasons. One of these reasons is that content developers may be willing to reach more audience around the world. For example, translating YouTube episodes that contain a lot of dialectal content can increase the number of subscribers and viewers who do not speak Arabic. One impact is that this study will motivate more content developers to put translation (subtitling) as one of their highest priorities. The translation strategies and procedures proposed in this study can be extended to cover all types of source texts. It will not only cover the translation of CA dialogues and dialects in contemporary Arabic novels. This is because the marked CA dialogues and dialects used in the three novels can be used by any ordinary speaker of Arabic and in so many various forms of discourse. This could include the classical media (TV, radio, and cinema) and the new media (social media platforms and podcasts).

This study advocates for expanded research within translation studies, urging scholars to explore the translation of various Arabic dialects into English and other languages. Additionally, the application of a mixed-method research approach—incorporating innovative tools such as NVivo—serves as a methodological model for future research endeavours. The interdisciplinary nature of this work further holds significant implications for the fields of linguistics and dialectology, as it opens avenues for in-depth exploration of the intricate relationships between translation, dialectal variation, linguistic structures, and cultural context.

The final beneficiary from this study is the ordinary reader who will find in the strategies proposed by this study a sort of justification for the options resorted to by literary translators when they face sections of CA and dialects in the novels they translate. Understanding the cultural, social, and educational standing of characters in the source text will give the target text reader the chance to rethink the judgments they make on this translated work or another. In the long run, the impact of this study can be summarized in the fact that it will provide a springboard for future investigations into the matter of dialects and their translations into other languages. It also highlights the importance of literary dialectal dialogues and their implications in the age of machine translation and Artificial Intelligence.

The study highlights an increasing interest among translators who are not native speakers of Arabic in engaging with research on the translation of contemporary Arabic literature into English. A 'non-native speaker of Arabic' refers to someone whose first language is not Arabic but who has acquired proficiency in it as a second or additional language. These individuals might include academics, professional translators, or enthusiasts who have learned Arabic through formal education, immersion, or self-study.

In contrast, a native speaker of Arabic is someone who has grown up speaking Arabic as their first language, typically within a community where Arabic is the primary language of communication. Native speakers inherently possess a deeper cultural and linguistic intuition about Arabic, including its dialectal and contextual expressions, compared to non-native speakers who rely more on learned knowledge.

1.7 Theoretical framework of the study

This study explores the translatability and untranslatability of three Arabic dialects in three contemporary Arabic novels into English. Its theoretical framework connects directly to the selection of six excerpts and to the role of Marilyn Booth as a literary translator, drawing on two prominent theories in translation studies: Skopos Theory and Christiane Nord's translation-oriented model of text functions (Nord, 1997).

The choice of the six excerpts from the three novels reflects the study's focus on Arabic dialects whose nuanced cultural and social functions present unique challenges for translation (Jabir, 2006). Skopos Theory, as proposed by Vermeer and Reiss (Reiss *et al.*, 2014), emphasizes the translator's responsibility to create a target text that fulfils a specific purpose for its intended audience. This aligns with the selection of these excerpts, as they likely encompass diverse

dialectal expressions and contexts, demanding a careful consideration of how these functions can be conveyed in English. While Skopos Theory does not provide absolute answers to the question of translatability, it offers a framework to evaluate the purpose of translating each excerpt, which is explored in detail in Chapter 4 (Findings and Discussion). The six excerpts thus serve as a practical case study to illustrate how the function of dialects can shape translation strategies.

Nord's model complements this by emphasizing translation as a purposeful communicative activity embedded within cultural contexts. The six excerpts, chosen for their representation of dialects in diverse cultural and narrative settings, allow for an investigation of how dialect serves different functions in the source culture and how these functions might be preserved, adapted, or transformed for the target audience.

Marilyn Booth's work as a literary translator exemplifies the application of both Skopos Theory and Nord's functionalist approach. Booth's translations often navigate the tension between faithfulness to the source text and the communicative needs of the target audience. Skopos Theory underscores her role in deciding how to render dialects—whether to domesticate or foreignize them—based on the specific goals of each translation project. For example, Booth's translations are known for their attention to the stylistic and cultural nuances of Arabic texts, aligning with Skopos Theory's emphasis on purpose-driven translation.

Similarly, Nord's framework highlights the translator as an agent mediating between cultures. Booth's expertise in navigating cultural and linguistic differences reflects Nord's view of translation as an act shaped by the translator's understanding of the sender's and receiver's cultural habitats. Her translations often balance the dual responsibilities of preserving the source text's cultural identity and making it accessible to English-speaking audiences. Booth's historical awareness further connects her work to the theoretical underpinning of this study, particularly in her capacity to adapt her strategies to the specific communicative goals of each text.

The selection of the six excerpts and the focus on Marilyn Booth's translation practices both illustrate the central role of functionalist theories in addressing the challenges of translating Arabic dialects, offering practical and theoretical insights into the translatability of these linguistic forms. The selection of a questionnaire, completed by 50 literary translators, aligns

with the study's two theoretical frameworks, as these frameworks emphasize the central role of translators in negotiating with the target text and culture.

The two theories referenced above are closely aligned with the objectives of this study, as they underscore the significance of both the translator's agency and the intended purpose of the translation in shaping the translation process. This alignment becomes particularly evident in the discussion chapter, where many questionnaire participants highlighted the role of the dialect's function within the target text. Additionally, several participants asserted that the translator holds ultimate authority in determining which strategies to employ when addressing CA dialogues or dialects in the source text.

1.8 Methodology and data collection

This study adopts a mixed-methods research approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative tools to address its research questions. By combining these methodologies, the study ensures a balanced approach to data collection, analysis, and interpretation, leveraging the strengths of each method to provide an understanding of the research problem.

Mixed-methods research combines qualitative and quantitative approaches to gain deeper insights. While qualitative methods capture rich, descriptive data to understand subjective experiences, quantitative methods involve numerical data to identify patterns and trends. Dörnyei (2007) categorizes data into three types: (1) Quantitative data: numerical data used for statistical analysis; (2) Qualitative data: non-numerical data, such as participants' opinions and behaviours and (3) Language data: Linguistic samples of varying lengths, elicited specifically for language analysis.

The methodology is structured as a case study, focusing on three Arabic novels and their translations into English. The study uses a questionnaire to investigate whether the translation strategies adopted by the translators effectively represented dialects in the target texts. This case study approach is appropriate for exploring complex phenomena within specific contexts, making it well-suited for examining the intricate process of dialect translation.

The primary research tool is a questionnaire, which, as Litosseliti (2010) highlights, is particularly effective for measuring attitudes and perceptions related to language use, such as dialects and accents. Questionnaires offer several advantages, including their ability to generate large datasets that are relatively straightforward to process. However, as Litosseliti (2010)

cautions, the success of a questionnaire depends on its design and reliability in producing valid data.

The questionnaire designed for this study is divided into three parts: Part One collects demographic data, including participants' nationality, age group, and gender. This information provides contextual background for interpreting responses. Part Two focuses on participants' technical knowledge, including their understanding of concepts like *dialect*, *register*, and *diglossia*. This ensures that responses are informed by relevant linguistic awareness. Part Three evaluates participants' perceptions of dialect translation in six excerpts from the selected novels and their English translations. This section uses an evaluation scale for literary translation and includes an open-ended question inviting participants to share their insights on translating CA dialogues and dialects in contemporary Arabic novels into English.

In line with the mixed-methods approach, this study bridges the gap between qualitative and quantitative paradigms. Miles and Huberman (1994) note that many linguistic studies occupy a middle ground on the qualitative-quantitative continuum, blending descriptive analysis with numerical data. This balance allows for a more holistic understanding of the research topic, accommodating both subjective interpretation and objective measurement.

By employing a mixed-methods approach, this study draws on the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative paradigms to investigate the effectiveness of translation strategies in representing dialects. The use of a structured questionnaire ensures that the research gathers diverse data, ranging from demographic details to technical evaluations and personal insights. Furthermore, the incorporation of a case study methodology allows for an in-depth exploration of the complexities involved in translating dialects in three contemporary Arabic novels.

The questionnaire was developed using Microsoft Forms, an online platform chosen for its ease of use and accessibility. Microsoft Forms also facilitates preliminary quantitative data analysis by generating straightforward visual representations, such as basic charts, from the collected data. For qualitative analysis, particularly for responses to the final open-ended question, the software NVivo was employed to enable in-depth exploration of participants' insights.

The reliability of NVivo in qualitative research analysis remains a topic of active discussion. Auld *et al.* (2007) stress the importance of factors like the time required for training and the structure of coding systems before implementing NVivo in research. Similarly, Zapata-Sepúlveda (2012) and Buchanan and Jones (2010) underline the software's utility in simplifying complex qualitative analyses and supporting thematic content analysis, especially

within sensitive fields. However, these scholars also point out that additional measures are necessary to ensure the research's validity. Overall, while NVivo can significantly support the research process, its effectiveness is influenced by multiple factors and should ideally be integrated with other methodological approaches. In this study, NVivo is used as an organizational tool to aid in thematically analysing data gathered from both the research questions and questionnaire responses.

The participants in this questionnaire are literary translators working between Arabic and English. Over one hundred translators from nearly 20 different national backgrounds were invited, and 50 translators from 15 nationalities ultimately participated. This number is considered sufficient to provide a diverse range of perspectives and responses. In humanities research, the ideal number of participants for a questionnaire can vary, depending on the specific goals, methods, and practical limitations of the study (Barkhuizen, 2014).

Of the 50 participants, 14 were from Syria, followed by six participants from Iraq. Representing Egypt, the most populous Arabic-speaking country, five participants responded. Four participants were from Saudi Arabia, while three participants each were from the United States, Britian, Kuwait, and Palestine. Additionally, there were two participants each from Sudan and Jordan, and one participant each from Canada, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia, and Yemen. In terms of gender distribution, the sample included 30 male and 20 female translators. All 50 participants possess experience in translating literary texts between Arabic and English.

The relationship between dialects and languages is intricate, as the evolution of a vernacular into a recognized language is shaped by factors such as writing and nationalism (Haugen, 1966). Experience significantly influences the perception and representation of dialectal variants, with processing difficulties diminishing over time (Sumner and Samuel, 2009). This complexity is reflected in the findings of the questionnaire, where 5 participants expressed uncertainty, and another 5 disagreed that translating novels containing dialectal dialogue posed a significant challenge in their professional practice.

This study advocates for a neutral perspective when addressing the translation of dialects. Literary translators should neither undervalue nor overemphasize the complexity of translating dialects, whether in literary or non-literary contexts. Dialects, as integral and dynamic components of language, deserve a balanced approach in translation studies. While dialects may lack the systematic conventions of standardized languages, their use as a medium of communication necessitates diverse interpretive perspectives. Translation studies have

expanded in scope, particularly in the twenty-first century, to include nuanced analyses of translational acts, such as the treatment of dialects (Armstrong, 2014). This broadened focus has fostered an acknowledgment of the distinctive linguistic features inherent in translations, including dialectal elements, and has led to the development of methodologies for exploring these characteristics (Teich, 2003). Furthermore, Koppel and Ordan (2011) underscore the unique nature of translated texts, noting that they exhibit consistent patterns independent of the source language, which can be effectively identified through classification methods. These studies collectively underscore the importance of examining dialect-specific linguistic features and adopting a comprehensive approach to their translation.

The questionnaire results reveal that many participants believe translating Arabic dialectal dialogues into formal English risks distorting the social and cultural representation of the source text's characters. Specifically, 13 participants (26%) strongly agreed, and 24 participants (48%) agreed with this statement. This reflects a prevailing view among the 50 literary translators, who often resist rendering dialects in formal language.

Translating dialects into formal language is inherently complex, influenced by a confluence of linguistic, cultural, and social considerations. Chomsky (1956) highlights the limitations of finite-state processes in adequately capturing the complexity of language, while Haugen (1966) examines the sociolinguistic dimensions of dialect development. Together, these insights highlight the multifaceted challenges inherent in such translations.

1.9 Structure of the thesis

This study is divided into five main chapters, each addressing a crucial aspect of the translatability of CA dialogues in contemporary Arabic novels into English. *Chapter One (The Introduction)* provides a broad overview of the research topic, highlighting the significance of the presence of the CA dialogues in contemporary Arabic novels. It presents the rationales behind this study and highlights its aims. It then defines the four research questions and background of the study. Then the statement of originality and impact of the study on literary translators, translation studies scholars and ordinary readers are presented. The chapter then explains the selected theoretical framework of the study, its methodology and data collection procedures.

Chapter Two (The Literature Review) offers a comprehensive review of relevant scholarly literature on the translation of CA dialogues and dialects in contemporary Arabic novels into English. It underpins the main studies related to the translation of Arabic dialects into English.

The chapter explores existing theories and approaches to translation, with a specific focus on dialect translation. It also examines previous research on translating Arabic dialects, identifying gaps and areas for further investigation. It also positions the current research within the broader context of translation studies.

Chapter Three (Methodology and Data Collection) details the methodology employed in this study. It presents the case study of the three novels with their translations. These three novels are *The Open Door* by the Egyptian novelist Latifa Al-Zayyat (1923-1996), *As Though She Were Sleeping* by the Lebanese novelist Elias Khoury (1948-2024) and *Celestial Bodies* by the Omani novelist Jokha Al-Harthi (1978-). It then describes data collection through the questionnaire and how it is designed, distributed, and analysed. The chapter also presents a briefing on the pilot study, rationale for the research methods, participants, and limitations of the research methods.

Chapter Four (Findings and discussion) presents the main findings of the study. It also discusses the results and relates them to the research questions and the existing literature on the translatability of CA dialogues and dialects in contemporary Arabic novels into English.

Chapter Five (Conclusion and further research) summarises all the previous chapters including the results of the questionnaire and their links to other studies and related literature. It also lists the study limitations. In this chapter, the contribution to research and knowledge is outlined and recommendations for further areas of investigations are made. Finally, the limitations of this study are highlighted. This is followed by the bibliography and appendices.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Building on the foundation laid in the previous chapter which provided the reader with an introduction, background and rationale to the study and set out the research questions the study will be addressing, this chapter lists the main studies that have investigated the topic of translating Colloquial Arabic (CA) dialogues and dialects in contemporary Arabic novels into English. The chapter aims at presenting the different views on the translatability of dialects in general but there is a major focus on Arabic dialects especially those used as a written form in novels. This chapter is organized following a thematic structure. The main theme of this literature review is the translatability of CA dialogues and dialects in contemporary Arabic novels into English. However, there are many other themes revolving around the main theme. The chapter covers topics like dialect, colloquialism, slang, literary translation, and the main different schools of thought that addressed, explicitly or implicitly, the translation of dialects.

The type of literature reviewed here pertains to topics like translatability and untranslatability, translation and culture, language and dialect, dialectal Arabic, types of dialects, Arabic diglossia, register and equivalence. More focus is given to those studies that have dealt with the translation of Arabic dialects in contemporary Arabic novels into English. The representation of fictional characters using Arabic dialects in the target text is given a lot of importance when investigating the literature review. All the above-mentioned themes are to be investigated to highlight what other researchers have said about the translation of Arabic dialects into English in general. This chapter, therefore, draws upon a robust interdisciplinary foundation, integrating insights from the fields of Arabic dialectology, translation studies, cultural studies, and sociolinguistics. Although the focus is on the dialects used in dialogue in contemporary Arabic novels, a reference will be made as well to the translation of daily life dialects in general. The chapter investigates how scholars, in the Arab world and beyond, have viewed the process of using dialects as literary tool in modern Arabic prose and the most recent studies that have addressed the translation of literary dialect from Arabic into English. The chapter will also introduce the essential terms and definitions used throughout this thesis. It aims to locate the present study within the framework of functionalist translation theories

proposed by Skopos Theory (Reiss *et al.*, 2014) and Christiane Nord's translation-oriented model of text functions (Nord, 1997). In addition, this chapter will systematically connect the present study to the research questions raised in the methodology chapter. The literature review explains the rationale for using the questionnaire to get information from the community of English-Arabic translators on the topic of translating the CA dialogue in three contemporary Arabic novels into English. The focus will be on theories and studies relevant to literary dialect translation.

The existing literature reveals a significant gap in research concerning the translation of CA dialects into English. Arabic dialects vary widely, exhibiting differences in sounds, word forms, sentence structures, and vocabulary. At the same time, there are also similarities among these dialects that need further investigation. Additionally, there is a shortage of resources specifically focused on these dialects, while many resources are available for Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), which is the formal written version of Arabic. This situation creates an opportunity to explore how MSA tools could be used to assist in translating dialects. Graff *et al.* (2006) highlight that within Arabic-speaking communities, there is a divide between written/formal MSA and spoken/casual dialects; the spoken language lacks a standardized written form, and what is found in written texts is rarely used in everyday conversation. It is also important to mention that due to the limited reference materials on this topic, some sources in this literature review may have differing viewpoints. Nonetheless, all listed sources have been chosen for their reliability and quality.

There is a relevant study conducted by Al Mutairi (2019) on the effects of translators' stylistic choices on translating literary dialectal dialogue in Saudi and Egyptian novels. She found that translators often shift from Literary Dialectal Dialogue (LDD) to Literary Informal Dialogue (LID) in their translations, while still maintaining the conversational elements. She examines the effects of translators' stylistic choices on the function of literary dialectal dialogue in the English translations of contemporary Saudi and Egyptian novels. She identifies the procedures carried out by translators to deal with this issue. The study also explores whether different translators have a particular style or preferred procedures when translating literary dialectal dialogue. One of the main differences between the current study and Al Mutairi's is that she conducts an interview with the two literary translators who have already translated the selected novels while this study adopts a different approach by asking 50 literary translators about their opinions on the matter of translating CA dialogues in three contemporary Arabic novels into English. The two translators interviewed by Al Mutairi are Marilyn Booth and Anthony

Calderbank. I find myself in disagreement with Al Mutairi's use of the term 'Literary Dialectal Dialogue'. To me, this designation implies that the dialogue in question is confined solely to literary works, such as novels, suggesting that it serves a specific artistic or narrative function. However, I believe this perspective overlooks a crucial aspect: this type of dialogue is not limited to literary contexts; it is also an integral part of everyday communication among ordinary people.

In my experience, colloquial Arabic reflects the rich tapestry of interactions that occur in daily life, from casual conversations at home to lively discussions among friends. When I hear this dialect being spoken, I recognize that it captures authentic expressions of identity, culture, and community, transcending the boundaries of literature. Therefore, by labeling it as 'Literary Dialectal Dialogue', there is a risk of diminishing its significance and versatility in non-literary settings.

2.2 What is translation?

The essence and purpose of translation have long intrigued scholars in translation studies, generating diverse definitions and perspectives. According to Pym (2012: 106), translation theorists are free to interpret 'translation' in any manner they find suitable, as no single definition can claim absolute correctness. Pym's perspective is particularly relevant considering advancements in interdisciplinary fields, such as the emergence of artificial intelligence and chatbots, which challenge traditional notions of translation. Through his open-ended definition, Pym invites new interpretations that align with evolving cultural, technological, and functional contexts.

Skopos Theory, rooted in functionalist approaches, shifts the focus from rigid definitions of translation to its purpose within a given communicative context. For instance, Koller's (1979) definition, which views translation as transforming a source-language (SL) written text into a target-language (TL) written text, aligns with formal, written purposes but does not account for spoken language or dialects. In contrast, Nord's (1997) model emphasizes translation as a purposeful action, encompassing both the source text (ST) and its adaptation to the target culture. This broader approach accommodates forms like dialects, where oral expressions are often transcribed and then translated into written forms in the target text (TT), illustrating translation as both a transfer and transformation process.

Similarly, Toury (1980: 63) defines translation as the replacement of a message from one natural language to another. While this approach underlines the concept of equivalence, Reiss

et al. (2014) critique it as 'absolutely fuzzy', suggesting that equivalence should be re-evaluated through a Skopos lens. From this perspective, equivalence is not an inherent linguistic condition, but a functional criterion dictated by the intended purpose of the TT within the target culture. For instance, translating poetry or dialects demands careful consideration of the form, rhythm, and cultural nuances to preserve both the aesthetic and communicative intent of the ST.

House (1981) prioritizes meaning preservation, asserting that the essence of translation lies in maintaining meaning across languages. Yet, Skopos Theory complicates this stance by incorporating the interplay between form and meaning, particularly in literary works. For example, dialects in novels often encapsulate social, cultural, and personal identities. These elements evolve into idiolects, reflecting individual speech patterns within specific linguistic or cultural contexts. Nord's distinction between oral translation (interpreting) and written translation highlights the layered processes involved in translating such dialects, underscoring the need to adapt the skopos to suit the TT audience.

Nord's (1997) functionalist framework builds on Holz-Mänttäri's (1984) concept of translation action, which covers all intercultural transfers, including those beyond textual boundaries. This inclusive view supports translating complex linguistic forms like dialects, as the ST author often transcribes spoken dialects into written forms before translation. The translator, in turn, must navigate linguistic, cultural, and functional challenges to produce a TT that resonates with its audience while preserving the skopos of the original text.

In terms of translation types, Diller and Kornelius (1978) categorize translations as either primary or secondary, emphasizing their communicative or informative purposes. Skopos Theory bridges these categories by aligning the translation process with the intended function of the TT. Historical novels, for example, serve both communicative and informative purposes while also entertaining the target audience, requiring the translator to balance multiple objectives.

2.3 Translatability and Untranslatability

This study employs the concept of translatability, central to its exploration of dialect translation in literary works. While Cassin *et al.* (2014) argue that untranslatable terms or expressions pose challenges rather than impossibilities, they highlight the complexities inherent in cross-linguistic transfer. This aligns with Skopos Theory, which reframes translatability as a

functional question: to what extent can a text achieve its intended purpose within the TT culture?

Shuttleworth and Cowie (2014) elaborate on the tension between the unique linguistic structures of languages and the successful practice of translation. While Frawley (1984: 196) rejects the notion of absolute translatability, Skopos Theory accommodates the nuanced interplay between semantic equivalence and functional adequacy. Wilss (1982: 49) further measures translatability by the degree to which a text can be recontextualized in the TL, considering linguistic and extralinguistic factors. This perspective underscores the functional adaptability central to Skopos Theory, particularly when translating dialects, where linguistic and cultural nuances must be preserved to maintain the social and geographical identities of characters in the TT.

Toury (1980: 26) critiques translation theories that equate translation solely with translatability, arguing that such approaches impose restrictive adequacy conditions. From a Skopos perspective, these restrictions undermine the functional dynamism essential to effective translation. Newmark (1981) draws a distinction between communicative and semantic translation which complements this view. Communicative translation seeks to produce an effect on TT readers akin to that experienced by ST readers, while semantic translation prioritizes preserving the contextual meaning of the ST. Skopos Theory integrates these methods, advocating for a purpose-driven approach that aligns the translation strategy with the specific functional requirements of the TT.

Both Skopos Theory and Nord's functionalist model provide a comprehensive framework for examining translation, translatability, and untranslatability. By emphasizing purpose, function, and cultural adaptability, these models address the complexities of translating diverse forms of language, from written texts to dialects, while preserving their intended impact on the target audience.

2.4 The emergence of literary translation studies

The formal study of translation began to solidify as a discipline in the 1970s, coinciding with a shift in literature departments toward innovative theoretical frameworks (St-Pierre, 2019). However, the field has faced significant challenges, particularly disciplinary fragmentation and a persistent gap between theory and practice (Sun, 2014). This gap is especially evident in the translation of Arabic dialects, as noted by literary translators who participated in the questionnaire conducted for this research. They emphasized the complexities of adapting the

nuanced, context-driven nature of Arabic dialects into English while addressing cultural and linguistic barriers. Palumbo (2009: 156) suggests that this tension between theory and practice in literary translation might trace back to the 1960s when literary translation was a neglected area of research. James S. Holmes played a pivotal role in addressing this void by fostering international collaborations that eventually led to a paradigm shift in translation research, involving scholars such as Gideon Toury, Itamar Even-Zohar, Anton Popovič, and André Lefevere.

2.5 Translation and culture

Participants in this study consistently highlighted the role of dialects as integral to cultural expression, emphasizing their significance in literary translation. The term *cultural translation* describes approaches that aim to mediate linguistic and cultural differences, functioning as tools for cross-cultural research or practices sensitive to cultural and linguistic factors (Shuttleworth and Cowie, 2014). This approach underscores the inseparability of language and culture, both of which are essential for effectively translating Arabic dialects into English. Dialects, as deeply embedded linguistic forms, convey cultural nuances that are crucial for cross-cultural understanding.

Newmark (1995) situates translation as a vital means of explaining one culture to another, describing it as the most economical method of cultural mediation. He further asserts that translation introduces the cultural components of one society to another without elevating one over the other. In the context of translating Arabic dialects, this means transferring not only linguistic forms but also the sociocultural identities they encode. For example, translating the localized idioms, proverbs, and expressions found in Arabic dialects helps English-speaking readers grasp the unique cultural and regional characteristics of the source text, much like how translation introduces Japanese culinary terms such as *sushi* or *tempura* to the Middle East.

The intricate connection between culture and translation has been widely debated. Katan (1999) highlights two extreme positions: one posits that translation can capture culture without loss, while the other asserts that all translation entails cultural loss. These opposing views are particularly relevant when dealing with Arabic dialects, as they represent a vital cultural and linguistic component. The challenges of translating dialectal expressions often lie in preserving their cultural and contextual depth in the target language. This discourse has contributed to a more nuanced understanding of translatability, particularly in relation to the unique challenges posed by Arabic dialects in literary texts.

2.6 Language and Dialect

Another important topic related to the translation of Arabic dialects is the question of whether a dialect is a language on its own. When there was a debate in Egypt and the Arab world on whether to use Standard Arabic or dialects in literature, the Egyptian linguist Ibrahim Anis, in his book *Fī al-Lahajāt al-ʿArabīyah (On Arabic Dialects)*, written in Arabic in 1952, defines the Arabic word (لهجة) 'lahja' as 'a set of linguistic features that belong to a specific environment, where all the individuals in this environment share these features. The environment of the 'lahja' is a part of a wider and more comprehensive environment that includes many lahjas' (Anis, 1952:15). Interestingly, he includes a footnote on the same page where he translates (لهجة) 'lahja' into 'dialect'. Throughout the current thesis the word (لهجة) 'lahja' is used to mean 'dialect'. According to *Riyadh Dictionary of Contemporary Arabic*[3], (لهجة) 'lahja' is defined as 'a way of speaking that is unique to an individual, class, or specific social group'.

When he talks about the features which make a dialect, Anis (1952) restricts that to the sounds of the dialects, their nature and how they are produced. What makes a dialect different from another, he argues, is mostly the sound difference. He gives two examples from the dialects of pre-Islamic era tribes. The tribesmen of Tamim would pronounce (فُزْتُ) 'fuzt' (which means 'I won') as (فُزْدُ) 'fuzd' with no change in meaning. The difference here is the replacement of the sound (تْ) 't' with (دُ) 'd'. Another Arab tribe, Bani Sa'd, would say (أجلَهْ) 'ajlah' instead of (أجلَحْ) 'ajlaḥ' which means 'a blind man'. Anis adds that one of the differences between dialects is the structure of the word, or its form. For example, some people from Tamim tribe used to say (مديون) 'madiun' instead of (مدِيْن) 'madin' which means 'debtor'. He mentions that some dictionaries refer to the word (هِجْرِس) 'hijris' as having two different meanings: it means 'a monkey' for the Hijazis but it means 'a fox' for Bani Tamim tribe.

Anis (1952) insists that the dialects of a given language must share most words and their meanings. But one may disagree with this idea. For example, we have a lot of examples where Arabic dialects have completely different words for the same thing. For example, in Syrian Arabic the word (عيَّط) 'àyyat' means 'to shout', but in Egyptian Arabic it means 'to cry'. Moreover, Arabic dialects must share the structure of their sentences. Once there are differences

[3] This dictionary was launched online on September 27th, 2023, in Arabic. The translation into English is mine. The link to the word (لهجة) 'lahja' in Arabic is here: https://dictionary.ksaa.gov.sa/result/%D9%84%D9%87%D8%AC%D8%A9

in most of the meanings of words, their structure, and they have specific rules in constructing their sentences, then it is no longer a dialect; it is an independent language. Consequently, the issue of translating dialects is an argumentative topic in certain contexts, as a single dialectal word or expression may convey varying meanings across different dialects. This phenomenon is particularly relevant to the current study, which examines the translatability of colloquial Arabic dialogues utilized in three distinct Arabic dialects.

One of the important ideas Anis (1952) discusses is the idea that social circumstances in one specific environment may lead to the creation of some types of special dialects like the ones spoken by groups of people who have isolated themselves from society for religious or political reasons. This might be one of the reasons why we have so many dialects in the Arab world. A lot of villages, towns, and cities have been isolated during the Ottoman era in most Arab countries. This resulted in a lack of communication between these communities which may have given rise to the evolution of different ways of spoken linguistic variations or dialects. In addition, the geographical location might have played a remarkable role in formulating such dialects. For example, it is noted that mountain dwellers have their own dialect which is expressed in loud and high-pitched voices. Dwellers of coastal cities, however, have more foreign words in their dialects because of their contact with foreign travelers, merchants, and seafarers.

Wolfgang (1978) argues that the most immediate problem in the classification of linguistic varieties is the act of identifying what is a ‘language’ and what is a ‘dialect’. As he argues, the major feature of a dialect is its orality, the fact that it is spoken. A language, on the other hand, has a deep-rooted tradition of writing, easily attestable in certain orthographic conventions.

One may notice that many scholars label dialects as parts of language. Kachru (1983: 23) offers a compelling illustration that furthers this notion. Kachru assumes that there is a link between the diverse manifestations of English in the writings of Chinua Achebe or William Faulkner, in the speech of a taxi driver at a Calcutta railway station or a Nigerian professor of economics, etc. In fact, such a link is vital and may be complicated to understand.

Reflecting Kachru’s example on Arabic one may argue that there does exist a link between the diverse dialects of Arabic. There is some difficulty for Arabs in the Middle East to understand some Arabic dialects (notably those of Morocco, Algeria, etc.). These studies contributed to a better unpacking of the relationship between informal language (Arabic dialects) and formal language (MSA or al-Fuṣḥá).

2.7 Dialects and colloquialisms

Dialect and colloquialism, while technically distinct linguistic phenomena, share areas of overlap in their practical application and use. Dialects are defined by their unique features of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, which are often intrinsically tied to specific geographical regions or sociolinguistic communities. These characteristics make dialects a comprehensive linguistic system, functioning as a full-fledged variation of a language with consistent rules and patterns (Hlukhovtseva, 2022). For instance, regional dialects in English, such as Cockney in London or Appalachian English in the United States, reflect the cultural and historical influences specific to their respective regions.

Conversely, colloquialisms are informal linguistic expressions, idioms, or phrases that are predominantly employed in casual, everyday speech. These often deviate from the prescribed norms of standard language and are used to convey familiarity, humour, or emphasis in interpersonal communication (Faleyeva, 2021). Examples of colloquialisms include commonly used phrases such as ‘what’s up?’ instead of ‘how are you?’ or idiomatic expressions like ‘kick the bucket’ to mean ‘die’. Unlike dialects, colloquialisms do not constitute a systematic variation of a language but rather reflect the informal and dynamic aspects of its use.

Despite these differences, dialects and colloquialisms are interconnected and play a crucial role in shaping language and communication. Dialects provide a broad linguistic framework encompassing a wide range of linguistic features such as grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary. In contrast, colloquialisms are more narrowly focused, being specific to informal speech and frequently characterized by idiomatic or non-standard expressions (Peng-liang, 2010). This distinction does not undermine their shared importance. Hal and Rooy (2017) argue that both contribute significantly to linguistic diversity and the dynamic evolution of languages, as they reflect cultural practices and communicative needs. Together, they underscore the adaptability and richness of human language.

The current study adopts the term *‘Colloquial Arabic dialogue’* in its title to capture the overlap between ‘dialect’ and ‘colloquialism.’ This choice acknowledges the complexity in delineating the boundaries between these two phenomena, particularly in Arabic, where spoken varieties differ widely from the formal standard. While the terms are closely related, they are not interchangeable. Dialect refers to a distinct linguistic system used by a particular community, encompassing all linguistic components, including grammar, syntax, and phonology.

Colloquialism, by contrast, pertains specifically to informal and often regionally marked linguistic elements within any dialect or language.

The relationship between colloquialisms and linguistic evolution is noteworthy. Collins (2013) investigates the phenomenon of colloquialization in English, illustrating how informal language can influence the development of grammatical structures over time. This process highlights the transformative potential of colloquial expressions, which, although rooted in informality, can become integral to the linguistic system. Such insights reinforce the idea that colloquialisms are not merely peripheral but central to understanding how languages adapt to the changing needs of their speakers.

2.8 What is a dialect?

Scholars have provided various definitions of 'dialect', all of which generally refer to a linguistic entity within a clearly defined language. Baker (2018: 14) defines a dialect as 'a variety of language which has currency within a specific community or group of speakers'. This definition is particularly relevant when considering the translatability of colloquial Arabic dialogues in contemporary Arabic novels into English, as it highlights the need to recognize the specific community or group that the dialogue represents. Baker further classifies dialects based on geographical, temporal, and social factors, which are crucial considerations in translation:

1. Geographical: Just as Scottish dialect differs from American or British English, Arabic dialects vary significantly across regions. Translators must account for these geographical variations to accurately convey the original dialogue's regional nuances into English.

2. Temporal: Dialects can evolve over time, with certain words becoming archaic or gaining new meanings. In translating Arabic novels, it is essential to recognize whether the colloquial terms used are contemporary or hold historical significance, ensuring that the English translation reflects the appropriate temporal context.

3. Social: Social dialects reflect differences in social classes and backgrounds, such as the use of 'napkin' versus 'serviette' in North American and British English, respectively. Similarly, Arabic dialects can indicate the speaker's social status or education level. Translators must be

mindful of these social indicators to maintain the characters' identities and relationships in English translations.

Crystal (1992: 101) defines a dialect as 'a language variety in which the use of grammar and vocabulary identifies the regional or social backgrounds of the user'. This definition underscores the importance of maintaining these identifiers during translation. Crystal also differentiates between social, rural, and urban dialects, each conveying distinct background information. Translators of contemporary Arabic novels must preserve these distinctions to ensure that the translated dialogue accurately reflects the characters' regional and social contexts.

Chaika (1982: 132) argues that 'no sharp demarcation exists between language and dialect' and that mutual intelligibility often classifies varieties as dialects. This view suggests that CA dialects, which are mutually intelligible with MSA to varying degrees, can be translated into English by finding equivalent expressions that maintain their intelligibility and cultural relevance.

Radford *et al.* (1999) view dialect as a progressive form of language, evolving from older forms. This perspective may have limited application in the Arabic context, where dialects are often seen as evolving from Classical or Standard Arabic. Nonetheless, recognizing this evolutionary aspect is important for translators who must account for the dynamic nature of colloquial expressions in contemporary Arabic novels.

Blackburn (1984) supports the notion that language change leads to new dialects, emphasizing that dialects are a natural part of linguistic variation. This understanding reinforces the idea that translating colloquial Arabic involves embracing the diversity and richness of its dialects, ensuring that the English translation captures the original's linguistic vibrancy.

In the context of this research on the translatability of CA dialogues into English, it is essential to adopt these scholarly definitions and classifications of dialects. This approach ensures that translations remain faithful to the original dialogues' geographical, temporal, and social nuances, thereby preserving the authenticity of contemporary Arabic novels. These views were expressed in the opinions of the 50 literary translators who responded to the questionnaire.

The concepts of dialect, register, standard language, and sociolect are foundational in understanding linguistic variation and its implications for translation studies. A dialect encompasses the distinctive speech habits—such as pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and pragmatics—characteristic of a specific geographical area or social group (Swann, 2004, 76). In contrast, register pertains to variations in language use determined by context. For instance, individuals typically employ different styles of speech in formal settings, such as academic lectures or job interviews, compared to informal contexts like casual conversations with friends and family (Swann, 2004, 261). These distinctions are critical in translation, where understanding the interplay between dialect and register aids in maintaining the authenticity and contextual appropriateness of the source text.

The notion of standard language further refines the discussion by referring to a relatively uniform variety of a language that transcends regional variation and serves multiple communicative functions. Standard language is often employed in formal domains, including education, literature, science, and official discourse (Swann, 2004, 295). Complementing this is the concept of a sociolect, which some sociolinguists use to describe linguistic variation rooted in social factors, such as class or occupational group, rather than geographical origins (Crystal, 2008, 440).

2.8.1 Linguistic Variation in Arabic dialects

One of the foundational concepts in this study is the theory of linguistic variation, which asserts that 'sociolinguists have long felt that linguistic variants, whether phonological, syntactic, or semantic, do not occur randomly but should fall into definable patterns of correlation with each other' (Ferguson 1959; Ervin-Tripp 1964; Gumperz 1967; and Labov 1964, 1965, 1966). This theory highlights the systematic relationship between linguistic variants, a concept that is critical when examining the translation of Arabic dialects in contemporary Arabic novels into English.

From the perspective of the Structuralist school, the relationship between language and dialect is delineated through a clear opposition. According to Martinet (1953), 'language' refers to the medium of communication for major nations (e.g., English, French, Spanish), while a 'dialect' refers to a localized form of speech within the broader domain of a language. In this framework, Arabic dialects are seen as sub-languages or varieties of Arabic, shaped by specific social and linguistic contexts. For translators, this structuralist perspective emphasizes the need to

distinguish between MSA and CA dialects when translating novels, as each carries distinct linguistic and cultural markers.

The Descriptive school offers another view, differentiating language and dialect in terms of norms. Haugen (1966) states that 'language' may refer to a single linguistic norm or a group of related norms, whereas a 'dialect' is one of these norms, existing within the larger language system. Historically, dialects often evolved from a major language, influenced by political, cultural, and social factors. This notion is especially relevant in translating Arabic dialects into English, as it highlights the subordinate status of dialects to MSA. For example, Standard Arabic can be translated directly without reference to specific dialects, but dialects require contextual grounding to convey their connection to the broader Arabic language and culture.

The World Atlas of Language Structures (WALS) (2023) identifies 20 distinct Arabic dialects in addition to MSA, each sharing similarities due to their origin in Classical Arabic. Translators must navigate these variations carefully, recognizing that while Arabic dialects are rooted in a shared linguistic history, their contemporary forms reflect diverse cultural, regional, and social identities. This diversity requires nuanced translation strategies to capture the distinctiveness of each dialect in English while maintaining clarity for the target audience.

Dialects are often perceived as 'colloquial' or 'vernacular', a concept explored by Wolfram (1986: 5), who emphasizes the importance of understanding the attitudes surrounding vernacular dialects. He argues that studying these attitudes is essential to grasping the response patterns and linguistic features of dialect speakers. In the context of translating Arabic dialects, these attitudinal contexts are critical for accurately representing the characters' voices and social backgrounds in English. For example, capturing the vernacular tone of a Bedouin dialect in a novel requires not only linguistic equivalence but also an understanding of how the dialect signifies identity, culture, and societal perceptions. Thus, the theory of linguistic variation provides a vital framework for addressing the challenges of translating Arabic dialects in contemporary novels into English.

2.8.2 The writing of dialectal variations

The translatability of colloquial Arabic dialects in contemporary Arabic novels into English poses a significant challenge due to the absence of standardized norms for writing dialects. Honeybone and Maguire (2020) highlight that the defining characteristic of dialect writing lies in its attempt to represent non-standard spoken varieties in written form. However, they caution against assuming uniformity in how dialects are rendered in text, given the substantial diversity

in approaches and conventions within dialect writing. This diversity underscores the complexity of translating CA dialects, where each dialect not only varies linguistically but also resists easy representation in written form.

In the context of Arabic, dialects are often transcribed phonetically, closely mirroring their spoken forms. This approach, termed 'eye dialect' by Krapp (1926), attempts to approximate the auditory characteristics of the dialect, providing readers with a visual representation of its phonetic nuances. However, this technique introduces challenges in translation, particularly when moving into a target language like English, where equivalent phonetic and stylistic markers may not exist. Furthermore, the emergence of new orthographies for Arabic dialects in electronic media, as observed by Elhija (2014), reflects broader trends in the global linguistic landscape, paralleling developments in languages such as Chinese and Japanese. These orthographies, often informal and adaptive, have introduced innovative ways of capturing dialectal speech in written form but further complicate the task of translation by diverging from traditional linguistic norms.

Within the framework of this research, understanding how colloquial Arabic dialects are written—and how these representations interact with issues of diglossia, cultural context, and audience reception—is crucial. The absence of standardized conventions for dialect writing not only affects the fidelity of translations but also raises questions about how accurately the sociolinguistic realities of the source text can be preserved in the target language. Translators should be aware of these intricacies while considering the broader implications of linguistic hierarchy, power dynamics, and the global dissemination of Arabic literary works. This highlights the need for a nuanced, theory-informed approach to translating Arabic dialects into English, ensuring that the cultural and linguistic richness of the original text is effectively conveyed to a diverse readership.

2.8.3 Literary dialect

The use of dialects in literary works is a global phenomenon, yet scholarly attention to this area has been relatively limited. One of the pioneering studies on this topic is George Philip Krapp's 1926 article, '*The Psychology of Dialect Writing'*. Krapp observes that there was a notable interest among American readers of his time in literature written in dialect. His central inquiry is whether dialect literature originates 'from below'—as a genuine reflection of the spoken language and culture of the people—or is 'enforced from above', crafted as an imaginative creation by sophisticated literary artists. He identifies two types of literary dialects: the

authentic, daily dialect spoken by people and the artificial dialect invented by writers to add stylistic flair or authenticity to their work.

This distinction is particularly relevant when discussing the translatability of CA dialects in contemporary Arabic novels into English. Translators must grapple with whether to preserve the authenticity of spoken Arabic dialects or to adapt them creatively in a way that resonates with English-speaking audiences while maintaining the essence of the original text.

Krapp also discusses a specific technique used in literary dialect writing: 'eye dialect', which involves respelling common words to mimic their phonetic pronunciation. For instance, he highlights examples such as spelling 'is' as 'iz', 'dear' as 'dere', and 'once' as 'wunce'. This technique gives readers visual cues that the speech differs from standard language, enhancing the perception of a character's unique voice or regional identity.

In translating colloquial Arabic into English, the concept of eye dialect poses both opportunities and challenges. For example, representing Egyptian Arabic's pronunciation quirks (such as replacing the 'qaf' sound with a glottal stop) could involve crafting English equivalents that hint at the same phonetic distinctiveness. However, these creative spellings must balance readability and cultural fidelity, ensuring they do not alienate the reader or reduce the dialect to caricature.

Furthermore, Krapp's division of dialect into authentic and invented forms highlights a crucial dilemma for translators of Arabic novels: should the translation aim to capture the real, everyday speech of characters, or should it opt for a more stylized English dialect that conveys the same sociolinguistic tone? For instance, an Iraqi character's colloquial speech in an Arabic novel might be rendered in regional English dialects, like Southern American English, to evoke similar cultural or class connotations. Alternatively, the translator might use non-standard grammar or vocabulary in English to signal the informal, regional nature of the Arabic dialogue.

Translators often struggle to capture the social identities and regional characteristics of characters when working with dialects (Al-Khanji & Ennasser, 2022). Proposed strategies include employing variations in register within the standard language to simulate sociolects in dialect translation (Yu, 2017). Nonetheless, the outcomes of these methods vary, as evidenced by the translations of Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls* into Romance languages, where key aspects of the original literary dialect were frequently lost (Azevedo, 2000). Effective translation must address both the dialect and the standard language it contrasts with,

challenging the notion that the standard language always corresponds to a neutral target variety (Yu, 2017). This intricate process necessitates a nuanced approach to linguistic and cultural elements to maintain the intended literary impact.

2.9 Dialectal Arabic literature

De Angelis (2022) highlights that prose writing in Arabic dialects, such as novels and short stories, has historically been underrepresented in Arabic literature. While dialectal poetry has carved out a modest place in the literary tradition, prose in dialect, particularly the Egyptian colloquial dialect (known as ‘āmmiyya), has been less common. However, De Angelis notes that the past two decades have seen a noticeable rise in prose works written in Egyptian dialect, especially in novels, short stories, and online platforms like blogs and websites. He uses the term ‘Arab literature in dialect’ specifically to describe literary works produced in Egypt, clarifying that by ‘Egyptian dialect’, he primarily refers to the colloquial language spoken in Cairo. De Angelis argues that artistic expression in dialect has always existed in the Arab world, though tracing its origins is challenging. Supporting this view, Beeston (1977, 287) points out that dialectal writing predates the advent of Islam.

The term ‘āmmiyya, which translates to ‘colloquial’, is defined in the Riyadh Dictionary of Contemporary Arabic (2023) as ‘the language spoken by the public; it is not the formal language’. However, this definition has been critiqued for mislabeling ‘āmmiyya as a ‘language’ rather than a spoken dialect. Despite this ambiguity, ‘āmmiyya remains central to discussions about the evolution of Arabic literary forms.

Outside of Egypt, contemporary Arabic literature has taken a different trajectory, often reflecting themes of migration, exile, and border experiences, particularly in narratives involving migration to Europe (Sellman, 2018). These works intersect with fields such as postcolonial studies and border studies, addressing issues of identity, citizenship, and belonging. Contemporary Arabic literature draws from both medieval Arabic literary traditions and Western literary influences (Makar, 1998), demonstrating its adaptability and richness across different cultural and historical contexts. For readers unfamiliar with the field, this highlights the dynamic interplay between dialect, culture, and literary form in Arabic literature and its capacity to engage with diverse social, political, and historical issues.

Formal Arabic, or *al-Fuṣḥá*, has historically been regarded as pure, melodious, and better suited to conveying complex ideas (De Angelis, 2022: 172). However, De Angelis argues that there is no scientific evidence to support this assertion. Brustad (2017) highlights how the ideology

of diglossia has shaped sociolinguistic perceptions, leading to the 'invisibility' of texts written in colloquial dialects or a blend of dialect and standard Arabic. This invisibility has implications for translating such works into English, where nuances tied to *fuṣḥá* and *'āmmīyah* need careful handling.

The growing phenomenon of writing in dialects, particularly on the internet, adds another layer of complexity to translation. De Angelis (2022) attributes this trend to the lack of oversight on online platforms, where neither authorities nor publishing house editors impose linguistic standards. Social media, with its informal nature, fosters the use of colloquial language, where grammatical accuracy and syntactical precision are not prerequisites for communication. This shift also influences the creative use of *'āmmīyah* in contemporary novels, challenging translators to capture the casual and authentic tone of these works in English.

De Angelis (2022) further suggests that the increasing acceptance of *'āmmīyah* in written form might lead to its coexistence with *fuṣḥá* as a literary language. However, Brustad (2017) emphasizes that the 'ideology of *fuṣḥá'* is more threatened by errors in *fuṣḥá* itself than by the rise of *'āmmīyah*. For translators, this distinction is crucial: 'dialect' refers to linguistic variation across regions, while *'āmmīyah* encompasses the everyday spoken language, regardless of regional differences. This distinction must be understood to effectively render the unique interplay between *fuṣḥá* and *'āmmīyah* in contemporary Arabic novels into English.

2.10 Why do writers use dialects?

In examining the linguistic practices of popular Egyptian bloggers, Pepe (2019) observes that the use of vernacular Arabic establishes a tone of intimacy, authenticity, and accessibility. It also conveys honesty, pragmatism, liberal thought, and a connection to ordinary people, often with a humorous effect (Pepe 2019, 114). This characterization is particularly relevant to the translatability of CA dialects in contemporary Arabic novels into English, as it highlights the socio-cultural and emotional resonances embedded within dialectal expression.

De Angelis (2022) highlights how some Egyptian writers, such as 'Abd Allāh al-Nadīm and Ya'qūb Ṣanū', employed dialect in their works to engage with the masses and garner their support. Salāma Mūsā, while advocating for the use of dialect due to its accessibility, refrained from using it in his writings. The preference for dialect among satirists is particularly significant, as its informal and relatable tone aligns with their objectives. De Angelis (2022) notes that contemporary authors generally choose linguistic registers based on stylistic

considerations rather than political motivations, which underscores the deliberate artistic choices behind incorporating colloquial dialogue in Arabic literature.

The discussion of vernacular in literary dialogue also extends to Nobel laureate Najīb Maḥfūẓ, who, despite opposing the use of dialect in literature, developed an approach for his works. Scholars have noted that Maḥfūẓ employed a hybridized code, introducing dialectal expressions into classical Arabic to signal that his characters were speaking in vernacular. This approach, termed '*colloquialized Fuṣḥá*' (Somekh, 1991: 26-27) or 'Fuṣḥámmiyya' (Rosenbaum, 2000), demonstrates an intermediary strategy for representing spoken dialect within the confines of literary classical Arabic. Translating such stylistic choices into English involves replicating this subtle blending of formal and informal registers, which may require creative adaptations to reflect the original intent.

The concept of *al-Lahjah al-Bayḍā'* (White Dialect) also plays a significant role in this context. This term, referring to a neutral or intermediate linguistic register between classical Arabic and colloquial dialects, illustrates an additional layer of complexity in translating Arabic dialogue. Translating *al-Lahjah al-Bayḍā'* into English presents unique challenges, as English lacks a direct equivalent to this intermediate register, necessitating inventive strategies to maintain its neutral yet accessible tone.

De Angelis (2022) also traces the historical evolution of vernacular in Arabic literature, noting that the first novel written entirely in Egyptian dialect, *Qanṭarah alladhī Kafr* (*Qanṭara Who Blasphemed*) by Muṣṭafá Musharrafah, appeared in the 1940s. Musharrafah's work, along with his dialect-infused short story collection *Hadhayān wa-qiṣaṣ ukhrá* (*Hallucination and Other Stories*), reflects the gradual acceptance of dialect in literary expression. This evolution signifies a growing recognition of dialects as legitimate vehicles for artistic and cultural representation.

Rosenbaum (2011) extends this discussion, asserting that Egyptian dialect has evolved into a second literary language, evidenced by its use across diverse genres and its prominence in everyday communication, such as text messages, social media, and blog posts. This phenomenon is mirrored in other Arab countries, where vernaculars are increasingly prevalent in written forms.

2.11 Types of Dialects in the three novels

Some linguists categorize dialects into two main types: regional and social. Allen and Linn (1986) propose that social dialects emerge because of social distance. In essence, the greater the social distance between groups, the more pronounced the differences in their speech patterns tend to be. Furthermore, certain dialects are often viewed as carrying a form of prestigious dominance. For instance, in Syria, the Damascene dialect is predominantly spoken by the native inhabitants of Damascus. In contrast, various other dialects are prevalent in the rural areas surrounding the city. The Damascene dialect, however, has gained widespread recognition and prestige due to its frequent use in Syrian television dramas, which are immensely popular across the Arab world. A prominent example of such a drama series is *Bāb al-ḥārah* (The Door of the Alley), which significantly contributed to the widespread recognition and popularity of the Damascene dialect among Arab audiences.

Additionally, a significant area of interest in sociolinguistics today revolves around urban speech patterns and linguistic strategies. This focus stems from the growing importance of urbanization in modern society. Applegate (1970: 259) emphasizes the priority of research in this domain, highlighting its potential to inform educational policies and provide insights into the societal transformations driven by urbanization.

This study focuses on how colloquial Arabic dialogue is translated into English in contemporary Arabic novels. To explore this, it examines three novels where the characters speak different regional Arabic dialects. In *The Open Door* by Latifa Al-Zayyat, the characters use Egyptian Arabic, specifically the variety spoken in Cairo. In *Celestial Bodies* by Jokha Al-Harthi, the characters speak Omani Arabic. Meanwhile, in *As Though She Were Sleeping* by Elias Khoury, the dialogue is in Lebanese Arabic. Each of these dialects adds a unique cultural and linguistic flavour to the novels, which presents specific challenges and considerations for translation into English.

2.12 Arabic Diglossia

The translatability of colloquial Arabic dialects in contemporary Arabic novels into English is closely tied to the linguistic phenomenon of Arabic diglossia. To grasp this issue, it is essential to explore the broader concept of diglossia, a term introduced by Karl Krumbacher in his 1902 work *Das Problem der Modern Griechischen Schriftsprache (The Problem of Modern Greek Written Language)*. Initially applied to Modern Greek by French Hellenists, as Mackey (1986) notes, the concept was subsequently extended to Arabic by William Marçais. Ferguson's

landmark 1959 definition, however, remains the most influential framework for examining diglossia in terms of its linguistic and cultural dimensions.

Ferguson characterizes diglossia as a stable linguistic situation where a 'High' variety, typically classical or literary and acquired through formal education, coexists with a 'Low' variety used in daily conversations. In Arabic, this dichotomy is reflected in the coexistence of Classical or Standard Arabic (High variety) and various regional colloquial dialects (Low variety). While colloquial dialects are rich in cultural and social significance, they often lack the prestige, codification, and formal acceptance of their High counterparts. Gumperz (1962) observes that speakers frequently view the High variety as superior, associating it with logic, beauty, and suitability for formal and intellectual expression.

The intricate nature of Arabic diglossia is further explored by Haugen (1966), who delineates three levels: Classical Arabic, Standard Arabic, and Colloquial Arabic. Ferguson's framework, however, typically simplifies this into two key contrasts—Classical/Colloquial or Standard/Colloquial—highlighting the interconnected functions and societal roles of each variety within specific contexts.

Translating contemporary Arabic novels into English underscores these diglossic complexities. Colloquial dialects often encapsulate cultural nuances, humour, and emotional depth that are challenging to convey in English, a language without an equivalent High/Low linguistic divide. Translators face the dual challenge of remaining faithful to the original text while ensuring the translation is accessible and engaging for English-speaking audiences.

2.13 Variations of Arabic used in the three translated novels

The variations within the Arabic language—Classical Arabic, Standard Arabic, and Colloquial Arabic—pose unique challenges for translation, especially when it comes to rendering colloquial dialects in contemporary Arabic novels into English. Each variation reflects different functions, histories, and sociolinguistic realities that influence the way they are represented in literature. For this discussion, the focus is on three colloquial Arabic variations: Egyptian Arabic, Omani Arabic, and Lebanese Arabic, which were used in the three novels used in this study.

Classical Arabic, deeply rooted in religious and historical contexts, remains integral to Islamic religious practices and is commonly heard in ceremonies and Quranic recitations. This form of Arabic is revered as sacred, and its traditional usage is considered essential for preserving the authenticity of religious texts such as the Quran and Hadith. Classical Arabic is also the

language of historical and literary works from ancient and medieval periods. However, its complexity and archaism make it challenging to fully grasp even for modern educated speakers. For translators, while Classical Arabic is less commonly featured in contemporary novels, when it appears, especially in religious or historical contexts, its precise and formal tone demands careful attention to convey its sanctity and depth in English.

Standard Arabic, often referred to as *Modern Standard Arabic* (MSA), serves as a 'relatively uniform variety' of Arabic, as described by Sa'id (1964: 2). It is primarily used in written communication and formal spoken contexts, such as news broadcasts or official speeches. Unlike the regionally varied colloquial dialects, MSA is meant to provide a unified medium across the Arabic-speaking countries. However, as Sa'id notes, its spoken use is limited, and it contrasts entirely with colloquial Arabic, which is more regionally and culturally specific. In the context of contemporary Arabic novels, MSA often represents characters' formal discourse or narratorial voice.

Colloquial Arabic (CA), or *'Āmmīyah*, varies widely across regions and is primarily spoken, though it has increasingly appeared in written forms, particularly in literature and online media. Egyptian, Omani, and Lebanese Arabic exemplify the rich diversity within *'Āmmīyah*. Egyptian Arabic, for instance, is widely recognized due to its prevalence in films and media, while Omani Arabic reflects the linguistic influences of the Gulf region. Lebanese Arabic is notable for its incorporation of French vocabulary, mirroring the country's multicultural influences.

In novels where colloquial Arabic features prominently, translators must navigate the interplay between *fuṣḥá* (Classical or Standard Arabic) and *'Āmmīyah*. As Brustad (2017) highlights, *'Āmmīyah* is gaining legitimacy as a literary language without undermining the dominance of *fuṣḥá*. De Angelis (2022) predicts that both could coexist as literary languages, a trend that aligns with the increasing presence of *'Āmmīyah* in contemporary literature.

2.14 Colloquial Arabic

As for Colloquial Arabic, Zughoul (1980: 205-6) categorizes its major features as follows:

1. The term colloquial Arabic (اللهجات) (al-Lahajāt, spoken Arabic, (العامية) al-'Āmmīyah, or (الدارجة) al-Dārijah) describes the native varieties of the Arab masses. It is the language of the illiterate as well as the educated. These varieties serve as the primary mode of communication for both literate and illiterate members of society, transcending educational background. Colloquial Arabic, as such, occupies a vital sociolinguistic position as the vernacular form that

enables day-to-day interactions and expressions of cultural identity. Despite its association with the masses, it is often marginalized in formal settings, where Standard Arabic retains prestige and institutional support.

2. Each Arab country has one or more distinctive dialects that vary within that country and across the Arab world. These dialectal forms differ not only from one country to another but also within local contexts, shaped by geographic, historical, and cultural factors. This intra-Arabic variation means that dialects are often mutually intelligible only to a limited extent, highlighting the complex linguistic landscape across Arabic-speaking communities. The dialectal diversity reinforces cultural distinctions and reflects the sociopolitical fragmentation within the Arabic-speaking world.

3. Colloquial Arabic is simpler than Standard Arabic in syntax and lexicon. It is also more open to borrowings from foreign languages. This simplification can be understood as an adaptation to the needs of rapid, informal communication. Additionally, Colloquial Arabic demonstrates a high degree of permeability to foreign influence, readily incorporating vocabulary from languages such as French, English, Turkish, and others, particularly in countries with colonial histories. This lexical flexibility contrasts with the more conservative nature of Standard Arabic, which prioritizes linguistic purity and adherence to classical roots.

4. Colloquial Arabic has almost all the sounds of Standard Arabic in addition to some phonemes that are foreign to Standard Arabic. These additional sounds can vary significantly by region, influenced by indigenous languages, historical language contact, and colonial legacies. This phonetic richness gives Colloquial Arabic a diversity that further distinguishes it from the standardized form, offering speakers the ability to communicate nuanced social identities through regional accents and sounds.

5. Colloquial Arabic is viewed by most Arabs not only as inferior to Standard Arabic, but also as a violation of that highly elevated variety. Standard Arabic is associated with education, formal discourse, and historical heritage, while Colloquial Arabic, despite its prevalence, is often stigmatized as a less ‘authentic’ or ‘pure’ form. This perception reflects broader social hierarchies, as well as the ideological association of Standard Arabic with Arab unity and Islamic tradition, as opposed to the regional, everyday nature of Colloquial Arabic.

Classical Arabic remains largely reserved for religious, legal, and historical texts and therefore holds a distinct role from Standard Arabic, which continues to evolve in its practical, educational, and media-oriented functions. This separation highlights the layered nature of

Arabic diglossia, where each linguistic form occupies a unique socio-functional niche in Arab societies.

2.14.1 Egyptian Arabic

Since the focus will be on Egyptian Arabic as one of the three dialects studied in this research, it is worth mentioning to refer to some studies in this field. Selim (1967:133) defines Egyptian Arabic as 'The educated colloquial speech of Cairo and Alexandria and is thought to have developed from Classical Arabic or from the Arabic koine, a variety of Arabic believed to have been used simultaneously with early Classical Arabic'. Furthermore, he terms Classical Arabic as 'monologue Arabic' while he terms Colloquial Arabic as 'dialogue Arabic'. Selim is seemingly concentrating on the Classical/Colloquial dichotomy.

Even when we look at Egyptian Arabic itself, we come to know that there are also other sub-dialects within the main dialect. Mitchell (1978: 1-2) delves deeply into an investigation of using Egyptian Arabic. He reports that there are numerous forms of Egyptian Arabic; just as there are numerous dialects of English. He refers to sub-dialects of the general dialect, such as that of Cairo, Quena in Upper Egypt, and the Bedouin area west of Alexandria. He also highlights the differences of educational standard and class which correspond to dialect differences in a single district. It is noted, as Mitchell points out, that the most common form of Egyptian Colloquial dialects is the one spoken by the educated people in Cairo and this dialect was used by Latifa Al-Zayyat in her novel *The Open Door*.

It is observed that Egyptian Arabic can be understood by most Arabs everywhere. McGuirk (1986) concludes that the stature of Egyptian Arabic among other Arabic dialects is enhanced by the fact that Egyptians play a leading cultural role in exporting their films, TV programs, and popular songs. Consequently, Egyptian Arabic is considered the most prevailing dialect in the cultural Arabic scene.

Recent studies have examined the translation of Egyptian colloquial Arabic in contemporary novels into English. Almutairi (2022) found that translators tend to compensate for dialectal dialogue rather than directly translating it, often converting it to informal dialogue. Sabtan *et al.* (2021) evaluated machine translation of Egyptian colloquial Arabic from social media, identifying issues with literal translations and out-of-vocabulary words. Qutait (2020) explored the translation of Egyptian dystopian novels that incorporate both dialect and Modern Standard Arabic, highlighting the tension between genre familiarity and representing the linguistic

spectrum of literary Arabic. The instances of Egyptian Arabic selected from *The Open Door* for the purposes of this study primarily encompass cultural and religious expressions.

2.14.2 Omani Arabic

It is noticed that there are few studies that investigated dialectology in Oman. However, the ones available can give a clear perspective of the nature and types of dialects spoken in Oman. Morano (2022) points out that the southern region of Oman (Dhofar) is home to the group of Semitic languages known as the modern South Arabian languages. This group includes Mehri, Ḥarsūsi, Baṭḥari, Hobyot, Śḥerēt, and Soqoṭri. The people of Dhofar use one of these languages as their mother tongue and they speak Arabic as a second language. As for the north of Oman, there is a great variety of Arabic dialects spoken there reflecting interesting syntactical, lexical, and morphological features which are 'yet to be thoroughly investigated' (Morano, 2022: 13). One of the first researchers to study the Omani dialect is T. M. Johnstone (1967) who classifies Omani Arabic as a variety separate from all the other eastern Arabian dialects spoken in Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and the Trucial Coast (the present-day United Arab Emirates). Moreover, Holes (1990) excludes Oman from his study of the Gulf Arabic grammar on the grounds that the Arabic spoken in this country is totally different from the forms of Arabic spoken in the other Gulf states. Looking at this point, one may disagree because the Omani dialects are derived from Arabic so Omani Arabic should be included in any future studies. In a later study, Holes (1998) considers the isolation of Oman from outside influences as the probable reason which explains the survival of the features of its dialects.

Among the pioneering studies on the vernaculars spoken in Oman is the work of the Indian surgeon Atmaram Sadashiv Jayakar. Jayakar (1889) studied the dialect spoken by the people living in the Muscat area. Another scholar who studied an Omani dialect is Domenyk Eades who published an article titled *'The Arabic Dialect of Šawawi Community of Northern Oman'* (2009). In another study, Eades *et al.* analyse the camel-related lexicon among the Bedouins of Oman in an article titled 'Camel Culture and Camel Terminology among the Omani Bedouin' (Eades *et al.*, 2013).

Recent research on translating Omani Arabic to English highlights various challenges and approaches. Machine translation of Omani dialects from social media data has shown promising results (Al-Kharusi & AAlAbdulsalam, 2023). The transliteration of Omani place names into English presents unique challenges due to phonological differences and the lack of a universal system. A simplified transliteration system has been proposed for use in tourism-related materials to better convey Oman's cultural heritage (Kharusi & Salman, 2011).

2.14.3 Lebanese Arabic

Lebanese Arabic is a regional variety of Levantine Arabic, a dialect group encompassing the spoken languages of Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine. While closely related to these neighbouring dialects, Lebanese Arabic has distinct characteristics that set it apart from MSA, the formal version of the language used in writing, media, and formal communication across the Arab world. These differences manifest in several linguistic aspects, including pronunciation, vocabulary, and intonation.

In terms of pronunciation, Lebanese Arabic often simplifies or alters certain sounds found in MSA, such as the pronunciation of the 'qaf' sound (ق), which is frequently softened or replaced by a glottal stop in Lebanese Arabic. Vocabulary differences reflect the integration of foreign loanwords, especially from French and English, due to Lebanon's colonial history and cosmopolitan culture. For instance, many Lebanese speakers use words like 'merci' (thank you) and 'bonsoir' (good evening) in casual conversation. Intonation in Lebanese Arabic also tends to be more melodic and expressive compared to the relatively neutral tone of MSA. The two excerpts selected from Elias Khoury's *As Though She Were Sleeping* feature colloquial Lebanese Arabic expressions that encapsulate cultural and religious nuances.

2.15 Register

An essential concept relevant to the scope of this study is register. Baker (2018: 14) defines *register* as 'a variety of language that a language user considers appropriate to a specific situation'. This concept is crucial when analysing the interplay of colloquial Arabic dialects and their translatability into English, particularly in the three contemporary Arabic novels selected for this study. Register variation, as Baker explains, arises from three parameters: field (the subject matter or context), tenor (the relationship between the speakers), and mode (the medium or manner of communication). Understanding these parameters is fundamental for translators, as dialect usage within novels often reflects shifts in register, which convey subtle social and cultural nuances. For example, the casual tone of Egyptian Arabic used in dialogue among friends contrasts sharply with more formal Standard Arabic narration, a dichotomy that requires careful attention during translation.

Hatim and Mason (1990) argue that identifying the register of a text is a critical yet insufficient step in preparing it for translation. Instead, they emphasize register analysis, informed by Halliday's framework, as a means to reconstruct the situational variables of a text. For translators working with Arabic novels, this involves understanding how dialect and register

function within the narrative. For instance, the *field* might relate to specific cultural or regional activities (e.g., a family gathering depicted in Lebanese Arabic), while the *tenor* could highlight interpersonal relationships (e.g., a parent-child conversation in Omani Arabic). The *mode* may reflect stylistic choices, such as a poetic tone in *fuṣḥá* versus the casual, humour-laden expressions in colloquial dialogue.

Bolinger's (1975: 359) categorization of registers into five levels—oratorical, deliberative, consultative, casual, and intimate—offers another lens through which translators can analyse and render Arabic dialects. Colloquial Arabic, often found in the casual or intimate registers, conveys familiarity and emotional depth in novels.

For translators, the challenge lies in conveying these registers authentically in English while preserving the cultural and social contexts tied to the dialects. For instance, translating the *casual* humour of Egyptian Arabic requires finding equivalents that resonate with English-speaking audiences without losing the cultural essence. Similarly, intimate exchanges in Lebanese Arabic, which may incorporate French loanwords, demand nuanced translation choices that reflect the hybrid nature of the dialogue. Ultimately, register analysis not only aids in understanding how dialects function within novels but also guides translators in maintaining the integrity and authenticity of the original text when rendering it into English. The concept of register was explicitly mentioned by the 50 participants who completed the questionnaire, underscoring its critical role in shaping translation strategies when addressing sections of colloquial Arabic in contemporary Arabic novels.

2.16 Dialects under the lenses of translators

In addition to studies focusing on dialects and linguistic variation, it is crucial to highlight research that bridges translation theories with the theory of linguistic variation. Robinson (1997: 25) provides valuable insights into this intersection by exploring the dynamic relationship between linguistic variation and translation theories. Robinson emphasizes that translation extends beyond the mechanical act of achieving textual equivalence. Instead, he situates translation as a profoundly social process, deeply rooted in the cultural and social realities of the speakers involved.

This perspective is particularly relevant to the translation of colloquial Arabic dialects in the three contemporary Arabic novels. Robinson argues that translation should not be confined to textual substitution but must consider the social backgrounds of the characters and the context in which their speech occurs. By understanding the cultural and societal dimensions embedded

in the source text's dialects, translators are better equipped to render a realistic portrayal of fictional characters in the target text. This approach is critical for translating CA dialects, as it enables the translator to preserve the authenticity and social significance of the original dialogue in English.

Some studies have also explored the challenges of translating between formal and vernacular registers, particularly from English into Arabic. Hatim and Mason (1997: 98-99) examine the process of translating formal English into Arabic and highlight the linguistic choices available to translators. They propose three potential strategies for handling linguistic variation:

1. Opting for the classical Arabic variety.

2. Opting for one of the vernaculars (e.g., Moroccan, Egyptian, etc.).

3. Combining the two approaches, using vernaculars for informal speech and classical Arabic for formal contexts.

The 50 participants in the questionnaire conducted for this study affirm that this framework is equally applicable to translating colloquial Arabic into English, where similar decisions must be made to balance the authenticity of the source text with the expectations of the target audience. Translators must consider whether to retain the distinctiveness of the vernacular, adapt it into a more neutral or standardized form, or alternate between dialectal and formal registers depending on the context.

The translation of CA dialects in contemporary Arabic novels into English presents a unique and complex challenge. Comparative studies in translation, which examine translation practices across different contexts, have long been a significant area of research. Doorslaer (2017) highlights the importance of such studies, particularly for fostering cultural exchange. For instance, Tyulenev *et al.* (2017) explore how translation has been professionalized in Russia, China, and Spain, showcasing the distinct ways translation and interpreting are perceived in each country. Similarly, D'hulst (2007) examines the role of translation in European literatures and proposes a model that connects literary studies with inter-literary relationships. These examples demonstrate the critical role of comparative studies in understanding translation's cultural and linguistic complexities.

Building on this tradition, this study focuses on the specific challenges of translating Arabic dialects into English, as encountered in contemporary Arabic novels, films, and social media. This issue has been identified in the literature as a persistent problem. Translating dialects often

leads to the loss of their unique linguistic and cultural features, a concern highlighted by Aubed (2022), who notes that this loss can result in a flattening or standardization of the original text. By addressing these challenges, this research seeks to pave the way for further studies that explore innovative strategies for translating Arabic dialects while preserving their distinctiveness.

2.17 The Response of 'Equivalence' to Dialectal Variation

Central to any discussion on translating CA dialogue in the three contemporary Arabic novels into English is the concept of *equivalence*. This notion, which seeks to establish a parallel between the source and target languages, remains a subject of debate among theorists and practitioners of translation. While various scholars have proposed differing classifications of equivalence, several key types have emerged as particularly relevant to the challenges posed by translating colloquial dialogue.

2.17.1 Dynamic Equivalence

In the context of translating colloquial Arabic dialogue in contemporary Arabic novels into English, Eugene Nida's concept of *dynamic equivalence* (1964) offers a foundational framework. Dynamic equivalence emphasizes that the relationship between the target audience and the translated text should mirror the relationship between the original audience and the source text. Nida, who also refers to this approach as *functional equivalence*, stresses the importance of ensuring that the translated message is understood and appreciated by the target audience in the same way it was by the original audience. This approach prioritizes naturalness in translation, aligning with the target language, culture, and audience expectations while maintaining the spirit and intent of the original message (Nida, 1964: 159–166).

Nida identifies four essential requirements for a successful translation: it must (1) make sense, (2) convey the spirit and manner of the original, (3) read naturally in the target language, and (4) evoke a similar response in the target audience. These principles are especially relevant when translating colloquial Arabic dialogue, which is often deeply rooted in cultural expressions and regional nuances that may not have direct equivalents in English.

Further expanding on Nida's work, Newmark (1981:10) highlights the concept of *equivalent effect*, which aligns with the goals of dynamic equivalence. According to Newmark, the greatest challenge for translators lies in replicating the impact of the source text on its original audience within a different linguistic and cultural context. For instance, just as a successful translation of Shakespeare's *Othello* must evoke the same emotions in non-English readers as it does in its

original audience, a successful rendering of colloquial Arabic dialogue in novels must resonate with English readers while preserving the cultural and emotional depth of the original. This task is particularly complex when dealing with colloquial Arabic, given its heavy reliance on regional expressions, humour, and cultural references.

2.17.2 Formal Equivalence

The concept of equivalence plays an important role in translating CA dialogue in contemporary Arabic novels into English. Formal equivalence, as described by Catford (1965) and Crystal (1981), prioritizes faithfulness to both the form and content of the source text, focusing on reproducing linguistic features and cultural nuances. This approach provides readers with insights into the source culture but may maintain cultural distance. By contrast, dynamic equivalence, emphasizes the target audience's understanding and response, aiming to replicate the effect the original text had on its audience. De Pedro (2000, 415) highlights this distinction, noting that dynamic equivalence minimizes cultural differences to enhance comprehension, while formal equivalence retains cultural markers like idioms and proverbs.

This tension is particularly relevant when translating colloquial Arabic into English, as such dialogue often contains culturally and socially specific expressions and words. Dynamic equivalence may simplify or adapt these features to make them accessible to English readers, potentially losing some cultural depth. Formal equivalence, however, might retain these elements, offering a richer cultural portrayal but risking alienation of the target audience.

Nord (1997) broadens the discussion by viewing translators as intermediaries who bridge linguistic and cultural gaps. She argues that their role is to enable effective communication between culturally distinct audiences, ensuring that both verbal and non-verbal elements align with the target audience's expectations. This perspective reinforces the translator's responsibility in mediating between the cultural nuances of colloquial Arabic and the linguistic norms of English, ensuring that the dialogue resonates with its intended audience.

Reiss *et al.* (2014) critique the vagueness of terms like *equivalence* and *adequacy* in translation studies, proposing that equivalence involves achieving a similar communicative function across cultures. They argue that adequacy refers to the alignment of the translation with its purpose, a principle central to Skopos Theory. This theory underscores the importance of a translation's purpose in determining its approach. For the translation of colloquial Arabic dialogue in the three novels selected for this study, The translator prioritized different strategies depending on whether the goal is cultural preservation or audience accessibility.

In translating the colloquial Arabic dialogue in the three novels into English, the interplay between formal and dynamic equivalence, cultural considerations, and the translator's role as a cultural mediator highlights the intricate challenges of preserving the authenticity and communicative effectiveness of the original text. This balance is essential to ensure that the translated work remains both faithful to its source and engaging for its audience.

2.18 Text Types and Functions

Reiss *et al.* (2014) emphasize the importance of *conventional patterns of textualization*—a term that refers to the stylistic and compositional features of a text. These patterns allow readers to identify genres and their associated conventions. For example, in Arabic, the phrase *In the name of Allah, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful* typically signals the beginning of Quranic verses or formal speeches. This cultural and stylistic knowledge significantly impacts the translation process, especially when dealing with texts where genre recognition and conventions play a critical role.

Reiss *et al.* (2014) highlight how genre conventions guide translation decisions. For instance, I can say that Arabic novels frequently mix Standard Arabic for narrative prose with colloquial dialects for dialogue, reflecting the sociolinguistic realities of Arabic-speaking communities. The translator's ability to preserve these stylistic transitions in English ensures the authenticity of the characters' voices and maintains the text's cultural and linguistic integrity.

Moreover, Reiss *et al.* (2014) classify texts into three types—informative, expressive, and operative—each with distinct functions that influence translation strategies. Informative texts prioritize clarity of content, expressive texts emphasize artistic or emotional impact, and operative texts aim to elicit a specific response from the audience. Translating colloquial Arabic dialogue in contemporary Arabic novels often requires balancing these functions, as dialogue conveys both character expression and cultural authenticity. Table 2.1 below shows the three types of texts according to Reiss *et al.* (2014).

Table 2.1: Text types and functions (Reiss et al., 2014)

		informative	expressive	operative
ENCODING LEVEL	content (+ aesthetic organization); persuasive configuration			x
	content; aesthetic organization		x	(x)
	content	x	x	x

2.19 The translation of dialects

House (1997) suggests that translations of historical texts should avoid changes for culture-specific markers, whereas literary texts may allow TL equivalents, though dialect replacements often present equivalence issues. Kövecses (2005) observes that even regional varieties of the same language, such as local or national dialects, differ in metaphorical patterns, though studies on local varieties remain scarce. The current study explores dialectal equivalence, questioning how to best translate Arabic dialects (e.g., Egyptian, Omani and Lebanese) into English. True dialectal equivalence may be challenging, as direct dialect substitutions, like Egyptian Arabic to Cockney English, risk distorting cultural nuances despite offering superficial alignment. Dialectal equivalence works best when source and target dialects share cultural and social similarities. The following text from Al-Zayyat's novel can be easily reformulated in other Arabic dialects with nearly keeping the same situation and culture:

.. " -الهجوم النهارده ما كانش موجه ضد الإنكليز بس، الهجوم كان ضد الإنكليز والملك وعملاء الاستعمار على العموم، ودي مرحلة جديدة من مراحل الوعي الوطني، دا رأيي أنا شخصيا".

(Al-Zayyat, 2015: 2)

The Arabic text shows the use of Egyptian Arabic words and expressions like 'النهارده', 'ما كانش', 'بس', 'دي' and 'دا'. These words are not used in MSA. They are used mainly in Egyptian Arabic. The MSA equivalents for these colloquial words would be 'هذا النهار', 'لم يكن', 'فقط', 'هذه', and 'هذا' respectively. In English, they mean 'today', 'was not', 'only', 'this' and 'this' respectively.

On the other hand, Booth's translation of the same text was formal:

‘This wasn’t simply an anti-English thing today. No, people were attacking the English and the king, and agents of imperialism in general. And I say this is a new stage of national consciousness, that’s my own personal view of the situation.’

(Booth, 2017: 4)

The speaker in the Egyptian Arabic text exhibits ambiguity in their educational background, with dialogue that hints at political awareness typical of either an informed layperson or someone with formal education. In contrast, the target-language character in the English text appears distinctly well-educated, characterized by precise and measured language use. This shift in register within Booth’s translation substantially alters the persona of the source text’s speaker. Translating colloquial Arabic into formal English thus erases key indicators of the speaker’s educational, cultural, and social identity.

2.20 Skopos Theory

A main theoretical framework underpinning this study is *Skopos Theory*, as articulated in *Towards a General Theory of Translational Action: Skopos Theory Explained* by Katharina Reiss and Hans J. Vermeer (1984/2013). Originally published in German as *Grundlegung einer allgemeinen Translationstheorie (Foundation of a general translation theory)*, the work explores translation as a purposeful action and offers foundational principles for understanding translation processes. The book is divided into two parts: Vermeer presents the overarching theoretical foundation of Skopos Theory as a general approach to translation, while Reiss integrates her text-typological perspective, focusing on cases where functional equivalence between the source and target texts is required. This dual approach highlights both the strategic flexibility and situational specificity inherent in effective translation.

The English version of the book, translated by Christiane Nord, introduces critical terminological clarifications. Nord uses *translatorial action* to translate *translatorisches Handeln*, distinguishing between the processes of translation and interpretation under the umbrella term *translational action*. Additionally, Nord employs *translatology* to reflect the broader field of translation and interpreting studies, while reserving *translation studies* as a direct equivalent of the German *Übersetzungswissenschaft*.

The term *Skopos*—derived from the Greek word for ‘aim’ or ‘purpose’—was introduced by Hans J. Vermeer in the 1970s as a key concept in translation theory. It emphasizes that translation should be driven by a specific goal or purpose, which is negotiated and performed

to achieve an intended result. Though predating Holz-Mänttäri's theory of translational action, Skopos aligns closely with its principles, as both frameworks view translation as an intentional, context-driven activity involving both the source text and the broader communicative situation (Vermeer, 1989/2021).

In the context of translating colloquial Arabic dialogue in the three contemporary Arabic novels selected for this study, Skopos Theory offers valuable insights. The participants in the questionnaire navigate the cultural and linguistic intricacies of colloquial Arabic while ensuring that their decisions align with the purpose of the translation. For instance, preserving the authenticity and cultural resonance of dialogue might require adaptations that balance readability for the English-speaking audience with faithfulness to the source text's social and linguistic expressions. By foregrounding the translation's purpose, Skopos Theory equips translators to make informed choices that maintain the narrative's integrity while effectively communicating its cultural dimensions.

2.20.1 What does Skopos Theory posit?

At the heart of *Skopos Theory* lies the principle that translation is a purpose-driven activity. Reiss and Vermeer (2014) use terms such as 'purpose', 'aim', 'function' and 'Skopos' interchangeably, emphasizing that the intended function of a translation determines the process, style, and outcome. They illustrate this with practical examples, highlighting the context-specific nature of language. For instance, the format of a parliamentary speech differs significantly from that of an obituary, just as the Arabic saying *(لكلِّ مقامٍ مقالٌ)* (Every situation should have its own level of rhetoric) underscores the importance of situational appropriateness in communication. In translation, this principle requires careful tailoring to align the style and tone with the expectations of the target audience.

Reiss and Vermeer summarize the theory as follows: 'The Skopos of an action takes precedence over the mode of action', meaning the purpose of a translation dictates how and what is translated (Reiss *et al.*, 2014). In the context of the three novels selected for this study, this framework is relevant and was reflected in the responses of the 50 literary translators who responded to the questionnaire.

Skopos Theory unfolds in three phases:

1. Setting the Skopos: The target audience is analysed to determine the purpose of the translation.

2. Redefining the relevance of the source text: The significance of specific elements of the source text is adjusted to align with the purpose of the translation.

3. Accomplishing the Skopos: A functional transfer of the source text is achieved, ensuring it resonates with the target audience while preserving key aspects of the original.

Skopos Theory underscores the necessity of cultural and linguistic competence to ensure coherence between source and target texts. According to Reiss *et al.* (2014), coherence outweighs strict fidelity to the source text, particularly when cultural norms and conventions differ significantly between languages. Translators must navigate these complexities by understanding the cultural 'norms and conventions' that define societal interactions within a given community (Vermeer, 1987). While Vermeer views culture as an intrinsic marker of group identity, one might argue that cultural knowledge can be acquired through learning and need not depend solely on demographic or geographic affiliation.

This cultural lens is especially pertinent to translating CA dialogue in the three novels. The rich cultural context embedded in colloquial expressions and idioms requires the translator to act as a mediator, bridging the gap between the audience of the Arabic source text and English-speaking readers. This mediation is guided by the *Skopos* and informed by the translator's familiarity with both source and target cultures. By adopting the principles of Skopos Theory, this study evaluated how CA dialogue is translatable into English while balancing fidelity to the original and functionality within the target culture.

2.20.2 Terminological distinctions in Skopos Theory

Reiss *et al.* (2014) conceptualize both the text producer and the recipient as 'communication partners', positioning them as integral components of the communicative 'situation'. This situation encompasses various elements, including cultural context, the specific environment of the interaction, psychological and social dynamics of the communication partners, and the nature of their relationship (Reiss *et al.*, 2014, 17). They argue that before attempting to construct a theory of translational action, it is essential to establish a robust theory of text production. Moreover, they emphasize that such a theory must be rooted in an understanding of text reception and the effects the text produces on its audience.

This perspective is particularly relevant to the study of translating CA dialogues in contemporary Arabic novels into English. Any translation of dialects necessitates consideration of how the audience of the source text perceives and reacts to the dialects, as this response

informs the translation strategy. To explore this issue further, it is crucial to examine how Skopos Theory—especially as articulated by Reiss and Vermeer—defines language and classifies dialects. By doing so, one can better understand the implications for achieving functional equivalence in translation, particularly when handling the nuanced and culturally embedded features of dialects.

2.20.3 How do Reiss and Vermeer define language and classify dialects?

Reiss and Vermeer define language as a generic term including all the means used by members of a particular community to communicate with each other (Reiss *et al.*, 2014). This inclusive definition accommodates not only existing linguistic forms but also any potential future modes of communication that may arise within a community. Their framework emphasizes the evolving and adaptable nature of language.

Furthermore, Reiss *et al.* (2014) observe that, over time, written language can develop a degree of independence from spoken language. For example, they highlight the aesthetic qualities of Egyptian hieroglyphs and the spiritual significance of Arabic calligraphy as representations in the Qur'an. These examples underscore how written language can transcend its utilitarian purpose, assuming cultural and artistic dimensions.

Reiss and Vermeer classify dialects as 'subforms on lower ranks' and further categorize them into regional dialects (regiolects), social dialects (sociolects), and idiolects, the latter referring to language varieties unique to individuals at specific times (e.g., Shakespeare's language or James Joyce's *Ulysses*). Translation, according to Reiss *et al.*, is a form of 'transfer' that extends beyond Jakobson's (1959/2000) concept of 'interlingual translation', which they find too restrictive. Instead, they advocate for the term 'intercultural translation', reflecting the broader cultural dimensions involved in the translation process.

Reiss and Vermeer's broad definition of language and their classification of dialects provide valuable theoretical grounding for the study of translating CA dialogue in the three Arabic novels into English. Their distinction between written and spoken language is particularly pertinent to Arabic, where MSA and regional colloquial dialects coexist in a diglossic relationship.

However, their labelling of dialects as 'subforms on lower ranks' risks undervaluing the complexity and cultural richness of colloquial Arabic. Colloquial Arabic, far from being a mere 'subform', often carries profound social, historical, and emotional significance. For example,

the choice of dialect in a novel may convey the speaker's class, region, or identity, all of which are critical to the narrative. This complexity raises the question of whether the hierarchical framework proposed by Reiss and Vermeer adequately addresses the cultural and social dimensions of dialects in Arabic. Additionally, their preference for 'intercultural translation' over 'interlingual translation' aligns well with the translation of Arabic dialects.

2.20.4 Language and culture as viewed by Skopos Theory

Reiss *et al.* (2014) conceptualize language as an integral component of culture, emphasizing that cultures utilize language as a conventional tool for communication and thought. Furthermore, they define culture as encompassing a society's social norms and their expressions. Consequently, translators must be 'bi-cultural', possessing an in-depth understanding of both source and target cultures to navigate the cultural and situational elements that can create translation challenges. This insight is significant when addressing the translatability of CA dialogue in the three Arabic novels selected for this study. This is because cultural specificity and localized expressions are often central to the impact of the text.

Reiss *et al.* (2014) also argue that translation theory must address the evaluation of changes in the value of text elements or entire texts that occur during the transfer from the source culture to the target culture. They acknowledge that such changes are an inevitable aspect of translation, whether they are seen as natural adjustments focusing on universal cognitive values or as fundamental issues requiring resolution. In the context of translating colloquial Arabic, this perspective invites a critical examination of how shifts in meaning, tone, or cultural resonance might affect the reception of the text in English. The challenge lies in balancing the authenticity of the source text's cultural and linguistic nuances with the expectations and understanding of the target audience.

A key advantage of Skopos Theory, as highlighted by Reiss and Vermeer, is its capacity to define the purpose (the 'what'), timing (the 'when'), and method (the 'how') of translational action. Unlike Toury, they view translation as a phenomenon of both the source and target cultures, originating in the source culture but capable of exerting direct or indirect influence on it. This dual perspective underscores the importance of the translator's contextual awareness of the source text's production and its cultural significance. For instance, in the case of colloquial Arabic dialogue, the linguistic richness and socio-cultural identity of the source text often shape the translator's strategy to achieve functional equivalence in the target text.

Reiss and Vermeer further stress the translator's pivotal role in determining what is translated, when, and how, guided by their expertise in both source and target languages and cultures. The translator's decisions directly influence the success of a translation, with a thorough analysis of the source text and target situation forming the foundation of their strategy. When applied to the translation of colloquial Arabic, this theory highlights the complexity of transferring dialectal nuances, cultural idioms, and interpersonal dynamics into English. While the theory provides a flexible framework, it also invites critical scrutiny: does it fully account for the socio-political and literary dimensions of colloquial Arabic, particularly its role in challenging or reinforcing cultural hierarchies? Such questions are vital for exploring how translation can preserve or transform the essence of colloquial Arabic in contemporary Arabic novels.

2.20.5 The basic rules of Skopos Theory

The primary rule asserts that translation is determined by its Skopos—the purpose or objective behind the translation. This means that the translation process serves as an offer of information in the target culture and target language (TL), informed by an equivalent offer in the source culture and source language (SL). However, the relationship between the source text (ST) and target text (TT) is not bidirectionally reversible, as the TT adapts the ST to suit the needs of the target culture. Moreover, Skopos Theory stipulates two critical criteria for the TT: it must exhibit internal coherence (be understandable within itself) and coherence with the ST (maintain some degree of faithfulness). These rules are hierarchically organized, with the Skopos rule taking precedence. The theory also highlights the importance of considering the distance between the SL and TL, including differences in dialects, cultural norms, and communicative contexts.

Munday (2012) emphasizes that the effectiveness of a TT hinges on its receptibility within the target culture. He argues that the translation strategy must prioritize the comprehensibility of the TT for the intended audience, factoring in their knowledge, expectations, and cultural context. A translation that fails to resonate with the target audience undermines its communicative purpose and fails to achieve its intended function.

Skopos Theory provides a valuable framework for addressing the translatability of CA dialogue in contemporary Arabic novels into English. The theory's emphasis on purpose-driven translation aligns with the challenges of transferring culturally embedded elements, such as dialects, idioms, and sociolinguistic nuances, from Arabic into English. The Skopos—or

purpose—of such translations often involves preserving the narrative's authenticity while ensuring accessibility and resonance with an English-speaking audience.

Munday's focus on audience comprehension reinforces the need for translators to adapt colloquial Arabic to align with the cultural and linguistic expectations of the target audience. Yet, this approach may conflict with the artistic and cultural integrity of the ST. For example, in contemporary Arabic novels, the use of dialect often serves as a tool to emphasize regional identity, social class, or emotional depth. Translating these features into English while retaining their impact requires creative solutions, such as finding functional equivalents or using paratextual elements like footnotes or glossaries.

2.20.6 The rationale for incorporating Skopos Theory as a core component of the theoretical framework for this study

The choice of Skopos Theory as a guiding framework for this study is suited to addressing the challenges of translating colloquial Arabic dialogue in the three Arabic novels selected for this study. This approach underscores the necessity of defining a clear purpose when translating dialectal dialogue into formal language. By prioritizing the target audience's perception, Skopos Theory enables the translator to capture the authentic representation of characters in the source text, ensuring fidelity to the narrative's cultural and linguistic nuances.

Hans J. Vermeer, a pioneer of Skopos Theory, sought to bridge the gap between translation theory and practice. As early as 1976, he aimed to move beyond the constraints of linguistic translation theories. In his seminal *Framework for a General Translation Theory* (1978), Vermeer contended that linguistics alone is insufficient for addressing translation challenges, arguing that translation is not 'merely and not even primarily a linguistic process' (Vermeer, 1987: 29). He emphasized the need for alternative methodologies to tackle translation problems, a call that Skopos Theory directly addresses.

Furthermore, the adaptability of Skopos Theory enhances its relevance to this research. Reiss *et al.* (2014) highlight the theory's extension to diverse literary and pragmatic genres, acknowledging that novels may incorporate non-literary elements such as recipes, obituaries, and business letters. This flexibility is critical in literary translation, where cultural sensitivity is paramount. Translators who uncritically replicate source-culture conventions risk producing texts perceived as alien or inadequate by target-culture readers. Adopting Skopos Theory thus helps mitigate such risks, as it emphasizes aligning translations with the norms and

expectations of the target culture, thereby increasing the accessibility and acceptance of the text.

2.21 Christiane Nord' translation-oriented Model of Text Functions

This model represents the second component of the theoretical framework for the current study, which investigates the translatability of CA dialogue in three contemporary Arabic novels into English. Nord identifies four fundamental text functions, which can be further divided into various sub-functions. These functions are rooted in Karl Bühler's organon model (Bühler, 1934/1965), which outlines three primary text functions: referential, expressive, and appellative. These correspond to the functions identified in Skopos Theory, albeit under slightly different terminologies: informative (referential), expressive, and operative (appellative).

Bühler's functions are relevant to this study, as they provide a foundation for understanding how the nuances of colloquial Arabic dialogue, which often carry cultural and emotional significance, can be effectively conveyed in English translation. Nord extends Bühler's model by incorporating a fourth function, the *phatic function*, which she adopts from Roman Jakobson's model of language functions. This function emphasizes the relational aspect of communication, focusing on establishing and maintaining connections between the speaker and the listener or reader. In the context of translating colloquial dialogue, the phatic function becomes significant as it underscores the importance of capturing the interpersonal and cultural dynamics embedded in the dialogue, which are crucial for preserving the authenticity and readability of the translated text for an English-speaking audience.

Nord's (1997) functional classification framework emphasizes that different communicative functions require tailored translation strategies. This principle is relevant when addressing the translatability of colloquial Arabic dialogue in the three contemporary Arabic novels into English. For instance, consider the Arabic proverb *(اطلبوا العلمَ ولو في الصين)*, which translates to 'Pursue knowledge even if you go to China in its pursuit'. While this proverb carries a strong cultural and motivational message in Arabic, a direct translation may lack cultural resonance for a Chinese audience. A more effective approach would involve substituting it with a Chinese proverb that conveys a similar ethos, ensuring relevance and accessibility to the target audience.

This example illustrates the critical role of functional equivalence in translation, particularly when navigating culturally specific elements such as colloquial expressions or idiomatic dialogue. Nord (1997) identifies three key aspects of functionalism that are especially pertinent

to translator training and practice: the significance of the translation brief, the necessity of thorough source-text analysis, and the systematic classification and prioritization of translation challenges.

Applying these principles to the current research, the translation brief becomes essential in guiding how colloquial Arabic dialogue is adapted for an English-speaking audience, focusing on preserving the intended communicative function of the dialogue. Source-text analysis further aids in identifying cultural, linguistic, and stylistic features of the original text that may pose challenges in translation. Finally, the classification and hierarchization of translation problems allow translators to prioritize solutions that maintain the integrity and readability of the text in the target language, ensuring that the colloquial nuances of Arabic dialogue are effectively conveyed.

2.22 Nord's systematic approach to translation problems

Nord's (1997) framework emphasizes that translation problems are an inevitable aspect of the translation process, even for experienced translators. She categorizes these problems into four main types: pragmatic, cultural, linguistic, and text-specific. This categorization is relevant to the current study, which examines the translatability of CA dialogue in three contemporary Arabic novels into English, as each category highlights unique challenges associated with rendering dialectal expressions across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

Pragmatic translation problems arise from contextual differences between the source-text and target-text situations. These problems can be analysed through extratextual factors such as sender, receiver, medium, time, place, motive, and text function. For example, colloquial Arabic dialogue may reflect specific social or geographical contexts that require careful adaptation to resonate with an English-speaking audience.

Cultural translation problems result from the divergence in norms and conventions governing verbal and non-verbal behaviours in the source and target cultures. This issue is pronounced in the translation of colloquial Arabic, as cultural nuances embedded in the dialogue often carry layers of meaning that may not have direct equivalents in English.

Linguistic translation problems stem from structural differences between the source and target languages. For instance, challenges may arise when translating Arabic verb forms into English, where tense usage may differ significantly. These linguistic disparities can complicate the accurate portrayal of temporal and narrative situations in colloquial dialogue.

Text-specific translation problems are inherent to source-text elements, such as idioms, figures of speech, neologisms, or puns. Translating colloquial Arabic dialogue often requires a creative approach to maintain functional equivalence in the target text, especially when such features carry significant cultural or stylistic weight. Nord (1997) suggests that literal translations may not suffice in these cases and advocates for strategies that prioritize the intended effect of the original text over strict linguistic fidelity.

Nord further underscores the importance of addressing translation errors as part of the evaluation process. These errors, she argues, provide valuable insights into the relative functionality or adequacy of a translation. In some cases, deliberate deviations from grammatical norms in the target language may be necessary to replicate features such as a character's idiosyncratic or non-standard speech patterns in the source text. This principle is applicable to the current study, where preserving the authenticity of colloquial dialogue requires balancing linguistic accuracy with the dynamic representation of character voice and cultural context.

2.23 Literary communication across cultural barriers according to Nord's model

When examining the challenges of translatability in literary communication across cultural and linguistic divides, Nord (1997) identifies four fundamental relations essential to cross-cultural literary communication. These relations are relevant to the current study, which explores the translatability of CA dialogue in three contemporary Arabic novels into English. They provide a framework for understanding the complex interplay between the source text, its cultural and linguistic context, and the expectations of the target audience.

1. The Relation between the Sender's Intention and the Text

Nord assumes that authors, when crafting their texts, aim to produce a deliberate effect on their readers, ensuring that the intended message is not left to chance. In the context of authentic literature, the sender (the author) and the text producer are the same individual. However, in translated literature, the dynamics shift. According to Nord (1997), the translator does not merely replicate the sender's intention but interprets and reformulates it within the target language and cultural context. This interpretative process is particularly significant when translating colloquial Arabic dialogue, as the translator must navigate linguistic and cultural markers while preserving the original text's communicative intent and artistic integrity.

2. The Relation between the Sender's Intention and the Receiver's Expectation

Effective communication, whether in the source or translated text, requires the text producer to account for the cultural background and knowledge of the audience. For a translation to maintain an identity of intention and function, three conditions must be met:

- The translator has correctly interpreted the sender's intention.

- The translator has successfully expressed this interpretation in a manner that aligns with the cultural and linguistic expectations of the target audience.

- The translator has ensured that the background knowledge and expectations of the source-text and target-text audiences are either aligned or adjusted to achieve equivalence.

3. The Relation between Fiction and the Real World

Within the framework of Skopos Theory, Nord (1997) underscores the importance of addressing the dual distances between the *text world*, the source culture's reality, and the target culture's reality. This concept is pertinent to the current study, which examines the translatability of CA dialogue in three contemporary Arabic novels into English, as it highlights the cultural and linguistic adjustments necessary for effective cross-cultural communication.

Nord posits that the *skopos*—the intended function of the translation—determines how the translator approaches the *text world*. In the context of colloquial Arabic dialogue, the translator may adopt one of several strategies, depending on the purpose of the translation. These strategies include preserving the *text world* intact to maintain authenticity, neutralizing culturally specific references to enhance accessibility, or adapting the *text world* to reduce cultural distance. Each approach aims to achieve the desired communicative effect within the target culture while navigating the complexities of colloquial language, which often embodies rich cultural and contextual nuances.

4. The Relation between the Text and the Receiver

Nord (1997) emphasizes that literary texts are composed of a range of stylistic features—including rhythm, prosody, syntax, metaphors, and symbols—as well as broader literary codes such as character development, thematic ideas, expressiveness, and atmosphere. However, she cautions that even when a translator replicates the stylistic devices used by the author, there is no guarantee that the translated text will achieve the same effect in the target culture. For Nord, an 'ideal translation' is one that aligns the function and effect of the target text with those of the source text. In the context of this study, the translatability of colloquial Arabic dialogue in

the three contemporary Arabic novels into English involves navigating stylistic and cultural complexities to maintain the original text's literary and communicative essence.

Nord's functionalist approach is rooted in her *function-plus-loyalty* model, which balances the purpose of the translation with a commitment to respecting the source text and its author. This model addresses criticisms that the functionalist approach grants translators excessive freedom to manipulate texts according to their preferences or the desires of their clients. By incorporating the interests of the three primary stakeholders in the translation process—initiators, target receivers, and original authors—the *function-plus-loyalty* model ensures a more ethical and purpose-driven approach to translation.

This framework is relevant when translating colloquial Arabic dialogue, where linguistic loyalty to the source text must be balanced against functional considerations to ensure the dialogue resonates with the target audience. For instance, achieving the same expressiveness or cultural atmosphere in English often requires creative adaptations to bridge cultural and linguistic differences while remaining faithful to the original intent.

2.24 Summary and Conclusion

This chapter serves as the foundational framework for the present study, which investigates the translatability of colloquial Arabic dialogue in three contemporary Arabic novels into English. By conducting a comprehensive review of existing research in the fields of literary translation and dialectology, the chapter provides critical insights into the challenges and strategies associated with translating dialectal variations in literary texts. It highlights significant studies that address dialect-related translation issues, with a particular focus on the two theoretical frameworks underpinning this research: Skopos Theory and Christiane Nord's functionalist approach.

A detailed analysis of the fundamental principles and applications of these theories is presented to explain their relevance to the translation of colloquial Arabic dialogue. Skopos Theory emphasizes the purpose (or *skopos*) of the translation as the primary determinant of the translator's strategy, offering flexibility to adapt cultural and linguistic elements to suit the target audience. Nord's functionalist approach builds on this by incorporating the concept of *function plus loyalty*, which ensures that the translation respects the original text's intent while meeting the communicative needs of the target audience. Together, these theories form a

theoretical foundation for addressing the complexities of translating culturally embedded and linguistically nuanced dialogue.

The chapter also defines and clarifies key concepts integral to the study, including *translatability* and *untranslatability*, which explore the limits and possibilities of conveying meaning across languages. Additionally, it examines the nature and role of *dialect* in literary texts, focusing on specific varieties such as Egyptian Arabic, Omani Arabic, and Lebanese Arabic, which represent distinct regional and cultural identities. The concept of *register* is analysed to highlight the impact of varying levels of formality and social context on dialogue, while the phenomenon of *Arabic diglossia*—the coexistence of formal and colloquial forms of Arabic—is explored to reveal its implications for translation practices.

By synthesizing these studies and theoretical perspectives, the chapter establishes a critical foundation for the research questions guiding this study. It positions the study within a broader academic discourse on literary translation and dialectology while addressing the unique challenges posed by the translation of colloquial Arabic dialogue. This review equips readers with the necessary conceptual and theoretical tools to engage with the subsequent chapter, which details the methodological framework employed to investigate the research problem. The methodology chapter builds on the insights provided here, demonstrating how these theoretical approaches and concepts are operationalized to analyse the translatability of colloquial Arabic dialogue and to propose solutions for preserving the linguistic and cultural integrity of such texts in English translation.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter listed the main studies that dealt with the translation of Colloquial Arabic dialects in contemporary Arabic novels into English. It also explained the general theoretical approaches adopted to answer the research questions.

This chapter provides an overview in which the theoretical framework of the current study is established. This has been done within the context of quantitative and qualitative research methods and the use of various analytical tools, namely Microsoft Forms, Excel and NVivo. This chapter describes the design frame of the study, the participants (sampling, access, etc.), ethical considerations, data gathering, materials used, the research procedure, limitations, and analysis. The chapter also provides justification for the methods used and the tools applied. It also gives an overview of the pilot study and its implementation and results. All these points lead then to a conclusion that highlights the major tasks implemented to answer the research questions.

This chapter highlights my position as a literary translator navigating between Arabic and English within the scope of this study. My dual role as both literary translation practitioner and academic serves as a contribution to the examination of colloquial Arabic dialogue and its translatability in three contemporary Arabic novels. This positionality offers an insider perspective that enriches the study's framework and distinguishes it from previous research.

Efforts to incorporate broader perspectives were undertaken through the distribution of a questionnaire aimed at engaging other literary translators. The responses gathered, in conjunction with my practical experiences, constitute a foundation for the study. These elements collectively contribute to a nuanced understanding of the challenges and strategies involved in translating CA dialogues in contemporary Arabic novels into English, thereby advancing knowledge in this specialized area of literary translation.

3.2 Aims of the study

This study investigates the translation of colloquial Arabic dialogue in three contemporary Arabic novels into English. It seeks to answer the four research questions outlined in section 1.3 (Research Questions). The core focus is on the preservation of the source text characters' authenticity. In simpler terms, the study examines whether the translations effectively convey the social, educational, and cultural backgrounds of the characters as presented in the Arabic originals. Notably, the dialogue within the three selected novels is written in colloquial Arabic (Egyptian, Omani, and Lebanese), while the narrative employs MSA or al-Fuṣḥá.

The rationale of 'preserving source text authenticity' operates within the context of this study by addressing the balance between faithfully representing the characters' social, educational, and cultural backgrounds and adapting the text to suit the expectations of the target audience. The study examines this challenge through the lens of two theoretical approaches that prioritize the target audience, illustrating how these approaches can still align with the goal of authenticity within the context of translating colloquial Arabic dialogue into English.

The selected novels—featuring colloquial Arabic varieties such as Egyptian, Omani, and Lebanese alongside MSA—pose a unique linguistic and cultural challenge. These varieties serve as markers of the characters' identities and backgrounds, making their accurate representation a crucial aspect of maintaining authenticity. However, ensuring that these nuances are accessible to an English-speaking audience requires strategies that may necessitate adaptation rather than literal fidelity.

The two theoretical approaches, despite their target-audience focus, provide frameworks to mediate between the source and target texts. By prioritizing the communicative function of the dialogue and its contextual significance, these approaches allow the translator to preserve the essence of the characters' voices and the social dynamics of the original text. For instance, shifts in register or style may be employed to approximate the impact of colloquial Arabic on English readers while maintaining the characters' authenticity.

In this way, the study demonstrates how these seemingly divergent priorities—target audience focus and source text authenticity—can be harmonized. Through an application of theory and a critical engagement with the translation process, the research aims to ensure that the cultural

and social layers embedded in the Arabic dialogue are effectively conveyed in English, thereby advancing the understanding of translatability in contemporary Arabic novels into English.

This investigation uses a case study method to explore how Arabic dialects and everyday conversational language are translated into English. In this research, a questionnaire is sent to translators who specialize in literary works between Arabic and English. These translators often face unique challenges when dealing with Arabic dialects because, unlike Modern Standard Arabic (the formal written form used across the Arab world), dialects vary widely depending on the region, social context, and cultural background. For instance, Egyptian Arabic sounds very different from Moroccan Arabic, and both include expressions that might not exist in English or carry different meanings.

Through the questionnaire, the translators share their hands-on experiences and the strategies they use to bring dialectal nuances and informal dialogue into English. These insights help the researcher understand not only the technical aspects of translating Arabic dialects but also the deeper implications for conveying characters' personalities, social statuses, and cultural identities. This approach provides valuable real-world perspectives on bridging the linguistic and cultural gaps between Arabic and English literary expressions.

3.3 The structure of the methodology chapter

The methodology chapter of this study is based on Gary Thomas's model (2023), which provides a flexible structure to guide research projects. The main parts in this structure are described below:

- *Design*: According to Thomas, a research project does not need to be limited to one method or structure; multiple methods, like surveys, experiments, and case studies, can be combined in a single project. This flexibility allows researchers to choose methods that best suit their goals. In this study, a case study approach using a questionnaire was selected, and the choice of this combination is explained here. This section also justifies why specific tools, such as Microsoft Forms, Excel, and NVivo, were chosen for data collection and analysis.

- *Participants*: In this study, the term 'participants' refers to Arabic-English and/or English-Arabic literary translators who completed the questionnaire designed for this research. Instead of calling them 'respondents', they are recognized as active contributors to the study, as their insights are valuable to the research. This section provides details on how participants were selected, how they were reached, and any challenges faced in contacting them.

- *Ethical Considerations*: This section describes how ethical guidelines were followed from the beginning of the study to ensure the research was conducted responsibly and respectfully.

- *Data Gathering and Tools Used*: Here, the process of gathering responses through the questionnaire is detailed, including response rates, follow-up steps, and how the questionnaire was structured. It also discusses the pilot study, which helped refine the questions.

- *Procedure*: This part outlines what participants were asked to do, how data was gathered, and when each research tool was used. Each step of the data collection process is described and explained.

- *Analysis*: The choice of analysis methods is explained here, with a focus on using NVivo software for qualitative analysis. This section discusses NVivo's reliability and its technical features, such as coding, which help to organize and analyse qualitative data effectively. Using Thomas's approach allows for a flexible research design that adapts to the study's needs, incorporating multiple methods and tools to achieve a comprehensive analysis.

In the context of this study on the translatability of colloquial Arabic dialogue in three contemporary Arabic novels into English, a questionnaire was selected as the primary data collection method over interviews due to several practical and methodological considerations. Questionnaires enable researchers to collect data from a larger pool of participants, which is beneficial when seeking to capture diverse perspectives and experiences. This broader reach enhances the study's ability to generalize findings across different demographics or professional contexts, thus strengthening its overall validity.

Moreover, questionnaires provide a standardized framework for collecting responses, ensuring consistency and comparability across participants. This structured approach is significant when analysing data from multiple respondents, as it minimizes variability in interpretation and reduces the potential for interviewer bias. The anonymity afforded by questionnaires further encourages participants to share honest insights, particularly when addressing sensitive or critical issues related to translation practices, such as the challenges of adapting colloquial Arabic for English-speaking audiences.

From a logistical perspective, questionnaires are less resource-intensive than interviews, saving time for both researchers and participants. They can be completed at the participants' convenience and distributed online, allowing for greater accessibility across geographically dispersed respondents. Additionally, the flexibility of questionnaire design enables the

collection of both quantitative data—through tools like Likert scales—and qualitative insights, such as open-ended responses, making them well-suited for mixed-methods research.

In translation studies, the utility of questionnaires lies in their ability to identify trends, patterns, and commonalities among practitioners. For this research area, such data is invaluable in understanding shared strategies, challenges, and perceptions among translators working with colloquial Arabic and English. By leveraging the advantages of questionnaires, this study seeks to uncover nuanced insights into the interplay between source text authenticity and target audience expectations, offering a comprehensive view of the translatability of colloquial Arabic in contemporary Arabic literature.

3.4 Design: Approach to research methods

An overview of the research methods used in this study is presented in this section.

3.4.1 Quantitative and qualitative research methods

In academia, research is often divided into two main types: qualitative and quantitative. Dörnyei (2007) defines these approaches based on the type of data they gather and how it is analysed:

- Quantitative Research: This method focuses on collecting numerical data, which is then analysed using statistical tools. A common example is surveys conducted through questionnaires, where responses are processed with software like SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences).

- Qualitative Research: This approach gathers open-ended, non-numerical data, which is analysed without statistics. For instance, interviews are often used in qualitative research, where recordings are transcribed and examined for themes and meanings through content analysis.

These two methods are sometimes combined into a *mixed-method approach*, which integrates both quantitative and qualitative techniques in either data collection or analysis. For example, researchers might use a questionnaire followed by interviews. In such cases, even a quantitative tool like a questionnaire may include open-ended questions, like interview questions, bridging both methods.

Dörnyei also credits Francis Galton for pioneering quantitative methods in psychology in the early 1900s. Galton introduced key concepts like psychological testing, questionnaires, and statistical tools like regression and correlation. The early 20th century saw significant advances

in scientific methods and statistics, led by figures like Karl Popper (in scientific philosophy) and statisticians Spearman, Fisher, Neyman, and Pearson. This progress led to a rise in quantitative research across social sciences.

In applied linguistics, Lazaraton (2005) notes a shift from heavy reliance on quasi-experimental, quantitative studies in the 1980s to a more balanced view from 1990 to 2005, incorporating more qualitative research and a multidisciplinary approach.

Oakes and Ji (2012) highlight that while there is increasing interest in using large text databases, or 'corpora', in translation studies, many researchers lack clear guidance on the statistical methods from corpus linguistics that can be applied to translation research.

This study uses both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The quantitative approach focuses on collecting data about characteristics like nationality, age, gender, translation experience, educational background in literary translation, the types of literature participants translate, and their understanding of terms like dialect, register, and diglossia. Additionally, quantitative methods are used to analyse participants' evaluations of six selected excerpts and their translations. This numerical data is presented in tables and charts created with Microsoft Forms.

For deeper insights, qualitative analysis was applied to open-ended questions from the questionnaire, particularly around: (a) *which dialects participants use daily*, and (b) *their views on best practices for translating Arabic dialects into English*. These responses are analysed to highlight key themes and insights. Combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches, or a mixed-methods approach, helps produce results that can be applicable across different dialects and languages. Dörnyei (2007) describes mixed methods as an expanding field that combines both approaches to enhance research quality. Here, the quantitative questionnaire gathers standardized data from many participants, while qualitative analysis adds depth by exploring individual perspectives.

Qualitative research, as explained by Denzin and Lincoln (2005), involves gathering a wide range of material—such as personal stories, interviews, and observations—to better understand people's lives and experiences. Qualitative researchers often use various methods to view the topic from multiple perspectives.

While qualitative research has unique strengths, some scholars note its limitations. For example, Brewer (2007) suggests that qualitative research can be more subjective, but it

remains valuable for discovering new insights and describing complex topics. Dörnyei (2007) points out other challenges, such as potential overemphasis on individual responses when sample sizes are small. This study avoids such issues by including a sample of 50 participants, ensuring the results are reliable. Another noted drawback of qualitative research is that it can take a long time to analyse. To address this, this study used NVivo software, which made the analysis process quicker and more efficient.

This research is part of translation studies as it explores the translation of colloquial Arabic dialogue in three contemporary Arabic novels into English. It also draws on related fields like linguistics, cultural studies, and literary studies. This research project was primarily conducted as a case study and supported by data collected through a questionnaire.

3.5 What is a case study?

Thomas (2021) argues that case studies are commonly used in applied social sciences and humanities. Rather than considering a case study as a research 'method', he describes it as a 'focus'—an in-depth examination of a single subject from multiple perspectives. This approach is particularly relevant to examining the translatability (or untranslatability) of colloquial Arabic dialogue into English. Consistent with Thomas's perspective, this study focuses only on the translation of colloquial dialogue, intentionally excluding MSA narrative translation from its analysis.

Other scholars share this view. Stake (2005) asserts that a case study is not a method but a choice of what is to be studied, emphasizing that any method can be used to explore the chosen case. While this is largely accurate, case studies are often still recognized as a methodological approach that employs diverse research tools. Thomas (2017) further distinguishes between types of multiple case studies: in *parallel studies*, cases occur and are studied simultaneously, while in *sequential studies*, cases happen consecutively, with each potentially influencing the next.

Simons (2009) offers a more comprehensive definition, describing a case study as an in-depth investigation from various perspectives of a particular project, policy, or system within its real-life context. Thomas (2023) suggests that the objective of case studies is to develop a nuanced understanding of the case by examining its details. A case study often involves various methods to capture the complexity of the subject, enabling researchers to understand the case deeply rather than generalize the findings to other cases.

Warren and Bell (2022) also emphasize the versatility of case studies as an umbrella methodology, allowing the use of different methods for data collection and analysis. They consider it an ideal approach for exploring complex phenomena in specific real-world contexts. This perspective is particularly relevant to this study, as the selected novels, although fictional, use colloquial Arabic that anchors them in real-life contexts. The case study approach, therefore, aligns well with the study's goal of understanding how colloquial language and dialects are translated in contemporary Arabic literature translated into English.

Researchers do not select case studies arbitrarily; there must be clear reasoning. Thomas (2023) provides three motivations for choosing a case: (1) to explore a subject in-depth due to existing familiarity (a 'local-knowledge case'), (2) to use it as an exemplary model (a 'key case'), or (3) to examine it due to its uniqueness or deviation from norms (an 'outlier case').

Other scholars also discuss case study purposes. Duff (2007) suggests that a case study's purpose varies based on how much is already known about the topic, prior research, the nature of the case itself, and the researcher's philosophy. Yin (2003) categorizes case studies by their aims: exploratory case studies define questions and hypotheses for further research, descriptive case studies outline a phenomenon within its context, and explanatory case studies reveal cause-effect relationships.

Case studies are frequently used in translation studies. For instance, Munday *et al.* (2022) discuss *The Last Flicker* (1991), the English translation of Gurdial Singh's Punjabi novel *Marhi Da Deeva* (1964). Munday *et al.* (2022) highlight the significance of translating this novel due to its local impact and success in other languages, such as Hindi and Russian. In the original, characters use the Malwai dialect of Punjabi, which is central to the story's cultural context. However, in the English version translated by Ajmer S. Rode, characters' dialogue includes a mix of registers, from archaic insults to modern American expressions, creating a cultural shift. This translation results in characters appearing more like urban North Americans than their original rural Punjabi identities. This example illustrates the need for caution when translating dialects. Translating one dialect into another can risk altering the characters' original identities, potentially confusing readers by giving characters new traits that were not intended in the original text.

Despite their advantages, case studies also face criticisms in translation research. Susam-Sarajeva (2009) warns of two main issues: researchers may treat the methodology as obvious without questioning it and may selectively present examples to support their arguments. To

counter these limitations, this study included examples from three translated novels and asked participants to evaluate them through a questionnaire.

Additionally, some scholars question the validity of case studies. Flyvbjerg (2006) addresses five common misconceptions: (1) theoretical knowledge is superior to practical knowledge; (2) a single case study cannot yield generalizable findings; (3) case studies are better for generating hypotheses than for testing theories; (4) case studies are biased toward confirming the researcher's beliefs; and (5) it is challenging to summarize findings from specific case studies. Flyvbjerg refutes these points, arguing that disciplines without numerous, well-executed case studies lack systematic examples, which are crucial for robust academic inquiry.

The study by Hatim and Mason (1997) on the translation of idiolect and tenor offers valuable insights into the challenges of translating colloquial Arabic dialogue in contemporary Arabic novels into English. They define idiolect as 'the individual's distinctive and motivated way of using language at a given level of formality or tenor' (Hatim and Mason, 1997: 98). This concept is directly applicable to the three Arabic novels selected for this study, where characters often use unique colloquial expressions to reflect their social identities, emotions, or cultural contexts. Translating these idiolects into English requires not only linguistic equivalence but also sensitivity to maintaining the individuality and tone of the original dialogue.

Hatim and Mason analyse the translation of *Pygmalion* by George Bernard Shaw, focusing on how the Flower Girl's idiolect and the informal tenor of Cockney English were rendered into Arabic. In the Arabic translation, classical Arabic was used to reflect the written literary mode. However, this choice failed to capture the source text's variation in tenor and idiolect. Similarly, translating colloquial Arabic into English poses the challenge of how to preserve the informal, regional, or socially marked features of characters' speech without compromising the overall coherence and readability of the English text.

For example, an Egyptian character's colloquial dialogue, rich in regionalisms and informal expressions, might lose its vibrancy if translated into formal English. Hatim and Mason argue that opting for variation, such as blending formal and informal styles, can help preserve the nuances of the original text. However, they caution that this approach raises questions: What degree of informality should be marked in the English translation? Which English vernacular or non-standard variety should be chosen to reflect the tone and style of the original colloquial Arabic? For instance, translating an Iraqi or Moroccan dialect into an equivalent non-standard

English, such as Cockney or African American Vernacular English, could evoke similar socio-linguistic tones but risks introducing cultural inaccuracies.

Hatim and Mason also highlight code-switching and style-shifting—common features in Arabic dialogue—where speakers move between classical Arabic and colloquial dialects within a single conversation. This mirrors the natural speech patterns of Arabic speakers, especially in novels where dialogue reflects class dynamics, power relations, or emotional shifts. They emphasize that such switching is deliberate and never random, often serving a specific communicative purpose. Translating these shifts into English presents a dilemma: how can the interplay between formal and informal registers in Arabic be effectively conveyed in a language like English, which lacks a direct parallel to the diglossia of Arabic?

In an Arabic novel, for example, a character might switch between MSA for formal declarations and a colloquial dialect for personal or emotional exchanges. Capturing this contrast in English might involve alternating between standard English and regional or informal dialects, but this approach could lead to unintended cultural connotations or stylistic inconsistencies. Hatim and Mason suggest that translators must carefully consider these dynamics to maintain the integrity of the original text.

In summary, while case studies are often highly regarded for their ability to provide in-depth insights, they also require careful consideration and rigorous execution, especially in fields like translation studies.

3.6 Ethical considerations

Before starting this study, we needed to get official approval to ensure that everything would be done ethically and responsibly. This meant submitting a detailed plan of the research and its goals to the Committee for Ethics and Integrity at the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan). The application included the questionnaire and was prepared by the researcher and the supervisors. The Committee reviewed it all and gave approval, making sure that the participants fully understood what the questionnaire was about and why it was being conducted. All potential ethical concerns were addressed in a document and an information sheet for participants. Final approval was granted (see Appendix C for details).

In research projects of this nature, participants may have concerns regarding the confidentiality of their responses, particularly whether their answers could be linked back to them. To mitigate these concerns, it was explicitly stated that all responses would be submitted anonymously,

ensuring that individual identities remain undisclosed and that responses cannot be traced to specific participants. Furthermore, it was clarified that the purpose of this study is not to critique or assess Marilyn Booth's translation of the three novels under examination. Rather, the aim is solely to elicit participants' insights and perspectives on Booth's translation strategies. This distinction was emphasized to foster a comfortable environment for participants, allowing them to freely share their viewpoints without apprehension of judgment or evaluation.

3.7 The questionnaire

The questionnaire was developed to align with the key theoretical frameworks explored in the literature review chapter, specifically those pertaining to the two main theoretical approaches adopted within this study. The questions were formulated to comprehensively capture the anticipated spectrum of challenges encountered by literary translators when navigating the complexities of colloquial Arabic dialogue and dialects.

The questionnaire is suitable for this study because it aims at gathering opinions and insights from professional literary translators on issues raised in the research questions. In addition, the responses collected help identify any challenges and difficulties literary translators between Arabic and English have faced, or are facing, in their day-to-day work in literary translation when it comes to translating colloquial texts or spoken dialects from Arabic to English in contemporary Arabic novels. The opinions of the 50 literary translators played an important role in shaping the data used for the analysis in this study.

3.7.1 Justification for the use of the questionnaire

This study employs a questionnaire to gather in-depth insights from participants regarding the translation of colloquial dialogue in three contemporary Arabic novels, and Arabic dialects more broadly. The participants, boasting extensive experience in literary translation, offer valuable perspectives shaped by their daily engagement with diverse texts rich in colloquial Arabic and dialects. Their responses shed light on the challenges and strategies employed when translating these elements into English and vice versa. Through the questionnaire, the study acquires firsthand data on the specific methods utilized by these literary translators.

3.7.2 Reliability of questionnaires in research in translation studies

The questionnaire is suitable for the purposes of this study. Dörnyei (2007, 102) mentions three types of data that a questionnaire can yield about the participants: factual questions (for example, age, gender, and race), behavioural questions (the participants' actions, lifestyles,

habits, and personal history) and attitudinal questions (this is more related to the participants' attitudes, opinions, beliefs, interests, and values). Having said that, the three types of data mentioned by Dörnyei were collected when conducting the questionnaire of this study.

However, one of the concerns with questionnaires is what Thomas (2023) calls 'prestige bias'. This happens when the participants assume some kind of right answer. This must be avoided by telling the participants that their answers are anonymously kept and that no one can identify their personalities. To ensure participants' confidentiality, the questionnaire design omitted any requests for names or identifiable email addresses.

3.7.3 Design of the questionnaire

The questionnaire is structured to include a Participant Information Sheet (PIS), followed by a consent form, and then three main sections of questions. The PIS provides comprehensive information regarding the questionnaire. It begins by inviting participants to partake in the study and subsequently outlines key elements, such as the purpose of the research, rationale for participant selection, the voluntary nature of participation, anticipated outcomes, data usage, any associated risks, handling of study results, procedures for data withdrawal, and the right of participants to withdraw if any issue arises. The PIS concludes with contact details for the research team to ensure participants can reach out with any questions or concerns.

The first section contains the consent form, which requires participants to agree to five key statements: (1) acknowledgment of having read and understood the study information titled The Translatability of the Colloquial Arabic Dialogue into English: A Case Study of three Arabic novels translated by Marilyn Booth: *The Open Door*, *Celestial Bodies*, and *As Though She Were Sleeping*; (2) confirmation of voluntary participation, with the option to withdraw any time before final submission; (3) assurance of complete anonymity in responses, with the removal of any identifying information should personal data be inadvertently included; (4) consent to participate in the study; and (5) confirmation that the participant is over 18 years of age. Participants indicate consent by selecting 'Yes' below these items.

Part One of the questionnaire addresses the demographic characteristics and professional experience of participating literary translators. This section gathers information on factors such as nationality, gender, age range, years of experience in literary translation, spoken dialects, educational background in translation or related fields, preferred literary genres for translation, freelance work status, and experience with translating colloquial Arabic dialogue (both Arabic to English and English to Arabic).

Part Two, titled *Dialect and Translation*, includes both closed-ended questions and one open-ended question about dialects and dialect translation. It also features a ranking question to assess participants' familiarity with terminology such as dialect, register, and diglossia. Additional questions explore the challenges, strategies, and methods participants use when translating dialectal dialogue in literary texts.

Part Three serves as an evaluation section, where participants review selected excerpts from the three novels alongside Marilyn Booth's translations. Notably, participants were not informed that Booth translated the six excerpts. This approach was intended to elicit more objective feedback on the translation of colloquial Arabic dialogue, focusing solely on participants' assessments of translation quality and approach.

3.7.4 Literary translation evaluation scale

The evaluation of translator performance is an essential, yet under-researched, area within translation studies, as noted by Hatim and Mason (1997). They emphasize the need to distinguish between different activities, such as assessing translation quality, conducting translation criticism, and implementing quality control, versus evaluating translator performance itself. Their critique also highlights the lack of clarity regarding the objectives of translation tests, which often leaves test-takers speculating about the examiners' goals. However, Hatim and Mason's work primarily focuses on translation and interpretation tests rather than on providing evaluation scales for literary translation.

This study addresses the gap identified by Hatim and Mason by proposing a mini-evaluation scale specifically designed for literary translation. The purpose of this scale is not to assess entire translations of the three novels analysed in this research but to gather participant's insights on the translation of colloquial Arabic dialogue in six excerpts from these novels. The six excerpts were deliberately chosen from the three novels due to their dense integration of culturally specific colloquial Arabic dialects, which serve as rich sites for examining the complexities of linguistic and cultural transference in translation. The lack of a universally agreed-upon scale for literary translation further underscores the significance of this contribution.

Drawing on existing frameworks, the evaluation scale integrates principles outlined by Anthony Pym (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GKbMwltm_f0), Jeremy Munday (Munday *et al.*, 2022 and Farias de Souza, 2015), and other scholars. Pym's criteria, focusing on accuracy, fluency, and cultural representation, serve as a foundation. This approach aligns

closely with Skopos Theory, which emphasizes the purpose of translation in shaping evaluative criteria. The inclusion of these elements is crucial for examining how well translations of CA dialogue capture the nuances of the source text while meeting the expectations of the target audience.

Existing research offers diverse methods for assessing literary translation. Low (2002), for instance, introduced the 'Note-Down' method to empirically evaluate readers' responses to translated works. This method, applied to translations of Andre Breton's surrealist poetry, allowed for a systematic comparison of how different translations affected reader perception. By focusing on the imagery and stylistic choices employed by translators, this approach facilitated an analysis of the gains and losses associated with translation decisions. Similarly, Alexeeva (2021) proposed a multicomponent model for evaluating literary translation, incorporating factors such as aesthetic integrity, text unity, dominant stylistic features, diachronic distance, translator's style, and societal expectations.

To address the specific challenges of translating colloquial Arabic dialogue into English, the evaluation scale developed for this study incorporates the following six parameters:

1. The translation is accurate (it accurately conveys the meaning of the source text);

2. The translation is fluent (it reads smoothly and naturally);

3. The translation preserves the context and social standing of the characters/speakers of the source text;

4. The translation adheres to the norms of the target language, and considers its grammar, syntax, and vocabulary;

5. The translation preserves the style of the original author: It preserves such elements as tone, mode, register and dialect; and

6. The translation is acceptable to the general reader.

Participants assessed the translations based on these parameters, using three variables: Yes, No, and Partially. This structured framework allows for a systematic evaluation of how well the translations balance the need to preserve the authenticity of the source text with the expectations of the English-speaking audience.

The inclusion of dialect as a key element in the evaluation scale reflects the unique challenges posed by translating CA dialogue, which carries rich cultural and social connotations. By

incorporating the perspectives of readers and translators alike, the study advances the understanding of how colloquial Arabic dialogue in contemporary novels can be effectively rendered in English while maintaining its authenticity. This contribution adds to the broader discourse on literary translation evaluation, offering a practical framework that bridges theory and practice.

3.7.5 Conducting the questionnaire

The questionnaire was initially drafted using Microsoft Word before being transferred to Microsoft Forms. This step was taken deliberately to facilitate the administration of the questionnaire online, first during the pilot study and subsequently in the main study. By utilizing Microsoft Forms, I aimed to ensure accessibility, ease of distribution, and efficient data collection in both phases of the research.

3.7.6 Rationale for the use of Microsoft Forms for the online questionnaire

Branley *et al.* (2014) suggest that online surveys offer significant advantages, especially when compared to more traditional methods like postal or telephone surveys. These online surveys are often more convenient and cost-effective. Another advantage is that they can guide participants smoothly through each question, making it easier to complete.

However, online surveys do have some limitations, or 'challenges', as Branley *et al.* (2014) put it. A major challenge is sampling bias: since the survey is conducted online, it naturally excludes people who do not have internet access. This means that only individuals with access through devices like mobile phones, laptops, or computers can participate. Excluding those without internet access can lead to missing valuable insights from some potential participants.

In this study, however, sampling bias was not a significant concern. By the time the survey closed, a total of 50 participants had responded, providing a solid base of insights to enrich the research. According to Dörnyei (2007), a sample size of even six to ten participants can be adequate for qualitative studies, so this larger number was more than sufficient. Furthermore, all intended participants had internet access, as they were contacted through online channels, including email and social media. It is important to reiterate that the final question in the questionnaire solicited participants' personal reflections and insights regarding the best practices they recommend for translators engaged in the task of translating Arabic dialects into English. This inquiry was designed to elicit qualitative information.

3.8 The Role of social media in participant recruitment for this study

This study utilized social media platforms exclusively as a tool to recruit participants for its questionnaire. Social media was employed to establish initial contact with potential participants and to assess their interest in contributing to the research. As noted by Thomas (2023), social media offers a valuable means of accessing research participants, particularly those who may be difficult to reach through conventional methods. This aligns with the objective of the study of ensuring broader participation from literary translators.

Social media provides numerous benefits for data collection, as outlined by Thomas (2023). These include:

1. Expanding Participation: Social media increases the diversity and number of participants by reaching individuals from varied backgrounds and locations.

2. Fostering Networking: It allows participants to connect and engage with each other.

3. Convenience: Participants can complete tasks at their own convenience, unconstrained by rigid schedules.

4. Anonymity and Comfort: Anonymity enables participants to feel more at ease sharing their opinions and insights.

5. Accessibility: Social media can be particularly beneficial for individuals with disabilities, providing a more inclusive approach to participation.

For this study, the advantages of social media were significant. It was straightforward to locate potential participants, contact them directly, and clearly communicate the purpose of the research. Social media also facilitated easy follow-ups, enabling the researcher to remind participants who had initially expressed consent but had not yet completed the questionnaire. The questionnaire itself was provided through one comprehensive link, ensuring ease of access.

Despite its advantages, social media presents certain limitations, as discussed by Thomas (2023). One key issue is the exclusion of individuals who do not use social media. This challenge was encountered in this study, as some literary translators lacked social media accounts. To address this, I obtained email addresses through professional networks, such as the London-based Arab Publication House, managed by Mr. Naser Al-Badri. This effort provided access to a list of approximately 30 literary translators, who were subsequently contacted via email.

Another concern highlighted by Thomas (2023) is the potential public visibility of social media posts, which may remain accessible even after deletion. To prevent unintended participants from accessing the questionnaire, I avoided publicly sharing the link on any social media platform. Instead, participants were contacted directly, and the questionnaire link—containing the PIS, consent form, and survey—was sent only to verified individuals through secure channels, including email, Messenger, X (formerly Twitter), and WhatsApp.

By leveraging social media judiciously, this study maximized its ability to recruit participants while addressing potential disadvantages. The use of social media as a recruitment tool underscores its growing significance in research, particularly when combined with supplementary strategies like professional networking and direct communication to ensure the quality and relevance of participant engagement. Social media has served as a vital communication tool in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, facilitating interactions between researchers and literary translators. In this study, I engaged with questionnaire participants across a diverse range of social media platforms, ensuring adaptability to regional preferences and varying platform popularity across countries.

3.9 The Pilot Study

Following the development of the questionnaire using Microsoft Forms, a pilot study was conducted to assess its effectiveness. The pilot study was undertaken in June 2023, followed by the implementation of the full-scale study in November 2023. The purpose of the study was to check the viability and validity of the questions. One more purpose was to check the accessibility of the link that was sent to participants and to report any issues in opening the PIS, agreeing to the consent form, and answering the questions. As a member of the literary translation community between English and Arabic, with over 23 translated works to my credit, I have established strong relationships with many of its members. Consequently, this rapport facilitated my ability to engage with them across various social media platforms. This study involved two participants before sending the questionnaire to a larger number of participants. For the pilot study, two participants were contacted via WhatsApp and the link was shared with them. They were asked to report any issues in the link and whether they were able to open the PIS and read its content carefully, whether the consent form was clear to them and whether the questions were clear and understandable. The whole procedure with the pilot study was to be followed in the main study. Therefore, the pilot study was conducted is if it were the main study. The paper questionnaire had been already designed and constructive feedback was given by the supervisory team. More feedback was expected from the two participants in the pilot

study. Both participants reported easy access and understanding of the questions. They responded to the questionnaire and their responses were added later to the group of the participants, so the total number of participants was 50 at the close of the online questionnaire.

3.9.1 An overview of the results of the pilot study

To assess the questionnaire's efficacy, a pilot study was conducted with two participants from Syria and Jordan. An invitation containing one link to the Microsoft Forms questionnaire was distributed via WhatsApp. This link provided access to the PIS presented as a separate hyperlink, the informed consent form, and the questionnaire itself. Notably, Microsoft Forms ensured participant anonymity by not requiring names or email addresses. Participants were assigned unique identifiers (IDs 1 and 2) to facilitate data recording. Gratifyingly, neither participant reported any difficulties with the access link or the questionnaire itself.

3.10 The participants

The participants in this questionnaire are literary translators who work with literary texts between Arabic and English. They come from various nationalities, with some being native Arabic speakers and others native English speakers. The key criterion for their selection was their experience in literary translation; specifically, they had to have translated at least one literary work from Arabic to English or vice versa. It was not necessary for participants to have an in-depth understanding of translation theories, as this knowledge cannot be reliably evaluated. The primary focus was on their practical experience as literary translators.

Additionally, it was not required that participants hold degrees in translation or English literature, which allowed for the inclusion of literary translators who graduated from different academic fields. Participants were drawn from diverse dialectal backgrounds, as existing literature does not suggest that literary translators must have extensive knowledge of the dialects they are translating. There were no geographical restrictions on participant location, meaning they could be situated anywhere in the world. The researcher may not know the exact locations of all participants, but there is documented evidence of their experience in translating between Arabic and English. The location was not a limiting factor for the questionnaire, as it was distributed through emails and messaging services on social media platforms like Messenger, X (formerly Twitter), and WhatsApp.

In the early stages of planning the questionnaire, I intended to send invitations to participate to translation studies departments in Arab and British universities, as well as to translation associations both in the Arab world and beyond, such as the British Centre for Literary

Translation (BCLT) at the University of East Anglia. However, the inclusion of translation scholars in the target population was ultimately reconsidered. This decision was made because responses from scholars who lacked practical experience in literary translation could detract from the study's objectives. Consequently, the recruitment strategy was refined to focus solely on individuals actively engaged in literary translation, allowing translation scholars to participate only if they also had practical experience in the field. I chose to reach out to the translators directly rather than publicly posting the link to the questionnaire to ensure that only literary translators would participate in the survey.

3.11 Distributing the questionnaire

Upon receiving satisfactory results from the pilot study, I started distributing the questionnaire to the target population. The questionnaire then was sent to 103 participants. The link to the questionnaire was kept open for 15 days. Once 50 responses were received, it was decided that this number was enough. The number of the actual participants (50 participants) constitutes 48.54% of the total number of the contacted participants.

3.11.1 Difficulties in questionnaire distribution

Initially, most participants did not report any issues related to the questionnaire design and questions' formulation. However, there were some difficulties during the distribution of the questionnaire. Some participants said they would be willing to take part in the questionnaire but said they would do that later as they were busy with travelling to attend the Kuwait International Book Fair which was held from 22 November to 2 December 2023.

At least two of the potential participants apologized for not taking part in the questionnaire because they said they did not have much experience in translating from Arabic to English as most of the books they translated were from English to Arabic. It was clarified to them that this is not a requirement to take part in the questionnaire, but they insisted on apologizing for not being able to take part in the questionnaire.

One potential participant declined participation due to a lack of experience with translating literary works in the strictest sense. They elaborated that their translation experience focused on philosophical texts, and they did not possess the necessary expertise in contemporary Arabic novel's dialects and colloquial dialogues. Two other potential participants declined involvement. One translator apologized, citing they had never encountered the specific issue addressed in the study throughout their career. The other, a well-established translator, expressed regret for not being able to participate due to their unfamiliarity with the three novels

under investigation. This translator additionally believed the six excerpts presented in the questionnaire were researcher-translated. For clarification, the questionnaire purposefully omitted translator attribution for the excerpts to ensure objective participant responses; the authorship of Marilyn Booth was not disclosed within the questionnaire. Another potential participant, a non-native speaker of Arabic, disqualified themselves from the study due to a lack of experience in translating Arabic dialects. They consequently apologized for their inability to contribute to the questionnaire.

Another major difficulty in distributing the questionnaire was getting access to the contact details of some literary translators who are non-native speakers of Arabic and who usually translate from Arabic into English in most cases. For this end, I contacted Mr. Naser AlBadri, who is an Omani publisher who runs the London-based Arab Publication House. Arab Publication House is one of the few publication houses in the Arab world which is specialized in translating contemporary Arabic literature into English. He provided me with the contact details of the most popular names of literary translators who have been translating many works of Arabic literature into English. The list given by Mr. AlBardi included the names of 30 literary translators who usually translate from Arabic into English.

An additional challenge encountered during the administration of the questionnaire arose when one participant selected the 'other' option from the nationality drop-down menu embedded in Part One of the questionnaire. Upon contacting the translator, it was revealed that the participant identified as part of the stateless minority in Kuwait, a group not classified as Kuwaiti citizens due to demographic, social, and political considerations. However, since the participant speaks the Kuwaiti dialect, their data was classified as 'Kuwaiti' during analysis. This classification was made to align the participant's data with their probable spoken dialect, inferred from their geographical context.

A final problem emerged when a participant reported a malfunctioning link. This occurred after I deactivated the questionnaire link upon reaching the target sample size of 50 participants and initiating data analysis due to the study's time constraints. Despite reactivating the link and contacting the participant who expressed intent to complete the questionnaire, no response was received. Consequently, participant recruitment concluded with a final total of 50 participants.

3.12 Data analysis procedures

The main tools used to analyse the data gathered from the participants were Microsoft Forms, Excel and NVivo. After the questionnaire was closed, responses to the questionnaire were

downloaded from Microsoft Forms into an Excel-formatted sheet. This Excel file was named 'Raw Data File' and was saved on the researcher's One Drive. The same Excel file was copied again and named 'the Working Data File'. The Working Data File was checked in depth for consistency and compatibility and was prepared to be imported to NVivo. Any empty columns were deleted. It was found that two participants answered the open-ended questions in Arabic. To avoid any possible problems in classifying and coding data, these two answers were translated into English by the researcher.

P27 provided two responses in Arabic, though the rationale for doing so remains unclear. To ensure the utility of these responses, I translated them into English with careful attention to preserving their pragmatic and semantic nuances. This translation was undertaken to ensure compatibility with the structural framework and categorical organization utilized in NVivo. The final question in the questionnaire was open-ended and phrased as follows: (*Can you please share your own thoughts and insights about the best practices you recommend for translators to follow when translating Arabic dialects into English?*). Answering this question, P27 wrote:

الأفضل تقديم المعنى والمقصود من العبارات أولاً، والالتزام بروح النص الساخرة أو الغاضبة أو المتأففة، والتي تسم العبارات في اللهجات العربية المختلفة، أما الالتفات لمعاني الكلمات بحرفيتها فهذا آخر ما يهم القارئ الأجنبي.

The above text was translated into English as follows:

'It is better to give priority to meaning and its connotations in the first place and to be committed to the inner meaning of the text whether it was satirical, angry, or grumpy which could be the characteristic of expressions in various Arabic dialects. Paying attention to the literal meanings of words is of less importance to the foreign reader.'

This translation was inserted in the Working Excel File in the same box where P27 added his response in Arabic. The Arabic text was deleted and replaced with the English translation for easy analysis.

The same Participant (P27) responded to the question on which dialect they use for daily speech and communication by writing the response in Arabic as (اللهجة الفلسطينية) which was translated into (the Palestinian dialect) in the Working Excel File.

For the same question, (*Can you please share your own thoughts and insights about the best practices you recommend for translators to follow when translating Arabic dialects into English?*), another participant (P38) also answered this question in Arabic:

"من الأفضل على المترجم أن يحاكي اللهجة بما تسمح به اللغة الإنجليزية ويعطي المعنى المراد إيصاله من دون الحرفية كما في مثال "يا عدرا دخيلك اسمك راحت الغطيطة" فلماذا لم يترجمها إلى:

O Mary I beg you بدلا من

O Virgin

التي لا أراها دقيقة أكثر من كونها حرفية

كذا الأمر مع مثال by my head and eye! فلا أحسبها إلا ترجمة حرفية ركيكة".

I translated the above response into English as follows:

'It is better for the translator to echo the dialect if English would allow to do so. It is better to give the meaning without literariness as in the example [in Excerpt 5]. Why do not we translate 'O Virgin' into 'O Mary, I beg you!'? I see the former as inaccurate and literal. The same argument applies to 'by my head and eye!' [in Excerpt 3] which I consider to be a poor literal translation'.

The participants were not explicitly informed within the questionnaire that the six excerpts had been translated by Marilyn Booth. Nevertheless, it became evident that certain participants independently recognized her as the translator. Conversely, other participants indicated their belief that I was responsible for translating the excerpts into English. This variation in participant perceptions could have implications for their engagement with and interpretation of the text, as their assumptions about the translator might influence their responses. Understanding such dynamics is crucial, as the identity of the translator could affect the perceived authenticity, style, or cultural alignment of the translations, potentially shaping participant reactions in nuanced ways.

3.12.1 Data sources

The data sources for the current study are the following:

1. The three novels written in formal and colloquial Arabic.

2. Marilyn Booth's English translations of the three novels.

3. The questionnaire responded to by Arabic/English literary translators.

3.12.2 Microsoft Forms

Microsoft Forms provided some useful insights for the closed-ended questions in Parts One and Two. Essentially, Microsoft Forms helped summarize the data by generating simple charts and graphs that quickly illustrated how participants responded to the questionnaire. This basic visualization allowed a quick overview of the data, revealing any general patterns or trends in responses. For example, as shown in Figure 3.1, a screenshot from Microsoft Forms demonstrates how responses were displayed for one of the questions in Part One. In addition

to displaying response percentages, the software provided two key features that supported an initial understanding of the data.

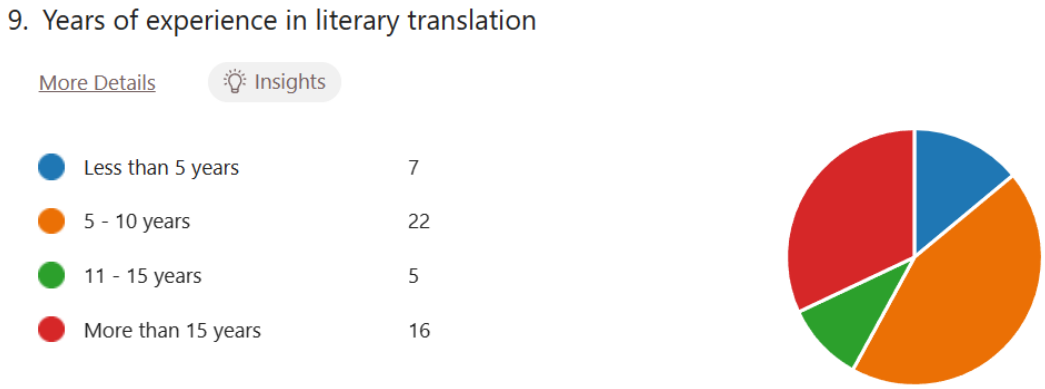

Figure 3.1: An example of the way Microsoft Forms can help give a quick overview of the data collected in the questionnaire

As shown in Figure 3.1, Microsoft Forms offers two helpful features: (a) insights and (b) details. When selecting 'insights', Microsoft Forms provides general observations about the data, highlighting key points or trends that it detects automatically. This feature, illustrated in

the following screenshot (Figure 3.2), gives the researcher a quick overview of any prominent patterns in the responses.

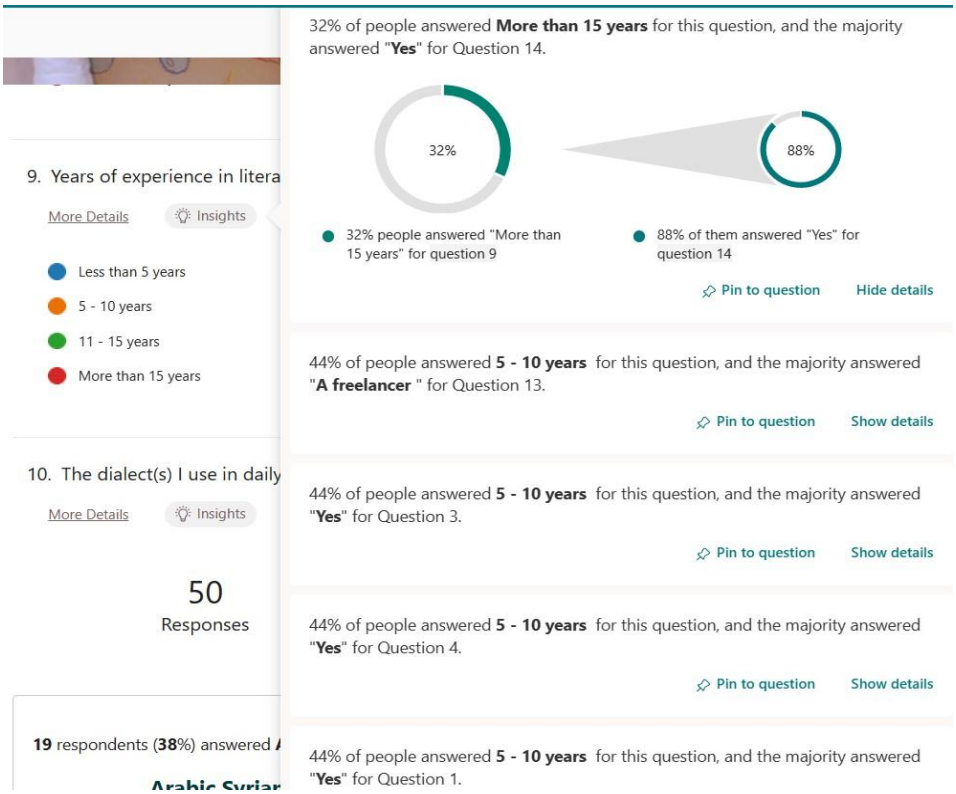

Figure 3.2: The way Microsoft Forms can generate insights from the collected data

Figure 3.2 shows four main insights drawn from the responses to one specific question in the questionnaire. This figure also allows for a quick comparison between the answers to this question and other items in the survey. Microsoft Forms not only creates these overviews but can also refresh them to highlight different perspectives in the data. By clicking 'show details' under each overview, the researcher can access more detailed information, including a table that lists all individual responses.

Additionally, Microsoft Forms allows the data to be exported to Excel for further, more in-depth analysis. However, Microsoft Forms has two key limitations: (1) it does not support advanced statistical analysis, and (2) it only offers a limited range of charts and graphs. Because of this, transferring data to another analysis tool is essential for more robust insights. In this case, NVivo was used, but Excel was necessary as an intermediate step to prepare the data for import into NVivo. The questionnaire items are interrelated in a manner that collectively forms a cohesive framework aligned with the overarching research questions.

3.12.3 Excel

In this study, Microsoft Excel—a popular software for handling data—was used to help manage and organize information. Excel is part of the Microsoft Office package and is well-known for making data easy to view, organize, and analyse. It displays information in a simple table format, using rows and columns, which helps keep things clear and organized. Excel can store different types of information, like text, numbers, dates, and formulas, and allows users to work with this data in various ways, such as sorting or filtering it. It can also create visual summaries like charts and tables. In this research, Excel acted as a middle step to organize data gathered through Microsoft Forms before moving it to another software called NVivo for detailed analysis. Essentially, Excel helped transfer information from the data collection stage (Microsoft Forms) to the in-depth analysis stage (NVivo). Excel is pertinent to this study due to its capacity to present data in a structured and visually coherent manner, enhancing clarity and facilitating systematic organization.

3.12.4 NVivo

NVivo is a software tool used for analysing qualitative data, which is information that is not in numbers—such as interviews, surveys, notes, web pages, articles, videos, and images. It is designed to help researchers identify patterns and themes in this type of data. NVivo supports two main methods of analysis: thematic analysis and content analysis. For this study, thematic analysis was used, allowing the researcher to find key themes or smaller sub-themes in the responses gathered from a questionnaire. The themes were also shaped by established criteria from literary translation evaluation guidelines developed by experts like Pym (2015) and Munday (Munday *et al.* 2022, and Farias de Souza, 2015). The use of NVivo in this study enabled a structured organization of themes drawn from both the research questions and participants' responses.

3.13 Limitations of research methods

One possible limitation in this study was identified when designing the initial questionnaire. The concern was that individuals outside the targeted group—such as translation studies students, translation theorists, or experts in non-literary translation fields—might respond, even though they were not part of the target audience. For example, people specializing in legal translation would not have the specific expertise needed here. To avoid this, I directly contacted literary translators to ensure only those with relevant experience participated. The study was intentionally focused on literary translators working between English and Arabic, as narrowing down the participants is essential to make sure they align with the aim of the study.

Another limitation of the research method is a common one in qualitative research: responses may reflect personal opinions rather than objective facts. However, this study specifically aimed to give literary translators a chance to share their perspectives, insights, and best practices, particularly on the topic of translating dialects and conversational speech in contemporary Arabic novels into English.

Additionally, because the study focused on just three novels, its findings may not apply to the full range of Arabic dialects or other world dialects. This limitation is acknowledged, as the research aims to serve as a starting point for further studies on translating colloquial Arabic dialogues and dialects. By exploring shared features across dialects, this study lays groundwork that future research might build on to find more widely applicable insights about translating dialects in world literature, both across and within languages.

One limitation of the questionnaire lies in the assumption that participants might recognize the excerpts as originating from the three novels and their respective translations analysed in this study. This assumption stems from the inclusion of the novels' titles in the title of this study, potentially leading participants to form preconceptions about the three works or the translator involved. To minimize this bias, the questionnaire did not explicitly disclose that the excerpts were drawn from these novels or translated by Marilyn Booth. However, the impact of this limitation appears to be minimal, as participants primarily articulated their perspectives based on their own experiences rather than on an awareness of the novels being translated by an experienced literary translator like Booth.

A further limitation of the literary translation evaluation scale lies in the potential variability in how participants interpret certain terminology. For instance, the term *accurate* in the first evaluation parameter—which asked participants to assess whether the translation was *accurate*, *partially accurate*, or *not accurate*—could be understood in different ways. Some participants might interpret the question as referring solely to the accuracy of the target text (the English translations of the three novels), while others might consider it in relation to both the source and target texts. To enhance clarity and mitigate misinterpretation, this parameter was supplemented with an explanatory phrase as follows: The translation is accurate (it accurately conveys the meaning of the Source Text). Despite this effort, there remains the possibility that participants considered broader interpretations of the term. To address this issue without overcomplicating the questionnaire, efforts were made to simplify its language and

structure, reducing the likelihood of participants being distracted by the potentially expansive implications of the terminology used.

Finally, there was a time constraint in the study: participants had only 15 days to complete the questionnaire. To encourage responses within this period, reminder emails and messages were sent five days after the initial invitation. This approach was necessary to keep the study on track with the project timeline and meet deadlines set with the supervisory team.

Interviews were excluded as a research method in this study in favor of a questionnaire-based approach. The questionnaire allowed for the inclusion of a larger and more diverse participant pool, thereby enabling the collection of broader and more varied insights. This approach was advantageous not only for increasing the volume of data collected but also for maintaining the anonymity of participants and the confidentiality of their responses, which can be challenging to guarantee in interview settings. Moreover, the use of a questionnaire facilitated a standardized format for data collection, reducing potential interviewer bias and allowing participants to respond at their own convenience, thus fostering a more open and reflective engagement with the research topics. Consequently, the decision to prioritize a questionnaire aligns with the study's objectives of maximizing input from literary translators while upholding rigorous ethical standards.

3.14 Summary and Conclusion

This chapter outlines the methodological framework employed in this research to address the study's key research questions (RQs) concerning the translatability of colloquial Arabic dialogue in three contemporary Arabic novels into English. It begins by articulating the overarching aims of the study, providing a roadmap that guides the reader through the research process. The chapter is organized to facilitate a clear understanding of the research approach, offering a detailed overview of the structure and content of subsequent chapters.

The chapter then elaborates on the research methodology, which adopts a mixed-methods approach to ensure a multifaceted examination of the topic. This approach integrates quantitative methods to uncover broad trends and qualitative methods to explore deeper insights into how colloquial dialogues in Arabic are rendered into English. The integration of these methods enables a comprehensive analysis, particularly in addressing nuanced linguistic, cultural, and pragmatic challenges inherent in translation.

Ethical considerations are thoroughly discussed to underscore the study's commitment to maintaining the highest ethical standards and transparency in research design, data collection, and participant engagement. Following this, a detailed explanation of the questionnaire design and distribution process is provided. This section focuses on the rationale behind the chosen data collection instrument, the strategies employed to reach a representative sample of participants, and how these methods align with the study's objectives.

The research tools used are then introduced, emphasizing the specific techniques applied for both data gathering and analysis. These tools are relevant for investigating how colloquial dialogue is adapted or transformed during translation, addressing both linguistic fidelity and cultural resonance. The chapter also explores how these tools contribute to evaluating the effectiveness and limitations of different translation strategies, which is a core focus of the research.

Finally, the chapter acknowledges the limitations of the chosen methodologies, reflecting on how these constraints may influence the interpretation of findings. By situating these limitations within the broader context of translation studies, the chapter sets the stage for subsequent discussions on the practical and theoretical implications of translating colloquial Arabic dialogue into English, a critical area in contemporary literary translation research.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present and discuss the findings of the questionnaire that was distributed to the participants who are literary translators between Arabic and English. The chapter presents the results of the participants' responses to the questionnaire. Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were used to analyse the results. The closed-ended questions were quantitatively analysed by Microsoft Forms and the open-ended questions were qualitatively analysed by NVivo.

4.2 Findings of the questionnaire

After the questionnaire was closed to participants, the total number of participants (including the two participants from the pilot study) reached 50 participants.

4.2.1. Findings of the quantitative analysis

Part One of the questionnaire was mainly about demographic details of the participants. The purpose of asking the participants about their nationalities was to know the dialectal and linguistic variation they represent in terms of the countries they come from. The following bar chart shows the nationalities of the participants:

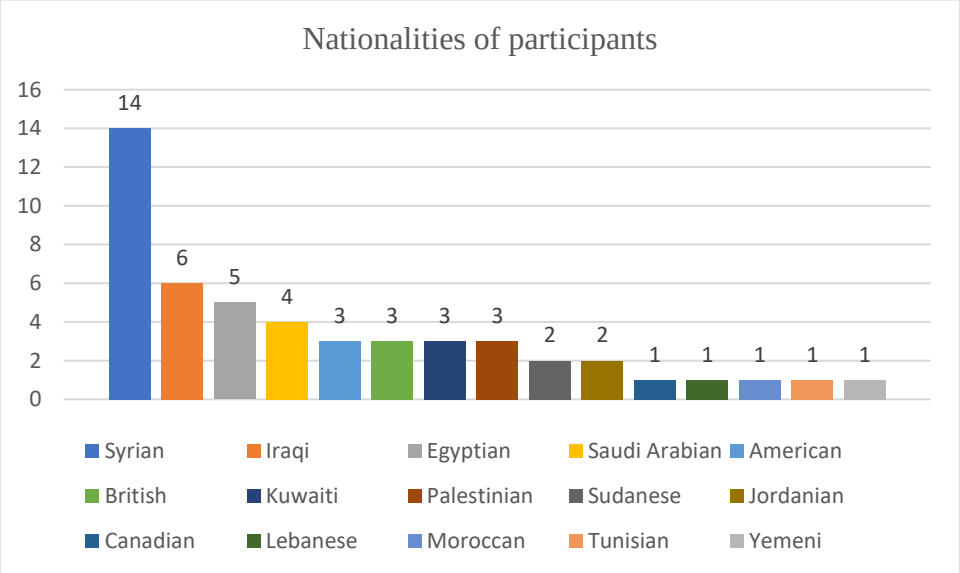

Figure 4.1: Nationalities of participants

Figure 4.1 shows that the 50 participants in this study come from 15 different countries across four continents, demonstrating a well-rounded and diverse sample. This variety reflects a

growing interest in Arabic-English literary translation, with 328 English translations of Arabic fiction and poetry published in the U.S. between 2008 and 2022, mostly by independent and academic presses. Recently, larger commercial publishers have also begun adding Arabic translations to their catalogs (Stanton, 2023).

The largest group of participants consisted of 14 individuals from Syria, accounting for 28% of the total sample. In addition, six participants were from Iraq, comprising 12% of participants. Egypt, the most populous Arabic-speaking country, was represented by five participants, or 10% of the sample. Four participants were from Saudi Arabia, making up 8% of the respondents. Furthermore, three participants each from the United States, the United Kingdom, Kuwait, and Palestine completed the questionnaire. The sample also included two participants each from Sudan and Jordan. Finally, one participant was from each of the following countries: Canada, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia, and Yemen. The participants comprised both native Arabic speakers and proficient non-native speakers, each possessing substantial expertise in the language. This linguistic proficiency enabled an exploration of whether knowledge of Arabic influences the comprehension of Arabic colloquial dialects and the application of the best strategies for rendering these dialects into an appropriate target text.

The questionnaire also collected data on participants' gender. Research suggests that gender can play a role in questionnaire responses, particularly in evaluative settings. The design of evaluation tools can significantly impact gender disparities, with the number of scale points affecting the expression of gender stereotypes, particularly in male-dominated fields (Rivera & Tilcsik, 2019). However, in the context of this study, I think that the participants' gender did not systematically affect the participants' responses. It has been used only for statistical purposes. In this study, the participant pool consisted of 30 males (60%) and 20 females (40%), emphasizing the importance of gender balance in representation. This distribution indicates that interest in literary translation between Arabic and English exists across genders.

Although research on the role of female literary translators between Arabic and English remains limited, the female participants in this study constitute a significant proportion, reflecting the increasing prominence of women's voices in this domain. Their participation highlights the shifting dynamics of gender representation within the field of literary translation in the Arab world. Recent studies on translation and gender in this region have identified several critical themes. Notably, gender issues in translation studies have received substantial attention, particularly regarding the translation of gender-stereotypical representations in literary texts

(Zhu, 2024). In the Egyptian context, scholars navigating the translation of gender studies concepts face considerable challenges, including resistance from various ideological frameworks, such as Islamist discourses (Mehrez, 2007).

When it comes to age groups, most participants fell within the age group of 41 to 55 years. This age group is important because these are the years when literary translators have acquired good reputation in the field of translation studies. Less than half of the participants belonged to that age group: they were 22 participants representing 44%. The next age group was close to the first age group; there were 21 participants from the age group 26 to 40 years old (which constitutes 42%). This shows that most participants were between 26 to 55 years old (the two age groups combined made 43 participants or 86% of the participants). However, there was only one participant who belongs to the age group (18 – 25 years old). Moreover, there were 6 participants who were over 55 years old. These numbers show that an absolute majority of the participants was more than 26 years old. This means that most literary translators between Arabic and English in this study started their professional productions of translations after the age of 26. This could be related to the completion of their first university degree. The following pie chart shows the percentages of age group distribution among the participants:

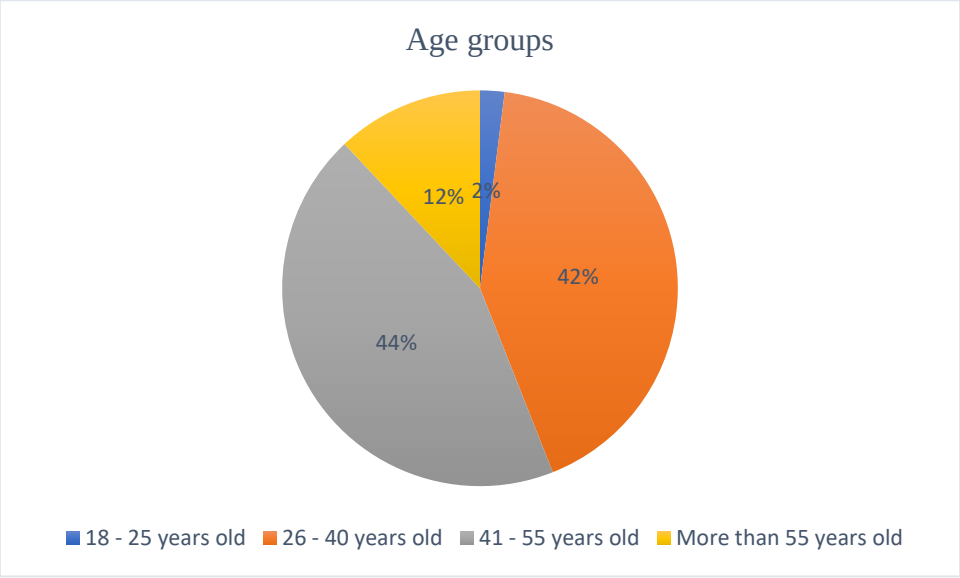

Figure 4.2: Age groups of participants

The next important data gathered from the questionnaire is the participants' years of experience in literary translation. While experience is demonstrably crucial in many disciplines, literary translation stands out as a field where years of practice are particularly vital. Literary translation

is a complex and demanding task that requires both comprehensive scholarship and broad creativity (Biguenet and Schulte, 1989). This is particularly true for graduate students, who face difficulties in translating literary texts due to a lack of experience and traditional teaching methods (Madkour, 2016). Less than half of the participants said they have between 5 and 10 years of experience in literary translation. The number of participants who have that range of experience was 22 participants (44%). Those who have more than 15 years of experience were 16 (32%). The results also show that 5 participants have between 11 and 15 years of experience while 7 participants have less than 5-year experience in literary translation. The following bar graph shows the numbers of participants according to years of experience they have in literary translation:

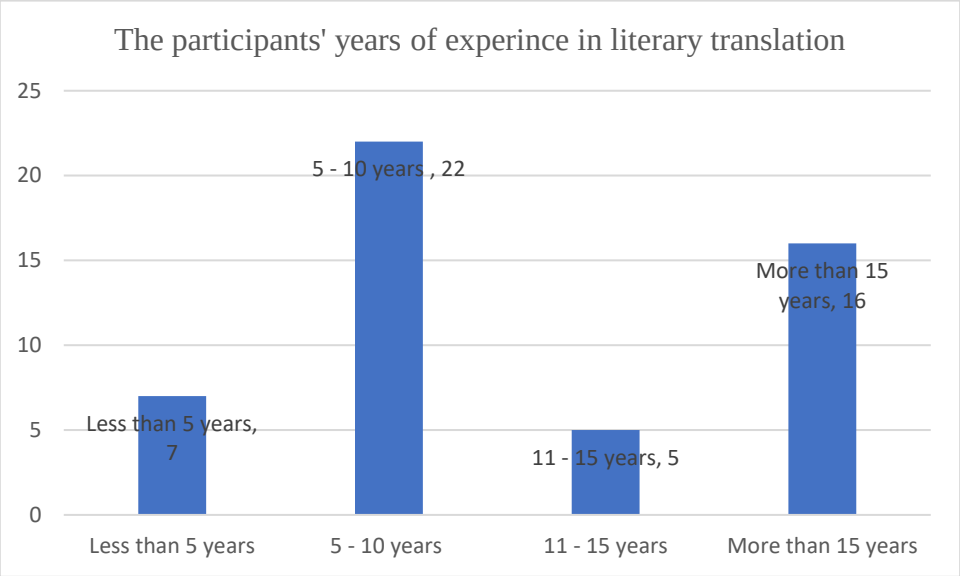

Figure 4.3: The participants' years of experience in literary translation

The participant pool composition strengthens the validity of the findings regarding the translation of colloquial Arabic dialogues and dialects into English. As evidenced by the graph, a substantial majority, 43 participants (86%) possess over five years of experience in literary translation. This extensive experience suggests familiarity with a diverse range of texts, potentially including those featuring colloquial Arabic dialogues and various Arabic dialects.

The participants were then asked to indicate what educational level they have achieved in translation studies and/or any other disciplines. 12 participants (24%) indicated that they possess a bachelor's degree in translation studies; 8 participants (16%) said they have master's degree in translation studies; and 2 participants (4%) said they have PhD in translation studies.

Interestingly, 50% (25 participants) studied other disciplines but they had proficiency in two or more languages. The three remaining participants gave different answers to this question. P28 answered that her undergraduate degree is in Arabic, but her academic research is not in translation studies. P30 answered that he has no qualifications in translation studies but did not say what his discipline was. Finally, P42 answered that she studied English literature. The following table shows the responses to this question:

Table 4.1 The participants' academic qualifications in translation studies and/or any other discipline

The participants' academic qualifications in translation studies and/or any other discipline		**Number of Participants**	**%**
Bachelor's degree in translation studies		12	24%
Master's degree in translation studies		8	16%
PhD in translation studies		2	4%
The participant studied a different discipline, but they knew two (or more than two) languages.		25	50%
	The participant holds an undergraduate degree in Arabic, but their academic research is not in translation studies.	1	2%
	The participant does not have any qualifications in translation studies	1	2%
	The participant indicated they studied English Literature	1	2%

In the context of these 50 participants, the results of the questionnaire show that while pursuing a career in literary translation does not necessarily require formal studies in translation, strong language proficiency and relevant experience are highly valued. Further studies in the future may investigate the reasons why literary translators choose this profession even though they have not studied literary translation as an academic prerequisite in the first place. Some scholars think that studying translation theories can help translators improve the quality of their work. Literary translators can significantly benefit from engaging with the field of translation studies. This engagement provides a crucial theoretical foundation for their practice, as highlighted by Tymoczko (2014). Additionally, studying the concept of translatorial ethos, as explored by Flynn (2007), can enhance their understanding of prevailing translational norms and practices. However, as Madkour (2016) emphasizes, a purely theoretical grounding is insufficient. The specific challenges inherent to literary translation, such as navigating various linguistic levels

and employing effective teaching methodologies, necessitate a combination of theoretical knowledge and practical training and experience.

The next question in the questionnaire aimed at investigating the literary genre(s) the participants usually translate the most. For this question, they were given the option to select any relevant answers and even to add any other answers they wish to share.

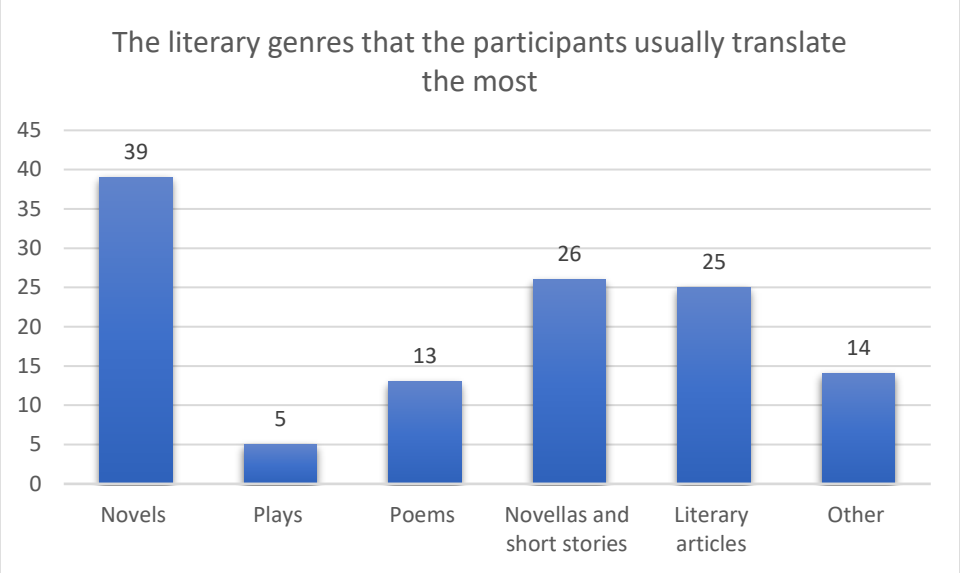

Figure 4.4: The literary genres that the participants usually translate the most

Figure 4.4 illustrates the literary genres that participants, who work as literary translators, prefer to translate. For this question, participants could select as many genres as applied to their work. The responses indicate that 39 participants focus on translating novels; 5 translate plays, 13 translate poetry, 26 translate novellas and short stories, and 25 work on literary articles. Moreover, 14 participants selected 'other' for genres not listed. Those who chose 'other' mentioned a range of specialized texts they translate, including financial and banking documents, biographies and autobiographies, non-fiction, and political or economic studies. Allowing participants to select multiple genres highlights the overlapping scope of work among the literary translators involved in this study.

When asked about the nature of their work in the field of literary translation, 96% of participants (48) said they are freelancers. On the other hand, only two participants selected the option (other) for this question. P1 said he is a 'hobbyist' while P31 said that she is a professor and translator at the same time. The following bar graph shows the answers to this question:

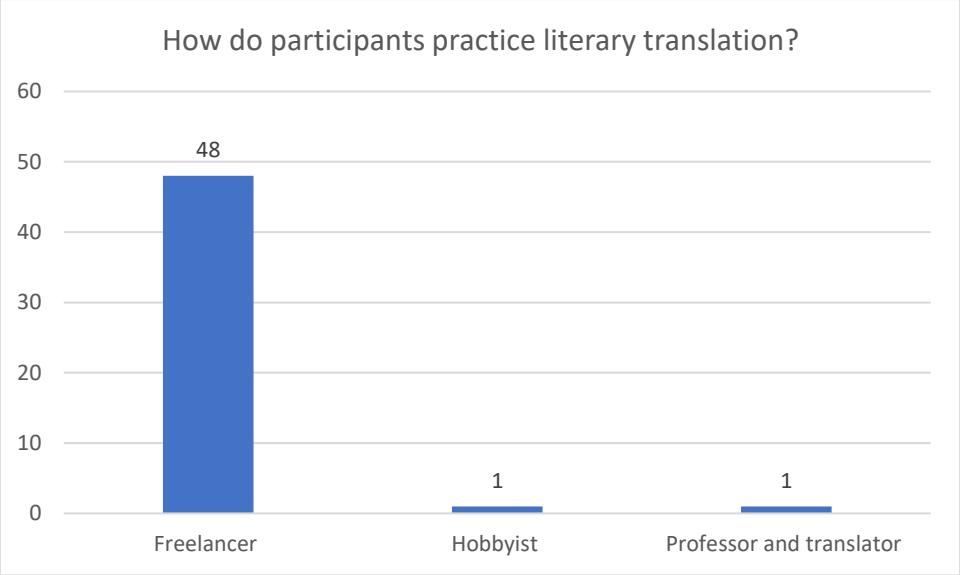

Figure 4.5: How participants described their career as literary translators

Analysis of the above graph reveals a significant prevalence of freelancers among Arabic-English literary translators. In the context of the 50 participants in the questionnaire, this finding suggests that literary translation may still function primarily as a secondary occupation pursued for various motivations. People may be motivated to translate Arabic literature for different reasons, such as a personal interest in the stories, the hope of making money, or publishers' guesses about how international readers might respond to these works. This insight highlights a research opportunity to explore why certain texts are chosen for translation and the potential advantages of hiring translators for highly regarded works, even if they are not expected to attract a large audience.

Literary translators are driven by a variety of motivations, including personal enjoyment and interpersonal relationships (Marin-Lacarta & Vargas-Urpí, 2020). In academic contexts, collaborative literary translation workshops provide students with opportunities to engage in metalinguistic reflection, enhance their linguistic competencies, and deepen their literary analysis skills. Such workshops frequently incorporate oral performance, which has been shown to play a pivotal role in sustaining students' motivation (Beauvais & Ryland, 2020). Additionally, stylistic approaches to literary translation prioritize the retention of the original text's stylistic elements and involve analysing individual translators' styles through corpus linguistic methods. This approach enables the identification of significant stylistic features in the source text and their evaluation in the translated versions, underscoring the importance of

preserving the distinctive 'added value' that separates literary texts from non-literary ones (Huang, 2011).

4.2.1.1 The questions about colloquial dialogue, dialect, and translation

Q1. *Have you ever translated any dialectal dialogues from Arabic into English or vice versa?*

When answering this question, most participants answered 'yes'. The percentage of participants who said 'yes' was 76% (38 participants). In addition, 12% participants (6) answered 'no' and the same percentage (12%) answered 'they are not sure'. The selection of 'I am not sure' by 6 participants could be an indication that they do not have a clear idea about the exact difference between what is formal and what is informal when we talk about Arabic dialects, colloquial expressions, and Standard Arabic. It might be also an indication that some literary translators do not consider the issue of colloquial dialogue or dialect a very important one. The following pie chart clearly presents the participants' responses to this question:

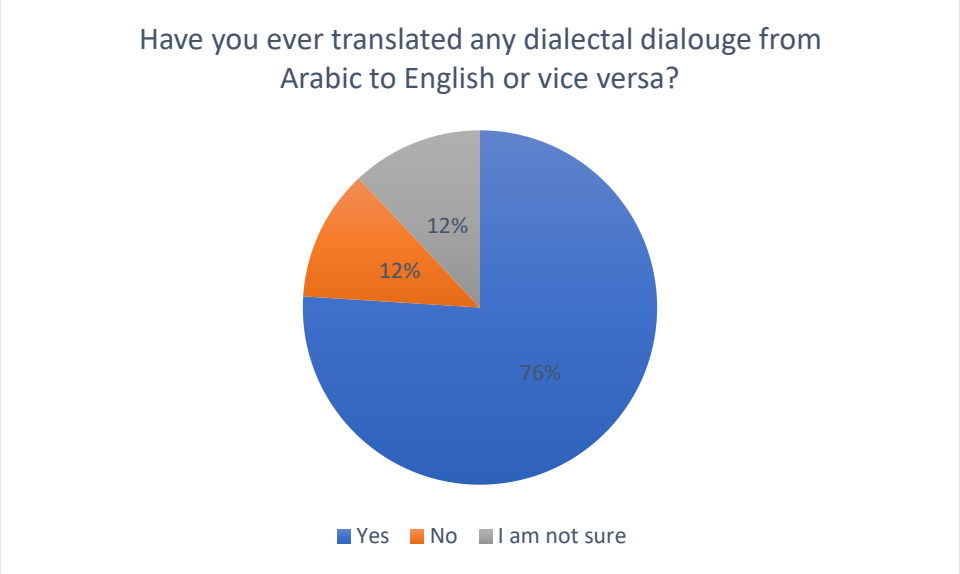

Figure 4.6: The participants' responses to whether they have translated any colloquial dialogues between English and Arabic

The finding that 76% of participants have experience translating colloquial Arabic dialogues strengthens the questionnaire's validity and reliability. This high percentage suggests a representative sample of literary translators who have encountered this specific challenge in their professional careers. The data implies a prevalent trend of colloquial Arabic use within contemporary Arabic literature, necessitating decision-making strategies from translators. Translators today are developing helpful ways to manage colloquial language and regional

speech differences. This research supports literary translators in handling similar issues as languages continue to evolve. It encourages translators of contemporary Arabic literature to address dialects by using a range of strategies.

Q2. *I am familiar with the meanings of the following terms: Dialect, register, diglossia.*

The purpose of this question is to see if participants understand some key differences between three important terms in translation and language studies: *dialect* (a regional or social variety of a language), *register* (different levels of formality or types of language used in different situations), and *diglossia* (the use of two language forms in a community, often one for formal and one for everyday contexts).

Dialect

Participants were asked in the questionnaire if they are aware of the meaning of the word 'dialect'. The results of the questionnaire show that all participants are aware of the meaning of the word 'dialect'. However, this awareness of its meaning may vary according to different conceptions as will be shown later in the qualitative analysis. The following bar graph shows the level of awareness of the meaning of the word 'dialect' among the 50 participants.

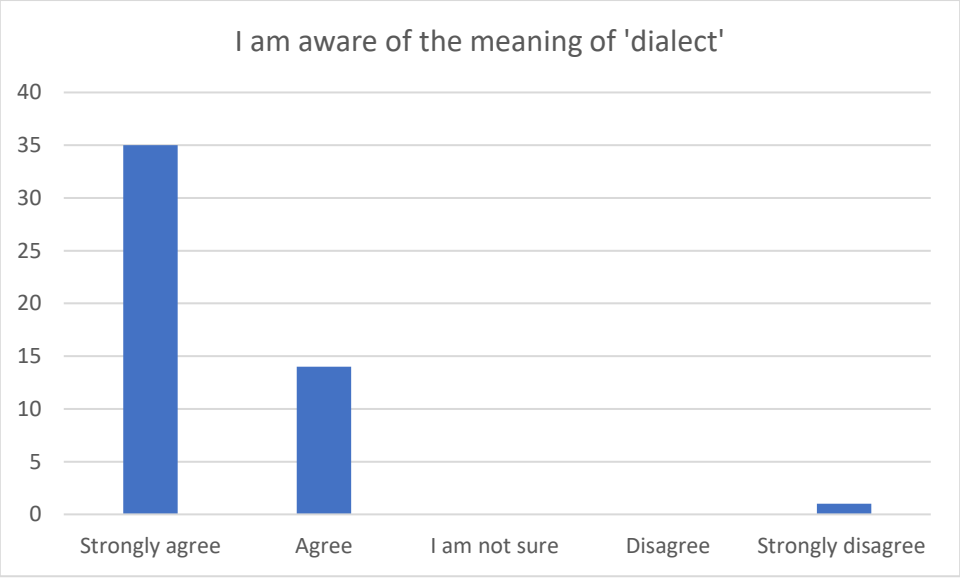

Figure 4.7: The level of awareness among participants of the meaning of 'dialect'

Ensuring the honesty of participants' responses to questionnaires is inherently challenging, as truthfulness is influenced by various factors, including motivation, anonymity, and the perceived significance of the study. However, it can reasonably be asserted that the participants

in this study provided truthful responses, given their professional expertise as experienced literary translators. Additionally, the complexity and challenges associated with translating colloquial Arabic—a significant aspect of their professional practice—underscore their informed engagement with the questionnaire.

70% of the participants (35) answered ‘strongly agree’ and 28% (14) of the participants answered ‘agree’ to this question. Those who answered ‘strongly disagree’ constituted 2% (one participant only). This means that almost every literary translator among the participants confirmed that they are aware of the meaning of the word ‘dialect’. This piece of information is very important as it can inform the translation process. Literary translators should know that some languages may have both a spoken and a written form. Or more specifically, literary translators should be aware that some novelists may use colloquial dialogue in their novels and use formal language as the narrative language. The high percentage of those who selected ‘strongly agree’ reflects that ‘dialect’ is a common translational concept among the 50 literary translators. This knowledge may be derived from their practice of translating such dialects.

Register

The concept of register plays an important role in understanding the translation of colloquial dialogue and dialects in the context of the three Arabic novels used in this study. Looking at the responses of the participants in the questionnaire, it is found that 40% (20) of them said that they have a high level of awareness of the meaning of ‘register’ by selecting ‘strongly agree’. Moreover, 32% (16) of the participants answered ‘agree’ to this question which means that they are aware of the meaning of ‘register’. Additionally, 22% of the participants (11) answered that they are not sure whether they know the meaning of ‘register’, or they do not. 6% of the participants answered that they are not aware of the meaning of ‘register’ with one participant answering ‘disagree’ and two participants answering ‘strongly disagree’. The following bar graph shows the distribution of responses to this question:

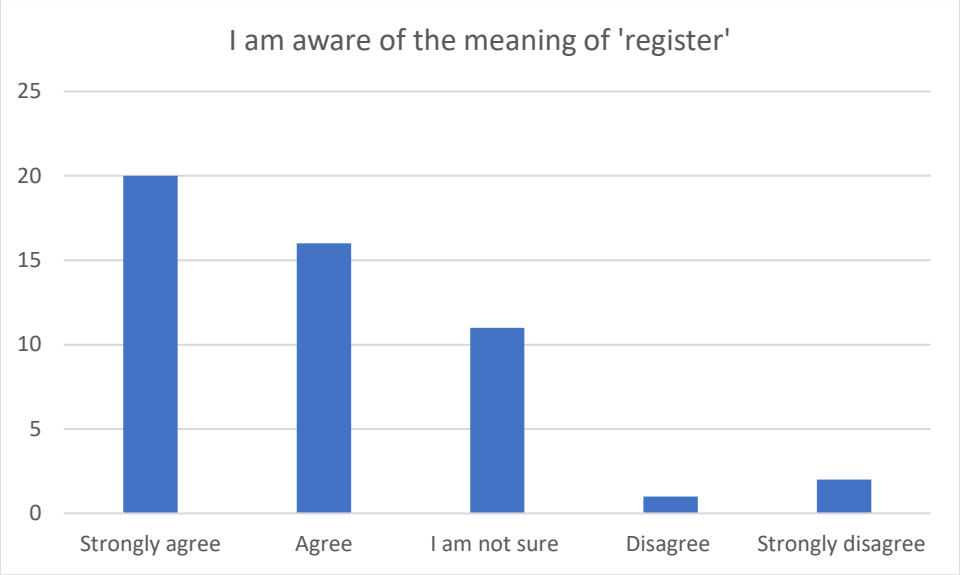

Figure 4.8: The level of awareness among participants of the meaning of 'register'

While the results indicate a high level of awareness regarding the concept of 'register' among a significant percentage of the participants (40% selecting 'strongly agree'), it is crucial to acknowledge the remaining participants who expressed uncertainty. This finding suggests a subset of the participants who might benefit from further exposure to the concept of register and its impact on translation quality. Deficits in understanding register and its influence can manifest in translated texts lacking stylistic variation, failing to capture the intended tone of the source text. Characters' dialogues, in particular, risk losing their distinctive features if the translator does not account for the register shifts employed by the characters themselves.

Diglossia

The term 'diglossia' could be the less commonly known translational term among the three terms given in this questionnaire. This is because the term itself has a very specific meaning in the context of translation studies between Arabic and English. Arabic is described as a *diglossic* language because there are two variations used in the language. They are usually referred to as 'high' and 'low'. Examples of diglossic languages are Arabic, Greek and Haiti. In Arabic, Classical Arabic, or Standard Arabic, or 'al-Fuṣḥá' is considered the high variation while the various spoken dialects in different Arab countries are the low variations.

The following bar graph depicts participant self-reported levels of awareness regarding the term ‘diglossia’. This graphical representation facilitates the presentation of participant responses on this topic:

Figure 4.9: The level of awareness among participants of the meaning of ‘diglossia’

The above bar chart visually represents participant responses to a query regarding their familiarity with the term ‘diglossia’. The data is categorized as either ‘aware’ or ‘not aware’. It is clear from the graph that 70% of the participants (35) answered to this question that they are aware of the meaning of ‘diglossia’. The previous percentage consists of 36% (18 participants) who said they are entirely familiar with the meaning of ‘diglossia’ and 34% (17 participants) who said they are familiar with meaning of ‘diglossia’ by selecting ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’ to the statement *I am familiar with the meaning of ‘diglossia’* respectively. However, 20% (10 participants) answered that they are not sure of the meaning of ‘diglossia’ while 10% (5 participants) answered that they are not familiar with the meaning of the term ‘diglossia’ with two participants selecting ‘disagree’ and three participants selecting ‘strongly disagree’.

Overall, the results show that the sample of the literary translators who participated in the questionnaire are more familiar with the meaning of ‘dialect’ and less familiar with the meaning of ‘diglossia’. This means that the 50 literary translators usually have theoretical knowledge of some translational terms whose understanding may facilitate the process of translation especially when dealing with problematic sections of colloquial dialogue or dialects in the texts they translate.

Q3. *It is important for literary translators to have good knowledge of the dialects they might find in the literary works they translate.*

This question investigates the perceived importance of dialect knowledge among the 50 literary translators when encountering its use as a stylistic device within contemporary novel dialogue.

The results show that 68% (34 participants) strongly agree with the above statement and 30% (15 participants) agree. Therefore, it is obvious that most participants support the idea that it is important for literary translators to have good knowledge of the dialects they might find in the literary works they translate. Only one participant (2% of the total population) said that they are not sure about this. The bar graph below shows the results emerging from the responses to this question:

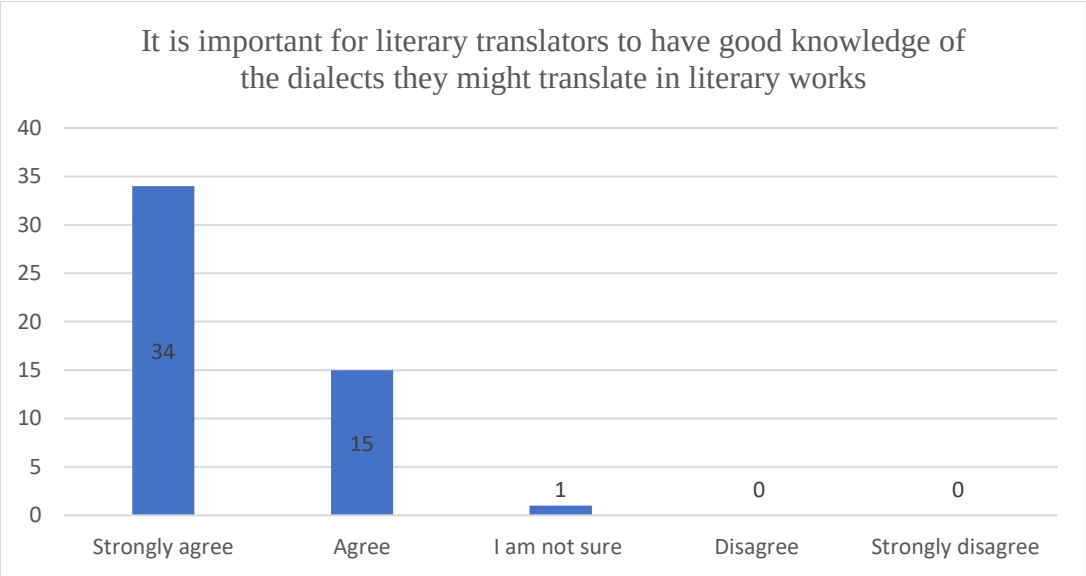

Figure 4.10: The participants' opinion on the importance of having good knowledge of the dialects they translate in contemporary novels

Q4. *The use of dialects in contemporary novels plays an important role in creating the genuine atmosphere the novel wants to convey.*

The purpose of this question is to check the participants' opinion on a very important issue in contemporary Arabic literature: the use of dialects in writing novels. Considering the prevalence of this stylistic choice among Arab novelists for dialogue construction, it is pertinent to investigate the perspectives of literary translators, who function as crucial collaborators in

the dissemination of these works across linguistic borders. There has been a lot of debate in the Arab world about the use of dialects in writing. The scope of this thesis is restricted only to using dialects as a medium for dialogue between the characters in novels. The current study is concerned only with the translation of colloquial Arabic dialogues used in the three contemporary Arabic novels into English.

For this question, 44% (22) of the participants strongly agreed with the idea that the use of dialects in contemporary novels plays an important role in creating the genuine atmosphere the novel intends to convey. Moreover, 52% (26) of the participants agreed with this idea. The results also show that one participant answered that they are not sure, and one participant disagreed with the statement. None of the participants selected the option 'strongly disagree'. The following bar graph shows the distribution of the responses to this question among the 50 participants:

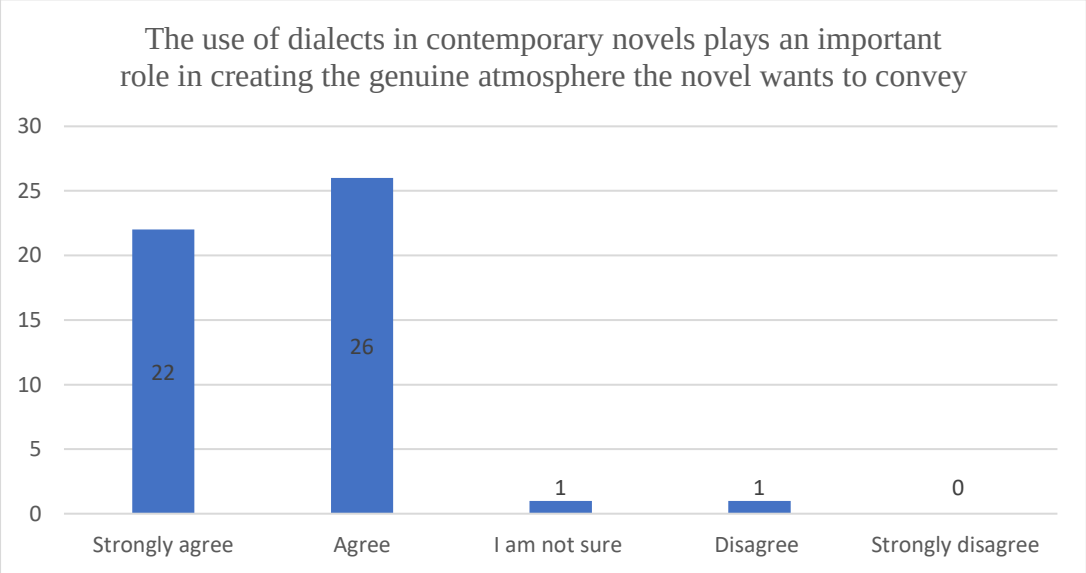

Figure 4.11: The participants' opinions on using dialects in contemporary novels to create a genuine atmosphere of the events

These results show that the 50 literary translators generally agree with the idea that dialects can really help in creating a realistic atmosphere as dialects and colloquial dialogues are part of day-to-day reality. One rationale for this question is that this is a very relevant idea to the work of translators and their readiness to work with the writers who use dialects and colloquial dialogues in their novels. This becomes important given the fact that some literary translators responded to my initial communication by saying that they are not ready to translate novels that include sections of colloquial dialogue and that their work in literary translation is

exclusively focused on MSA and has nothing to do with Arabic dialects. Therefore, they apologised for not taking part in the questionnaire. It should be noted that some contemporary writers prefer to have their novels translated into other languages, so they become known among foreign readers. One of the most acclaimed methods to publicize one's own novels is translation. This opinion on the part of literary translators may encourage authors to include sections of colloquial dialogue in their novels simply because literary translators think that the use of dialects and colloquial dialogue can help depict reality at its best. This can be extended to include the use of colloquial names for objects, habits, celebrations, and culturally specific or locally specific expressions.

Q5. *Translating novels that include passages of dialectal dialogue has been a challenge in my translation career*.

Because there are many Arabic dialects and colloquial expressions in the Arab world, it is assumed in this question that translating such sections of the language poses a challenge to literary translators. It seems that some people may believe that translating a dialect from one language to another is straightforward. However, when asked about this in the questionnaire, most participants agreed that such a translation is a challenge for them in their career as translators. 34% (17) of the participants strongly agreed with this statement and 46% (23) agreed that translating novels that include dialectal dialogue has been a challenge to them throughout their literary translation career. This means that 80% (40) of the participants think that this type of translation is a challenge. 10% (5) of the participants answered that they are not sure and 10% (5) of the participants disagreed with this statement. In other words, they think that translating novels which include dialects or colloquial dialogues do not pose a challenge to them. No one among the participants answered that they strongly disagreed with the above statement in this question.

The following bar graph shows the participants' responses to this question:

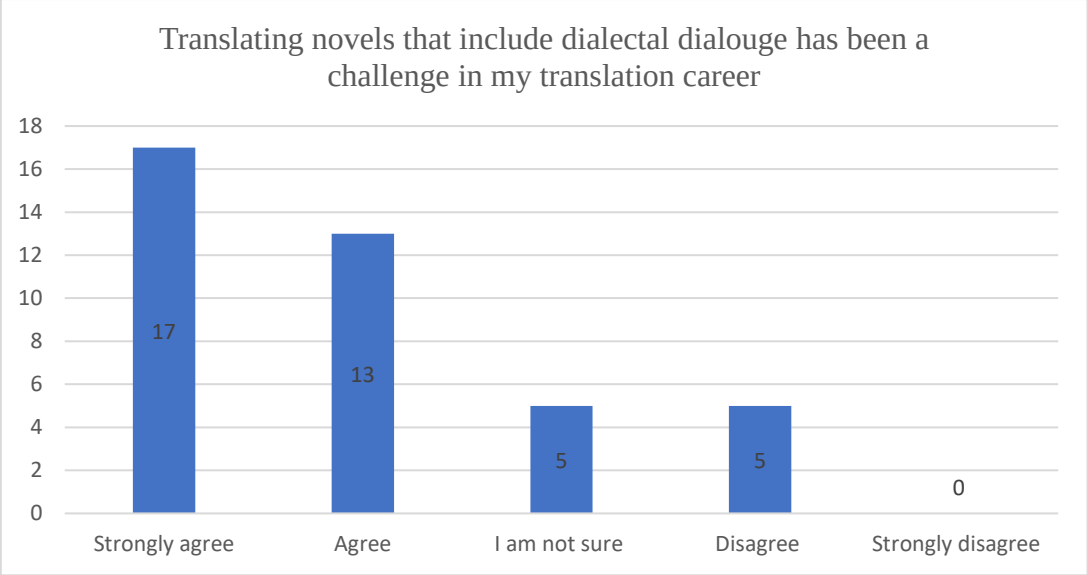

Figure 4.12: The participants' opinions on whether translating novels which include dialectal dialogue has been a challenge in their translation career

Q6. *When translating Arabic dialects in novels into English, it is important for me as a literary translator to read some academic books on how to deal with such translations*.

The purpose of this question is to check the participants' opinions on the importance of getting some academic knowledge and theories in the field of translating Arabic dialects in contemporary Arabic novels into English. The outcome here is to try to bridge the gap between practical literary translation and translation theories. The gap between translation theory and practice is a recurring theme in translation studies. The creative and improvisational nature of translation practice often conflicts with theoretical frameworks, creating a disparity between idealized concepts and the realities of translation work (Vinokur & Réjouis, 2017). However, this gap may not necessarily be problematic. Some argue that it allows practitioners the flexibility to selectively apply theoretical knowledge as needed, providing discretion in their work (Allmendinger & Tewdwr-Jones, 1997). The role of practice in literary translation has been studied by some scholars. Some scholars argue that literary translation is a valuable model for translation theory and practice (Tymoczko, 2014). However, other scholars suggest that it should focus on the reader's experience and the broader implications of the text (Scott, 2018).

For this question, only 22% (11) of the participants strongly agreed that it is important for literary translators to read some academic books on translating Arabic dialects in novels into English. Moreover, 34% (17) of the participants in the questionnaire agreed with the above

statement. As a result, we can see that more than half of the participants (55%) support this suggestion. In addition to this, 22% (11) of the participants were not sure whether to agree or disagree with this statement. Finally, 18% (9) of the participants disagreed and only 4% (2) of the participants strongly disagreed with the above statement.

These findings not only validate the need for such engagement but also showcase its practical benefits in navigating translation difficulties. The following bar graph visualizes the responses given by the participants to the above question:

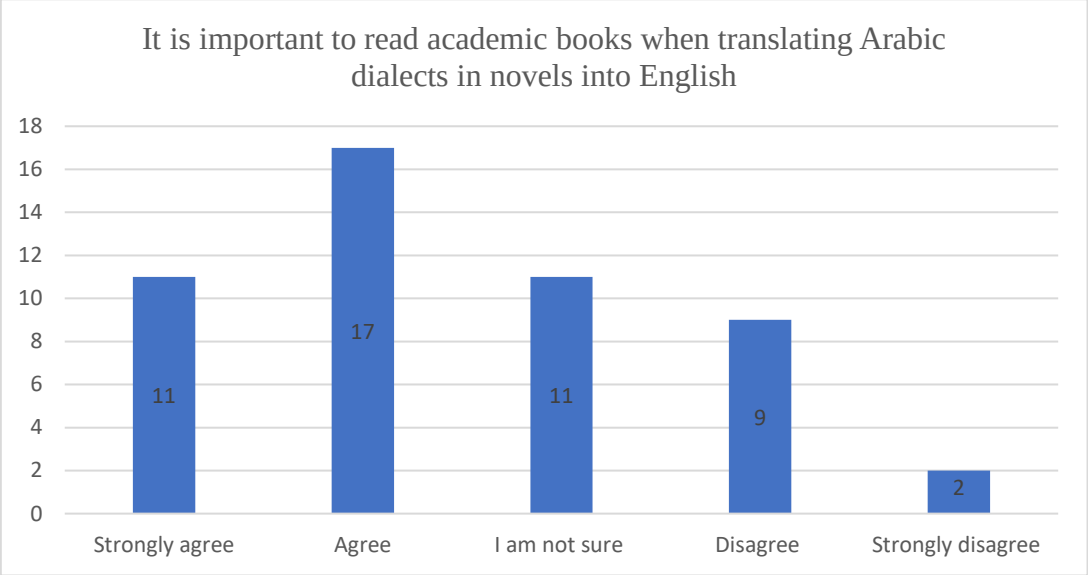

Figure 4.13: The importance of reading academic books when translating Arabic dialects in novels into English

The findings of the questionnaire indicate that most participants endorse the notion that literary translators should engage with academic literature in translation studies and dialectology when translating contemporary Arabic novels featuring dialectal elements. This underscores the importance of synergizing theoretical knowledge with practical experience. The results suggest that translator training is not a one-time event confined to the initial stages of a literary translation career. Rather, the data implies that learning is a continuous process for literary translators.

Q7. *When translating Arabic dialects in novels into English, it is better to translate them into socially and culturally 'equivalent' dialects*.

This question is based on the idea that Arabic dialects may be best translated into English dialects that match in terms of social and cultural context. It also assumes that the dialects chosen in translation should reflect similar social and cultural backgrounds. Looking at the

questionnaire responses, most participants supported this idea. Specifically, 20% (10 participants) strongly agreed, and 60% (30 participants) agreed, meaning 80% (40 participants) believed the best approach is to translate Arabic dialects in novels into an English dialect with a comparable social and cultural role. However, none of the participants specified a particular English dialect as the target dialect for translation. This outcome is surprising from a theoretical standpoint, even if practical examples exist, as there are cases where dialects in English novels have been translated into Arabic dialects. Additionally, 8% (4 participants) were uncertain, while 12% (6 participants) disagreed with the idea—8% (4) disagreed, and 4% (2) strongly disagreed. The following bar graph illustrates the responses, and the next question suggests that further research could provide additional evidence to support this approach:

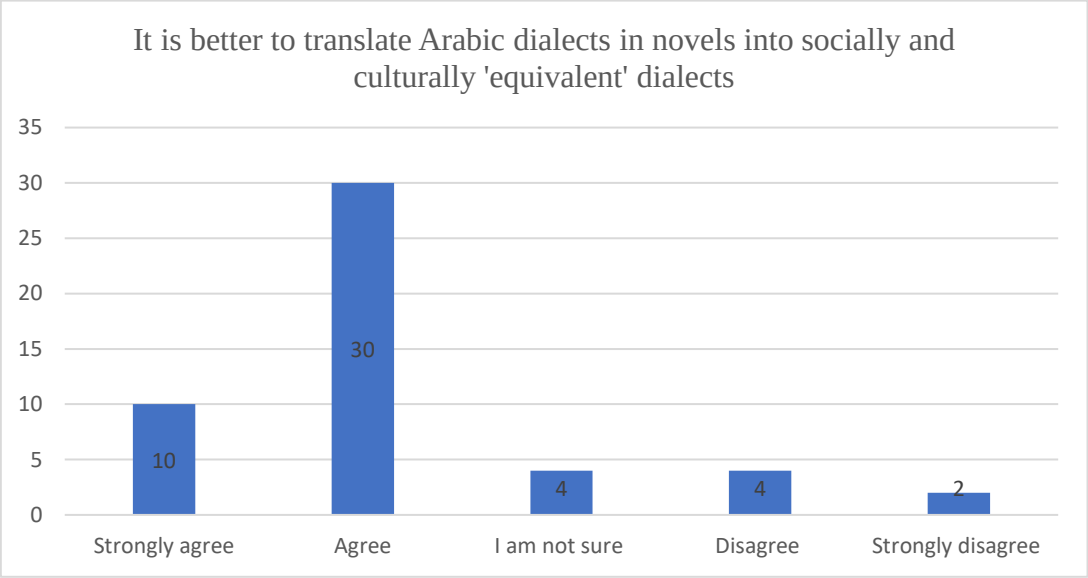

Figure 4.14: The opinions on translating Arabic dialects in novels into socially and culturally 'equivalent' dialects

Q8. *Arabic dialects should be translated into formal English as it is impossible to find an equivalent dialect in English that can reflect the same socio-cultural features of the source text dialects*.

The purpose of this question is to check whether the participants agree or disagree with a long-established practice stating that Arabic dialects in contemporary Arabic novels should be translated into formal English because it seems impossible to find an equivalent dialect that can encapsulate the same socio-cultural features of the source language dialects.

The responses to this question came in accordance with the responses to the previous question. This reflects consistency in the responses of the participants. Only 2% (1) of the participants strongly agreed with this strategy. Moreover, 24% (12) of the participants agreed with the above statement. This means that those who disagree with translating Arabic dialects into formal English constitute 26% (13) of the participants. There is, however, 22% (11) of the participants who are not sure about this. This reflects a kind of uncertainty about such suggestion. On the other hand, it is noticeable that more than half of the participants in the questionnaire did not agree with this strategy. 44% (22) of the participants disagreed and 8% (4) strongly disagreed. This means that 52% (26) of the participants exclude formal English as a possible target text for their translations when translating Arabic dialects into English. This is the main argument of this thesis; translating a low register into a high register is not always the right strategy. The responses to this question are illustrated in the following bar graph:

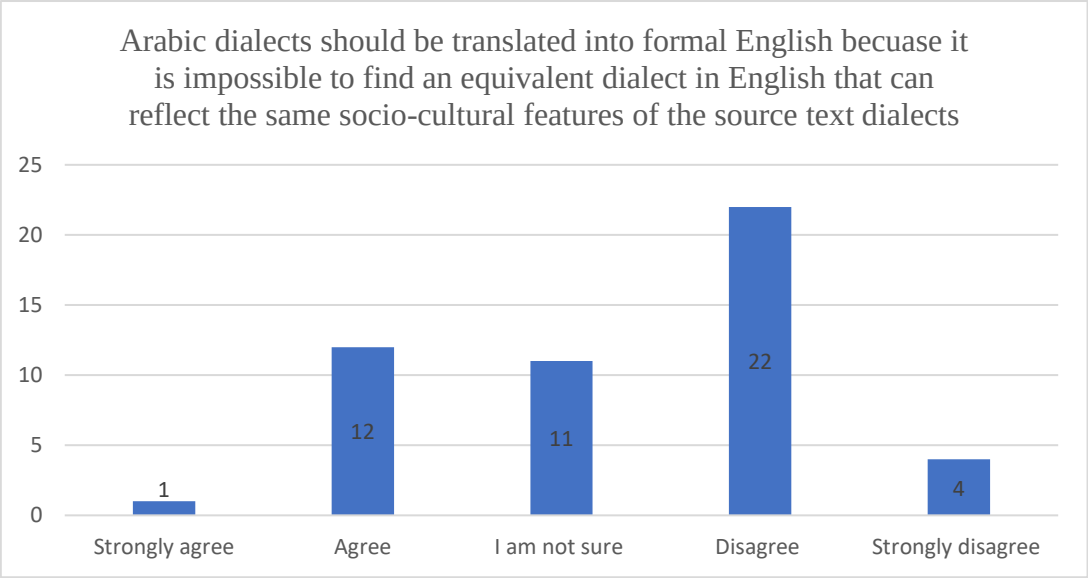

Figure 4.15: The participants' opinions on the necessity of translating Arabic dialects into formal English

Q9. *Translating Arabic colloquial dialogues into formal English can distort the social and cultural image of the characters in the source text.*

This statement, which aligns with Question 8, solicits participants' opinions on a potential consequence of translating Arabic colloquial dialogue into formal English. The underlying premise is that such a translation might distort the characters' social and cultural portrayal as envisioned by the author of the original Arabic novel. This explanation aligns with Skopos Theory and Christiane Nord's model of translation. Both focus on the purpose of the translation

and the decisions needed to achieve that purpose. Skopos Theory emphasizes that the translation's goal (or *skopos*) should guide how it is done. When translating colloquial Arabic into English, this means considering the translation's purpose and the needs of the readers. For instance, English readers who may not be familiar with Arabic culture might need additional help, such as footnotes or explanations, to understand the cultural and social aspects of the text.

Nord's model builds on this by offering a structured approach. It highlights the importance of the translation's function and staying loyal to both the original text's meaning and the target audience's needs. Together, these approaches help the translator make thoughtful choices to preserve the cultural and social depth of the original text while making it accessible to readers in a different language. The following bar graph depicts the participant responses to this statement:

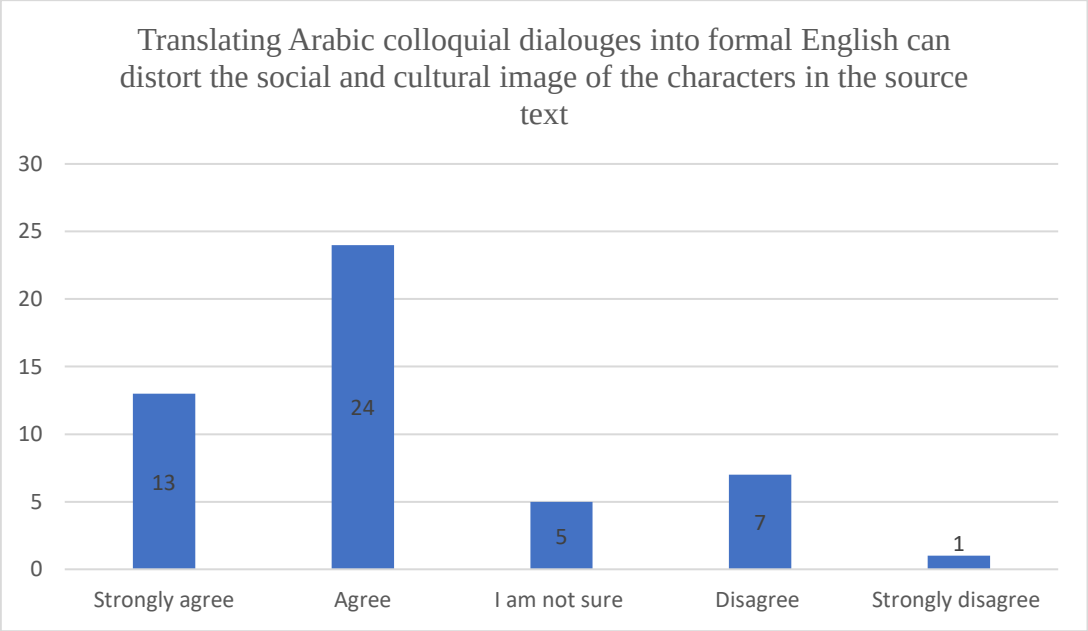

Figure 4.16: The participants' views on the statement that the translation of Arabic colloquial dialogues into formal English can distort the social and cultural image of the characters in the source text

Considering the results in figure 4.16 above, we can see that 26% (13) of the participants strongly agree that such translation into formal English can affect the cultural and social image of the characters in the source text. In addition, 48% (24) of the participants agree with this point. This means that 74% (37) of the participants think that this strategy is not the right one to come up with. In other words, this result offers further evidence for the belief that translating

from a low register into a high register can have negative effects on the representation of characters between the source text and target text.

However, 10% (5) of the participants responded to this statement by saying that they were not sure whether this translation from Arabic dialects into formal English could distort the social and cultural image of characters in the source text novels. This result might be triggered by many factors. The participants could have doubts about the alternative strategies. One may ask this question at this point: If translating colloquial expressions and dialects in contemporary novels from any language into another formal language can distort the cultural and social image of the characters in the source text, then what is the alternative strategy? We can also see from the bar graph that 14% (7) of the participants disagree with this idea and only 2% (1) of the participants strongly disagree.

4.2.1.2 Mixed analysis (quantitative and qualitative)

The mixed method of using the quantitative and qualitative research analysis approach was used to investigate the responses to one statement in the questionnaire. The reason for this is that the structure of the statement allows for different types of data. The statement is Q10:

Q10. *When I cannot understand any given Arabic dialect in the source text, I usually do the following. (Here the participants were given options to select from and the chance to add their own responses).*

This question was designed to explore how the 50 literary translators handle Arabic dialects when they appear in the source text. Since Arabic dialects vary widely and can differ significantly from MSA, translating these forms into English presents unique challenges. To better understand the strategies employed by participants, the question used a multiple-choice format, allowing participants to select predefined strategies while also offering an option to provide additional responses.

This method was chosen because it aligns with best practices in questionnaire design, enabling researchers to gather a broader range of insights. By combining structured responses with open-ended input, this approach ensures that diverse methodologies and innovative strategies used by participants are captured, even if they were not anticipated in the initial design of the questionnaire.

The responses are summarized in the following table, which shows how participants approach the complexities of rendering colloquial Arabic into English while preserving meaning, cultural context, and the original text's intent:

Table 4.2: The methods literary translators follow when they cannot understand any given Arabic dialect in the source text

When I cannot understand any given Arabic dialect in the source text, I usually do the following: (Participants were given the chance to select more than one option and to add their own methods as well).		
Method	**Number of participants who selected this method**	**The percentage of the participants who selected this method to the total population**
I try to use online search engines (for example, Google)	36	72%
I consult a translator who speaks or understands the same dialect.	39	78%
I try to understand the meaning from context.	35	70%
Other: (These methods were suggested by the participants). Only 22% (11) of the participants added the methods they usually follow when facing this case.		
Participant ID	**The method proposed**	
P1	I consult a speaker of the given Arabic dialect.	
P14	I try to find books that cover the subject.	
P25	I translate from English to Arabic exclusively.	
P26	I consult the author.	
P28	I consult the author, if possible.	
P29	I only translate from English to Arabic, not the other way around. However, I employ the same methods for this process and approve of their effectiveness.	
P30	I access other texts/recordings using the dialect.	
P31	I speak to people who know that dialect who are not necessarily translators but who can discuss the meaning.	
P32	I consult native speakers (e.g. one household member) and/or experts (e.g. various teaching colleagues) who are not necessarily translators.	
P42	I do not only ask translators, but I also ask native speakers.	
P49	I consult a native speaker, not necessarily a translator.	

4.3 Analysing the results of Part Three of the questionnaire

Part Three of the questionnaire conducted in the framework of this study includes six excerpts selected from the three Arabic novels. Three excerpts were selected from *The Open Door*, two from *As Though She Were Sleeping* and one from *Celestial Bodies*. The translations, which were done by Marylin Booth, were also presented in the Microsoft Forms questionnaire in a table to make it easy for the participants to read, analyse, compare, and evaluate.

This study focuses specifically on the challenges and strategies involved in translating colloquial Arabic dialects found in three contemporary Arabic novels into English. Rather than evaluating Marilyn Booth's entire body of translation work, the study narrows its scope to examine whether participants agree that Booth's translation techniques, as applied to selected excerpts, successfully convey the nuanced blend of formal and colloquial Arabic present in the source texts.

Colloquial Arabic poses a unique challenge in translation due to its regional variations and cultural specificity, which are often difficult to render effectively in English without losing the original text's essence. To ensure that participants evaluated the excerpts objectively, the questionnaire did not disclose that Marilyn Booth was the translator of the selected passages. This approach was designed to minimize any bias that could arise from participants' prior opinions about the translator or her work.

However, I acknowledge that some participants, particularly those familiar with Booth's style or the texts in question, might have independently recognized her work. This possibility highlights the intricate relationship between translators' stylistic choices and the distinctiveness of their approach, which can sometimes make their work identifiable even in anonymized contexts. Furthermore, the inclusion of the titles of the three novels and the translator's name in the title of this study may have enabled some participants to deduce that the six excerpts were, in fact, translated by Marilyn Booth.

4.3.1 Analysis of the responses to the translation of excerpt 1

The following table includes excerpt 1 and its translation:

Table 4.3: Excerpt 1 and its translation into English

Excerpt 1	
Source Text	*The Open Door* (By Latifa Al-Zayyat)
Register in the source text	Formal (Standard Arabic) and informal (Egyptian Colloquial Arabic)
Register in the target text	Formal English
The Arabic Original Text	**The English Translation**
وقطع الصمت صوت نحيب، وقفزت ليلى كالملدوغة من السرير ثم وقفت مُسمَّرة في وسط الحجرة حين عرفت في الصوت صوت أبيها، واختلط النحيب بدعاء يقطعه ما بين الحين والحين صوت أمها هادئًا منخفضًا: -يا رب تقدرني يا رب، دي ولية يا رب! -كفاية يا سيدي البنت تسمعنا. -الستر يا رب الستر.! وانخفض الصوت تدريجيًّا وأعقبته غصة ثم صمت. (Al-Zayyat, 2015, 30)	A sobbing wail sliced through the silence and Layla jumped out of bed as if stung. But immediately she recognized her father's tones in that wail. She stood transfixed in the middle of the room. She heard pleading invocations to God cut into the sobbing– "Lord, give me strength! She's just a helpless girl. Oh God!"–interrupted from time to time by her mother's voice, calm and low. "That's enough, *ya sidi*! The girl can hear us." "Protect us, Lord, protect us! Shield us from harm." The voice grew fainter until, with a final choked sob, it was silent." (Booth, 2017, 20 – 21)

The literary translation evaluation scale consists of the following parameters:

Parameter (1): The translation is accurate (it accurately conveys the meaning of the Source Text).

Parameter (2): The translation is fluent (it reads smoothly and naturally).

Parameter (3): The translation preserves the context and cultural and social standing of the characters/speakers of the Source Text.

Parameter (4): The translation adheres to the norms of the target language, and considers its grammar, syntax, and vocabulary.

Parameter (5): The translation preserves the style of the original author: It preserves such elements as tone, mode, register and dialect.

Parameter (6): The translation is acceptable to the general reader.

The participants' evaluation of the translation of excerpt 1 is illustrated in figure 4.17 below:

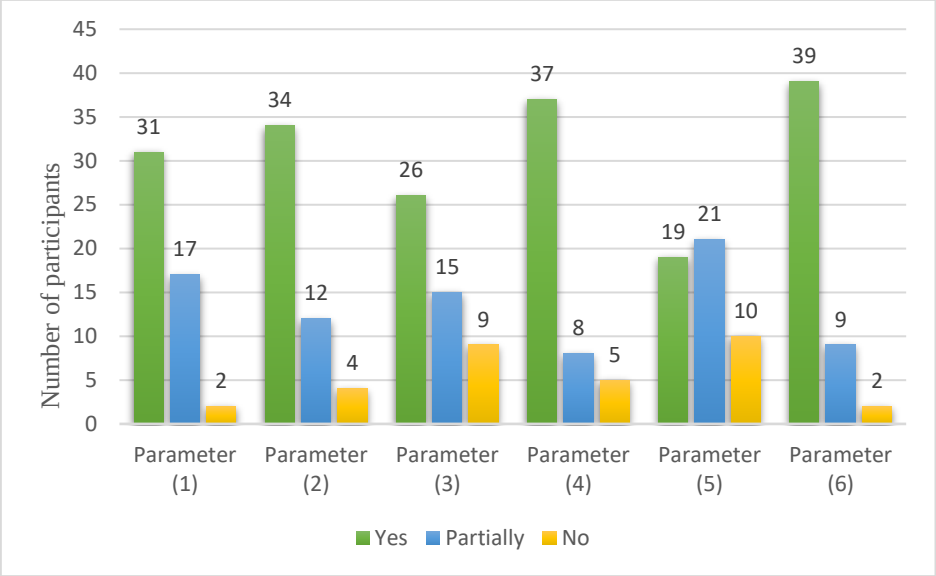

Figure 4.17: The participants' evaluation of some translational features of excerpt 1

Figure 4.17 shows the participants' evaluation of excerpt 1. According to the data represented in the graph, the participants think that the translation was more to be described as both accurate and fluent. 31 participants (62%) evaluated the translation as accurate and 34 (68%) evaluated it as fluent. In addition, more than half of the participants, 26 (52%) think that the translation of excerpt 1 preserves the context and cultural and social standing of the characters of the source text. As for parameter (4), most participants, 37 participants (74%), agree that such translation adheres to the norms of the target language, and considers its grammar, syntax, and vocabulary. For parameter (5), the results were interesting. Only 19 (38%) participants think that the translation has preserved the style of the original author in terms of tone, mode, register and dialect. Moreover, 21 (42%) participants think that the translation has partially met this parameter. There is also 10% of the participants who think that the translation does not meet this parameter. The results for this parameter show that there is a serious issue in the target text in terms of conveying the same tone, mode, register and dialect. This falls within the main objective of this study when it talks about a gap in the translation of dialects or colloquial Arabic into formal English. There is no surprising result for parameter 6 as most of the

participants agree that the translation is acceptable to the general reader where 39 (78%) participants say that it meets this parameter, and 9 (18%) participants believe that it partially meets this parameter while only 2 participants (4%) believe that the translation of excerpt 1 is not acceptable to the general reader.

The implications of these results in the context of the 50 literary translators participating in the study highlight critical insights into the challenges and perceptions of translating colloquial Arabic dialogue in the three novels into English. The fact that 10% of participants believe the translation fails to meet the parameter of accurately conveying tone, mode, register, and dialect points to significant difficulties in maintaining these linguistic and cultural nuances when translating colloquial Arabic into formal English. The high agreement among participants (78%) that the translation is acceptable to a general audience suggests that, while the translation may not fully convey the nuanced aspects of colloquial Arabic, it succeeds in providing an accessible and readable target text. This reflects a trade-off between preserving linguistic fidelity and ensuring audience comprehension. These findings reinforce the necessity of developing a nuanced understanding of audience needs and expectations, as well as the potential for innovative translation methodologies or tools to better capture the essence of colloquial Arabic.

4.3.2 Analysis of the responses to the translation of excerpt 2

The following table includes excerpt 2 and its translation:

Table 4.4: Excerpt 2 and its translation into English

Excerpt 2	
Source Text	*The Open Door* (By Latifa Al-Zayyat)
Register in the source text	Formal (Standard Arabic) and informal (Egyptian Colloquial Arabic)
Register in the target text	Formal English
The Arabic Original Text	**The English Translation**
وبعد فترة قصيرة قامت سامية هانم التي اعتادت أن يؤمّن الجميع على أقوالها ممتعضة. وألقت بالفرو على كتفيها وقالت: ـ بنتك ملحلحة أوى يا سنيه هانم. وهي تشد على حرفي اللام والحاء وتمد كلمة أوي.	It was not long before Samia Hanim rose to her feet, agitated. She was accustomed to listeners who hung wide-eyed on every word she uttered. She tossed her fur across her shoulders as she took her annoyed leave.

(Al-Zayyat, 2015, 43)	'Your daughter is terribly spirited, Sania Hanim.' She spit out the consonants and drew the word 'spirited' out." (Booth, 2017, 33)

The participants' evaluation of the translation of excerpt 2 is included in figure 4.18 below:

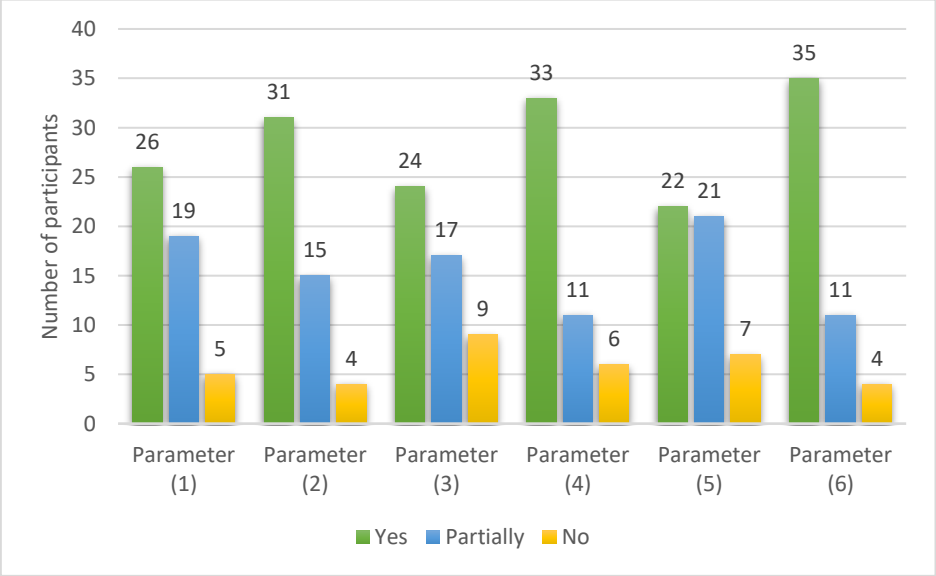

Figure 4.18: The participants' evaluation of some translational features of excerpt 2

The results for evaluating excerpt 2 show that 26 participants (52%) think that the translation is accurate; 16 participants (38%) think it is partially accurate while only 5 participants (10%) think that this translation is inaccurate. As for the fluency of the translation, 31 participants (62%) think that it is accurate; 15 participants (30%) evaluate it as partially fluent, and 4 participants (8%) evaluate it as not fluent. The results of the first two parameters are similar to the results that we have seen for excerpt 1. For parameter (3), less than half of the participants (24 participants) (48%) think that the translation of excerpt 2 has preserved the context and cultural and social standing of the characters of the source text. In addition, 17 participants (34%) partially agree that this parameter is met. On the other hand, 9 participants (18%) think that such translation does not preserve the context and cultural and social standing of the characters of the source text. For parameter (4), most participants, (33 participants) (66%), think that the translation of excerpt (2) has adhered to the norms of the target language, and

considered its grammar, syntax, and vocabulary. 11 participants (22%) think that the translation has partially met this parameter, while 6 participants (12%) think that the translation has failed to meet this requirement embedded in parameter (4).

From the responses to parameter (5) for excerpt (2), I understand that less than half of the participants (22 participants, or 44%) believe the translation successfully preserves the original author's style in terms of tone, mode, register, and dialect. Meanwhile, 21 participants (42%) feel this goal is only partially achieved, and 7 participants (14%) think the translation completely fails to achieve this. These results indicate that concerns about the translation's handling of elements like tone, mode, register, and dialect are common among participants.

A significant portion of participants expressed dissatisfaction, citing two key issues: first, a perceived mismatch between the informal nature of the original Arabic dialogue and the more formal tone of the English translation; and second, the absence of clear identification of the specific Arabic dialect used in the source text within the translation.

For parameter (6), the findings are consistent with the evaluation of excerpt (1). Most participants (35 participants, or 70%) agree that the translation of excerpt (2) is acceptable to the general reader. However, 11 participants (22%) believe it is only partially acceptable, and 4 participants (8%) rate it as unacceptable for the general reader. These results highlight a balance between meeting general readability standards and addressing the nuanced concerns raised by professional translators. These results can be directly related to Skopos Theory, which emphasizes the *purpose* of the translation as the primary guide for decision-making. They can also be linked to Nord's translation model, which emphasizes the type and function of the target text.

4.3.3 Analysis of the responses to the translation of excerpt 3

The following table includes excerpt 3 and its translation:

Table 4.5: Excerpt 3 and its translation into English

Excerpt 3	
Source Text	*The Open Door* (By Latifa Al-Zayyat)
Register in the source text	Formal (Standard Arabic) and informal (Egyptian Colloquial Arabic)
Register in the target text	Formal English
The Arabic Original Text	**The English Translation**
وقال علي بك: -يا ست هانم إحنا قلنا حاجة؟! على العين والراس يا ست هانم على العين والراس. (Al-Zayyat, 2015, 165)	"Did we suggest anything but, *madame*?" exclaimed Ali Bey. "By my head and eye, whatever you say, *madame* your wish is my command." (Booth, 2017, 131)

The participants' evaluation of the translation of excerpt 3 is included in figure 4.19 below:

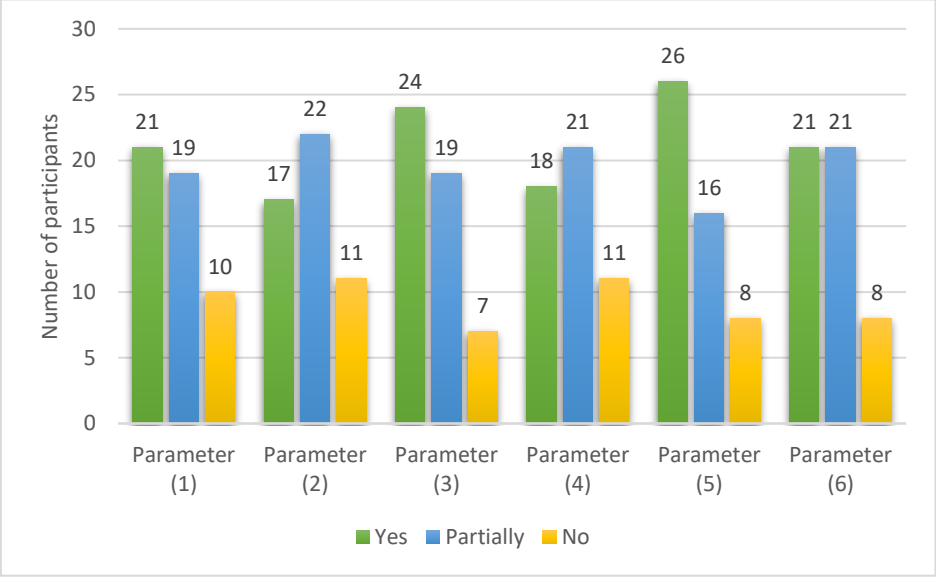

Figure 4.19: The participants' evaluation of some translational features of excerpt 3

The evaluation results for the translation of excerpt 3 indicate the following: regarding accuracy, 21 participants (42%) assessed the translation as accurate, 19 participants (38%) deemed it partially accurate, and 10 participants (20%) evaluated it as inaccurate. In terms of fluency, 22 participants (44%) considered the translation partially fluent, 17 participants (34%) rated it as fluent, and 11 participants (22%) judged it to be non-fluent. Concerning parameter

(3), which evaluates the preservation of the context and the cultural and social standing of the characters from the source text, less than half of the participants (24 participants or 48%) believed that this criterion was met. Additionally, 19 participants (38%) assessed this parameter as partially met, while 7 participants (14%) concluded that it was not met.

The results also show that for parameter (4), 21 participants (42%) believe that the translation of excerpt 3 has partially adhered to the norms of the target language, and that it has considered its grammar, syntax, and vocabulary. For the same parameter, 18 participants (36%) believe that the translation has partially adhered to those norms while 11 participants (22%) believe it has not.

As whether the translation of excerpt 3 has preserved the style of the original author in terms of preserving such elements as tone, mode, register and dialect, 26 participants (52%) believe that the translation has achieved this goal. In addition, 16 participants (32%) said that this translation has partially preserved these four elements while only 8 participants (16%) said the translation did not achieve this goal.

The findings for parameter (6) regarding excerpt 3 presented an unusual distribution. Specifically, 21 participants (42%) regarded the translation as acceptable to the general reader, while an equal proportion, 21 participants (42%), deemed it partially acceptable. Conversely, 8 participants (16%) assessed the translation as not acceptable to the general reader.

4.3.4 Analysis of the responses to the translation of excerpt 4

The following table includes excerpt 4 and its translation:

Table 4.6: Excerpt 4 and its translation into English

Excerpt 4	
Source Text	*As Though She Were Sleeping* (By Elias Khouri)
Register in the source text	Formal (Standard Arabic) and informal (Lebanese Colloquial Arabic)
Register in the target text	Formal English
The Arabic Original Text	**The English Translation**
منصور الذي احتلّت ابتسامة عريضة شفتيه الرفيعتين، كاشفة عن أسنان صغيرة بيضاء، لم ينتبه إلى بكاء عروسه	Mansour, the thin line of his lips wholly captured and partly transformed by a broad smile that revealed his small lustrous teeth,

إلّا حين سمع أمها تنهرها قائلة: "عيب يا ميليا شو نحن بدفن، هيدا عرس". (Kouri, 2007, 12)	was oblivious to his bride's weeping until he heard her mother scolding her. Shame on you, dear – Milia, stop it! *Ayb*. For shame – are we burying someone, girl! It's a wedding, after all. (Booth, 2012, 12)

The participants' evaluation of the translation of excerpt 4 is included in figure 4.20 below:

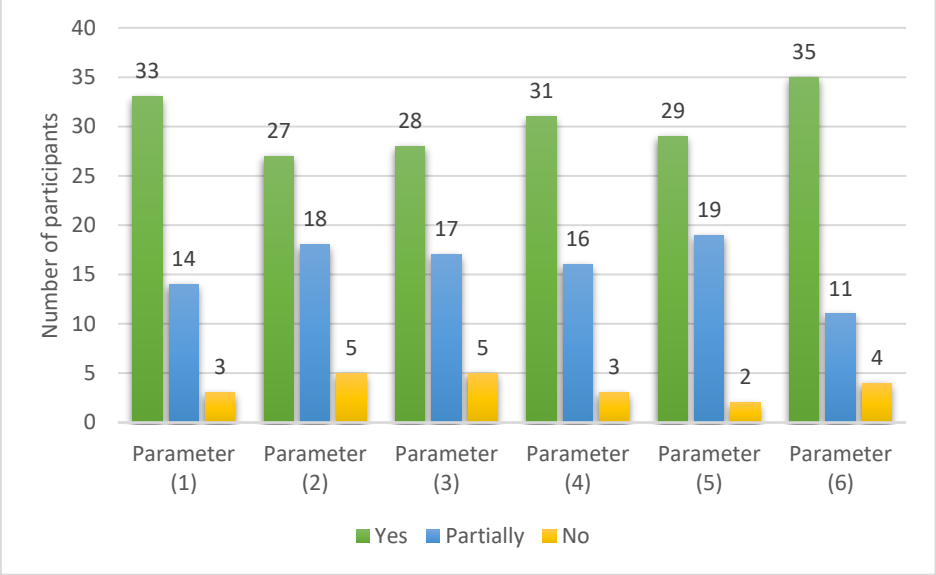

Figure 4.20: The participants' evaluation of some translational features of excerpt 4

The questionnaire results for evaluating excerpt 4 indicate the following: regarding accuracy, 33 participants (66%) considered the translation of excerpt 4 to be accurate, while 14 participants (28%) assessed it as partially accurate. Only 3 participants (6%) rated the translation as inaccurate. In terms of fluency, 27 participants (54%) evaluated the translation as fluent, and 18 participants (36%) deemed it partially fluent. A minority of 5 participants (10%) regarded the translation of this excerpt as non-fluent.

Responses to parameter (3) revealed similar trends. Specifically, 28 participants (56%) believed that the translation of excerpt 4 successfully preserved the context and the cultural and social standing of the characters from the source text, while 17 participants (34%) felt this goal was only partially achieved. A small proportion of 5 participants (10%) judged the

translation as unsuccessful in preserving the source text's context and the cultural and social nuances of the characters.

For parameter (4) on the evaluation scale, 31 participants (62%) said that the translation of excerpt 4 has adhered to the norms of the target language and considered its grammar, syntax, and vocabulary. The number of participants who said that this was partially done was 16 participants (32%). The number of participants who think that the translation of excerpt 4 did not meet this parameter was 3 participants only (6%).

Within the context of this study, parameter 5 is the most critical one. This parameter assesses the translation's ability to maintain the stylistic elements of the original author. Specifically, it evaluates whether the translation preserves the tone, mode, register, and dialect of the source text. For this parameter, the results of the questionnaire show that 29 participants (58%) believe that the translation of excerpt 4 has achieved this while 19 participants in the questionnaire (38%) believe that the translation has partially met this parameter. However, there were only 2 participants (4%) who said that the translation did not preserve the style of the original author. This means that they think the translation did not preserve the tone, mode, register and dialect of the source text.

The findings for evaluation parameter (6) were consistent with those observed for the preceding three excerpts. 35 participants (70%) assessed the translation of excerpt 4 as acceptable to the general reader, while 11 participants (22%) rated it as partially acceptable. Only 4 participants (8%) considered the translation unacceptable to the general reader.

4.3.5 Analysis of the responses to the translation of excerpt 5

The following table includes excerpt 5 and its translation:

Table 4.7: Excerpt 5 and its translation into English

Excerpt 5	
Source Text	*As Though She Were Sleeping* (By Elias Khouri)
Register in the source text	Formal (Standard Arabic) and informal (Lebanese Colloquial Arabic)
Register in the target text	Formal English
The Arabic Original Text	**The English Translation**
"العروس"، قال السائق. "مالها العروس"؟ سأل منصور. "بسّ صرخت يا عدرا دخيل إسمك راحت الغطيطة، ووقف التلج، العروس عملت عجيبة"، قال السائق. (Kouri, 2007, 21)	The bride –, said the driver. What about the bride? She screamed *O Virgin, help me*! And the fog disappeared. She screamed and the snow stopped. The bride made a miracle. (Booth, 2012, 21)

The participants' evaluation of the translation of excerpt 5 is included in figure 4.21 below:

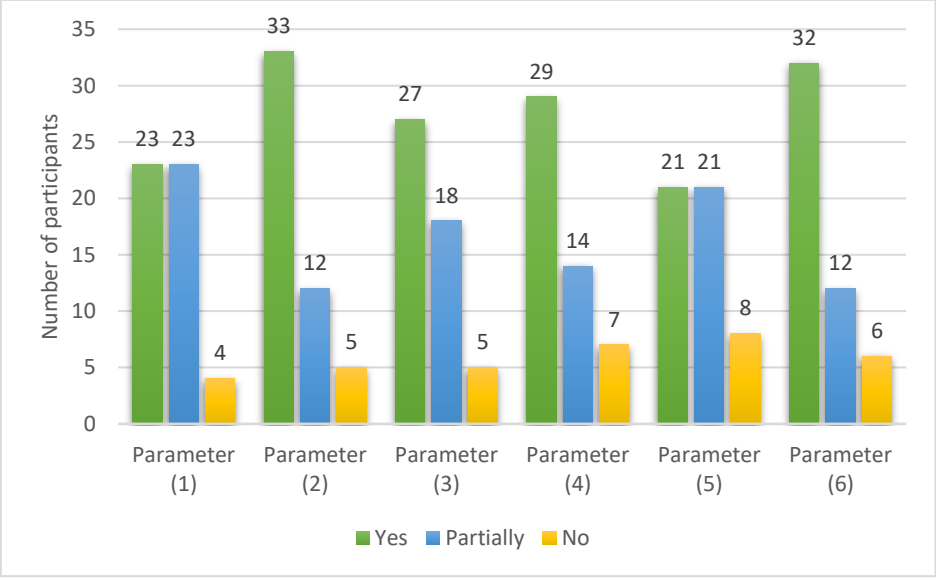

Figure 4.21: The participants' evaluation of some translational features of excerpt 5

Figure 4.21 shows the results of the evaluation scale of excerpt 5, which was taken from Elias Khouri's *As Though She Were Sleeping*. The results show that 23 participants (46%) evaluated the translation of excerpt 5 as accurate, and the same number of participants (46%) evaluated it as partially accurate. Only 4 participants (8%) evaluated the translation as inaccurate.

As for the fluency of the translation, two thirds of the participants (33 participants) (66%) considered the translation of excerpt 5 fluent while 12 participants (24%) considered it as partially fluent. Only 5 participants (10%) considered the translation as non-fluent.

The data also reveal that 27 participants (54%) agreed that the translation of excerpt 5 successfully preserved the context and the cultural and social standing of the characters in the source text. Furthermore, 18 participants (36%) partially agreed with this assessment, while only 5 participants (10%) believed that the translation failed to preserve these aspects of the source text.

Regarding parameter (4) of the evaluation scale, most participants, 29 (58%), stated that the translation adhered to the norms of the target language, particularly in terms of grammar, syntax, and vocabulary. An additional 14 participants (28%) indicated that the translation partially fulfilled this parameter. However, 7 participants (14%) concluded that the translation did not conform to the target language norms in these respects.

As for parameter (5), it is clear from Figure 4.21 that 21 participants (42%) believe that the translation preserved the style of the original author and it preserved the same tone, mode, register and dialect of the source text. The same number of participants said that the translation partially preserved these elements. Only 8 participants (16%) said that the translation did not preserve the style of the original author. This means that there were gaps in tone, mode, register and dialect in the target text.

The questionnaire shows similar results regarding parameter (6). For excerpt 5, 32 participants (64%) evaluated the translation as acceptable to the general reader while 12 participants (24%) evaluated it as partially acceptable. Only 6 participants (12%) evaluated the translation as unacceptable to the general reader.

4.3.6 Analysis of the responses to the translation of excerpt 6

The following table includes excerpt 6 and its translation:

Table 4.8: Excerpt 6 and its translation into English

Excerpt 6	
Source Text	*Celestial Bodies* (By Jokha Al-Harthi)
Register in the source text	Formal (Standard Arabic) and informal (Omani Colloquial Arabic)
Register in the target text	Formal English
The Arabic Original Text	**The English Translation**
تأفّفت سالمة: "قومي يا ميا اجلسي وأرضعي البنت". اعتدلت ميا جالسة فصاحت ظريفة: "الأفعى اللي عند ولدي ترضع راقدة مثل الكلبة... ما ترضى تجلس.. وسمَّتْ البنت رشا.. وولدي مسكين سكت.. أيش بيقول؟.. بتلدغه لو تكلّم.. بدل ما يسمّوا حبيبة ومريم وفاطمة يسمّوا هذي الأسامي مرڤت ورباب ونانباب وشاكاب وداداب وقلع عين إبليس... دنيا!.. وأنت يا ميا من اسمها بنتك؟".. ردّت ميا دون أن ترفع عينيها عن وجه الرضيعة: "لندن"، أطرقت ظريفة في سكون مفاجئ ثم نزعت جسدها الضخم عن الأرض وقالت: "أحسن أقوم أجهّز لك الغدا". (Al-Harthi, 2019, 23)	Get up, Mayya, sit up now and nurse the girl, muttered Salima, showing her disgust with her guest. Mayya struggled into a sitting position. The viper who's with my boy nurses laying down, Zarifa sang out. Like a bith dog. Won't even sit up. And she named the girl Rasha. My wretched son didn't say a word – well, what's he going to say? She'd bite the boy's flesh and poison him if he so much as said a word. Instead of naming them Habiba or Maryam or Fatima, they give them these names – Mervat, and Rabab, and Naabab, Shaaakaaab, Daaaadaaaab, or maybe, why not? She-who-gouges-out-Satan's eye? What a world it is? And you, Mayya, now what's your baby named? Mayya was staring into the baby girl's face, nestled at her breast. London. There was a sudden silence. Zarifa dropped her hand. Then she heaved her immense body off the floor. Must get myself moving, she muttered. Have to make lunch for you. (Booth, 2012, 20)

The participants' evaluation of the translation of excerpt 6 is included in figure 4.22 below:

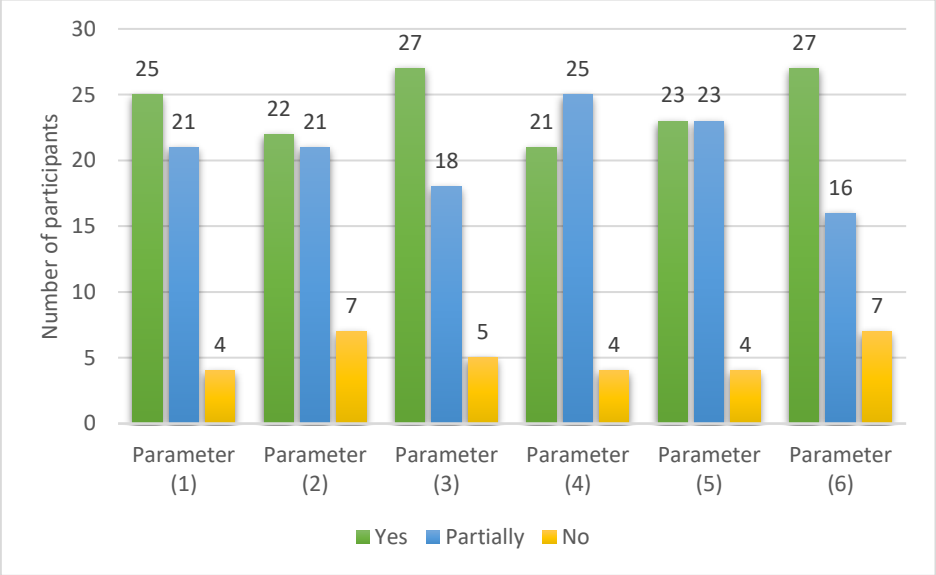

Figure 4.22: The participants' evaluation of some translational features of excerpt 6

Figure 4.22 presents the results of the questionnaire evaluating excerpt 6. In terms of translation accuracy, half of the participants (25 participants) assessed the translation as accurate, while 21 participants (42%) rated it as partially accurate. In contrast, only 4 participants (8%) evaluated the translation as inaccurate.

As for fluency, 22 participants (44%) believe that the translation is fluent, and 21 participants (42%) believe that it is partially fluent. On the other hand, 7 participants (14%) indicated that the translation lacked fluency.

For parameter (3), more than half of the participants (27 participants) (54%) believe that the translation of excerpt 6 preserved the context and cultural and social standing of the characters of the source text while 18 participants (36%) believe that the translation partially achieved that goal. Only 5 participants (10%) believe that such translation did not preserve the context and cultural and social standing of the characters of the source text.

When asked to evaluate whether the translation adhered to the norms of the target language and considered its grammar, syntax, and vocabulary, 21 participants (42%) said it did while half of them (25 participants) said it partially did. The results show also that 4 participants only said that the translation of excerpt 6 did not adhere to such norms.

For parameter 5, which evaluated whether the translation preserved the original author's style in terms of tone, mode, register, and dialect, fewer than half of the participants (23 participants)

believed that the translation fully achieved this goal, while an equal number (23 participants) indicated that it partially achieved this objective. Only 4 participants stated that the translation failed to preserve these stylistic elements. The repetition of rhythmic words in the target text may have contributed to enhancing the translation's quality.

The results for parameter 6, concerning the acceptability of the translation to the general reader, differed from those of the previous five excerpts. In this case, 27 participants (54%) rated the translation as acceptable to the general reader, while 16 participants (32%) found it partially acceptable. However, 7 participants (14%) assessed the translation as not acceptable to the general reader.

4.4 The findings of the qualitative analysis of data collected from participants in the last open-ended question of the questionnaire

When gathering participants' opinions on effective ways to translate colloquial Arabic dialogue and dialects into English, it is important to note that the term 'best' here is used relatively—not as an absolute standard. The participants' responses reveal useful links between different types of content, such as speeches, dialogues, or other texts that are not typically classified as literary genres. These responses can also be directly applied to the focus of this study, which examines the challenges of translating dialects and colloquial dialogue in contemporary Arabic novels into English.

To make benefit of the data in the best way possible, NVivo was used as a qualitative data analysis tool (See the rationale behind the use of NVivo in Chapter 3 – Methodology). NVivo is a tool that can categorise data, find trends and patterns, and facilitate make conclusions about the participants' responses.

The responses given by participants to the last open-ended question in the questionnaire constitute part of the qualitative analysis of this thesis because they offer a valuable source of information, providing insights informed by the quantitative data discussed at the beginning of this chapter. To categorise the responses given by participants, seven main themes were created. The themes were created based on the research questions of the current study (For more details about the creating of themes, please see Chapter 3 – Methodology). The themes were also informed by the parameters in the literary translation evaluation scale derived from Pym (2015) and Munday (Munday *et al.* 2022 and Farias de Souza, 2015).

The seven themes created from the four research questions are illustrated in the following diagram:

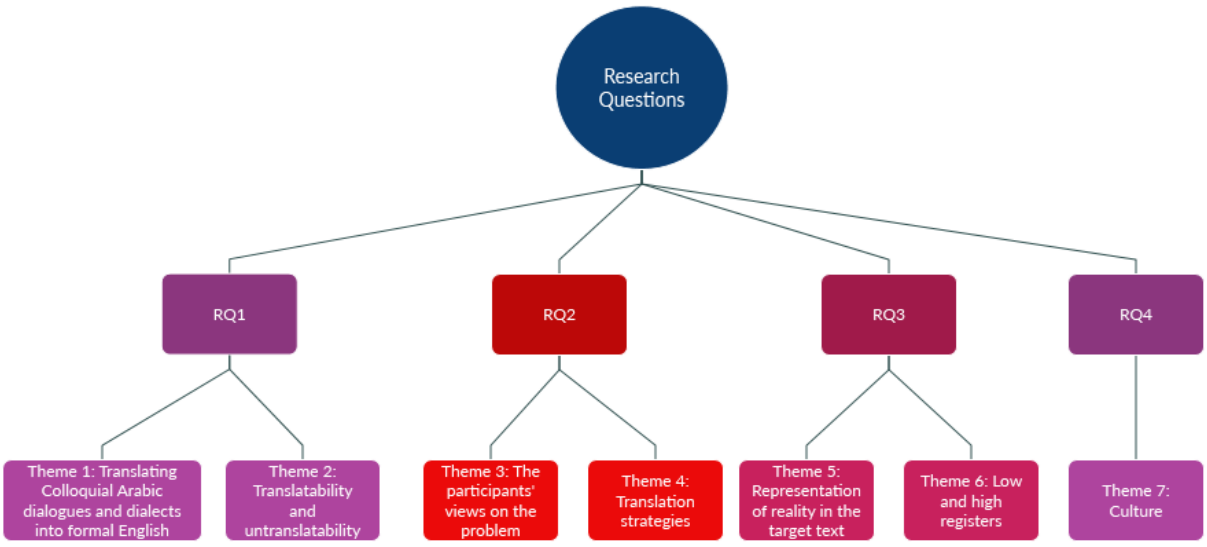

Figure 4.23: The 7 themes created from the research questions on NVivo

4.4.1 Theme 1: Translating Colloquial Arabic dialogue and dialects into formal English

This theme was based on RQ1: '*Where is the line between what can and cannot be accurately translated when converting Colloquial Arabic dialogues in contemporary Arabic novels into English?*'. Undoubtedly, this theme is one of the main themes discussed throughout the whole current study. It is based on the initial assumption that the source text (which is written in both MSA and CA was translated into formal English. As a result, there is a gap in the target text as the CA dialogue was not properly represented.

Among the participants, there were 4 participants who directly addressed this point. I understand from this that there is a kind of implicit opinion among those participants that CA dialogues and dialects should be translated into formal English as there does not exist any alternative. P25 believes that during the translation of such novels from Arabic into what he calls 'the standard language', more layers of the text may have a better chance to be understood. I can conclude that this technique is favourable for him (or for some literary translators) as it avoids touching on more issues if the CA dialogues were translated into colloquial dialogues in English.

In the questionnaire, four participants expressed the view that translating the Cairene (from Cairo) dialect in Latifa Al-Zayyat's *The Open Door* into a dialect like Liverpool's might not be

well received by literary translators or readers. One reason for this is that the characters in Cairo and Liverpool might be seen as having different social, educational, and cultural backgrounds, which could cause confusion or misinterpretation. Translating regional Arabic dialects directly into formal English, however, could also create issues by leaving out cultural details, like the characters' social class or education level, that are hinted at in the original language. This means that although translating to formal English may capture the general message, it loses some of the finer details that reveal who the characters are.

For instance, P31 shared that there is not a single correct way to translate dialect, especially given the many layers of meaning it can carry. This view aligns with Skopos Theory, which emphasizes the purpose of the translation rather than strict loyalty to the original text. According to this theory, the goal is to create a translation that serves the intended function in the new language and culture, even if some cultural aspects from the original language are simplified.

Other participants felt that it is important to find an equivalent expression for colloquial phrases in English. If that was not possible, they suggest using a simple, formal English version (a view supported by P5). This approach also aligns with Skopos Theory, which suggests that what matters is whether the translation method fulfils its purpose, not whether it exactly mirrors the original.

An alternative approach would be to translate a dialect into another dialect, such as replacing the Cairene dialect with a specific regional English dialect. While some participants and scholars support this idea, there is hesitation because each dialect carries unique cultural, social, and geographic nuances. So, even though this idea is discussed in theory, there is reluctance to choose a specific dialect when it comes to actual translation practice. I think the hesitation among participants to propose translating a dialect into another dialect may stem from concerns about potential criticism directed at them as literary translators. Adopting such a strategy introduces a level of risk, as it may not be well-received by all readers, and translators appear reluctant to subject their work to this degree of scrutiny.

When talking about this theme as a general theme, one of the participants, P49, believes that 'it is important to avoid an overly formal tone as it would eliminate the feeling of the presence of a dialect in the original text. The overall tone, choice of words, and letters can affect the feel of the text'. One may agree that the use of 'an overly formal tone' could damage the original message of translation. This is again a dilemma in the translation of dialects and colloquial

dialogues: using a very formal tone might result in a completely different register. Translating from a low register into a high one should be avoided by literary translators if they intend to deliver the message properly. It would be bizarre to translate the dialogue between two farmers who live in the mountains of the coastal area in Syria into formal English. More strategies to deal with this problem are presented in theme 4 (strategies).

The participants' insights on this theme in its relationship to RQ1 can be illustrated in the following word cloud where we can see a frequency of words like 'formal', 'text', 'language', 'tone', 'layers' [of meaning], 'dialect' and 'equivalent'.

Figure 4.24: The most frequently used words in theme 1

Concluding this section on the findings regarding theme 1 (Translating Colloquial Arabic dialogues and dialects into formal English), we can say that some of the 50 literary translators prefer to be on the safe side by supporting the idea of translating both MSA and CA in the three contemporary Arabic novels into formal English as it is the only way to save the layers of complication and linguistic variations in the source text. It is noted that those participants who have more than 15 years of experience in literary translation would prefer formal English as the target text variation. This perspective is further informed by the assumption that identifying an appropriate target language dialect capable of faithfully representing the diverse dialects employed by characters across the three novels under study presents a significant challenge.

Theme 1 further suggests a potential factor influencing the translation of CA dialogues and dialects in contemporary Arabic literature. Some literary translators may be drawn to a more straightforward approach, opting to render both low and high registers of Arabic into a single, formal register. This choice prioritizes clarity and aims to minimize potential criticism that

might arise from attempting to translate dialects into 'equivalent' dialects within the target language.

4.4.2 Theme 2: Translatability and untranslatability

This theme is also based on RQ1: '*Where is the line between what can and cannot be accurately translated when converting Colloquial Arabic dialogues in contemporary Arabic novels into English?*'. Reflecting this question on CA dialogues and dialects in the three contemporary Arabic novels in particular, another question would arise from RQ1: *Are CA dialogues or dialects translatable?* In the context of intercultural translation, encounters with dialect-specific expressions can present significant challenges. Among the 50 literary translators who responded to the questionnaire, many highlighted the challenge of accurately conveying nuanced expressions from the source text into the target language. This difficulty centres on the issue of translatability: should these expressions be directly transferred to maintain faithfulness to the original text, or is a more interpretative approach, aiming for approximate meaning, required?

An analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaire in the present study reveals that only six participants explicitly raised concerns regarding the translatability of the CA dialogues and dialects. Notably, while other participants also addressed this significant theme, they refrained from employing specific terms such as 'translatability' or 'untranslatability'. The participants who explicitly referenced this issue are P8, P10, P19, P24, P28, and P49.

P10 emphasized the importance of staying true to the original text, prioritizing the concept of 'faithfulness' in translation. For P10, a successful translation of CA dialogues and dialects depends on 'how well the translator can maintain fidelity to the source text'. However, this raises a challenging question: should 'faithfulness' focus on replicating the dialectal nuances of the source text, or should it centre on conveying the meaning as accurately as possible? Accuracy, in addition to faithfulness, emerged as a critical element in translating CA dialects. P19 highlighted this, stating that translations must 'preserve the style of the original author as much as possible' while ensuring accuracy. For P19, the translatability of dialects depends on achieving both conditions.

P49 offered a unique perspective by suggesting that 'translatability can be enhanced by retaining some distinctive vocabulary from the original text, giving readers a sense of the source dialect'. P49 added that each text requires a 'customized approach based on the translator's expertise and instincts'. This reflects a broader view among participants: the

translator's experience and judgment play a significant role in determining the most appropriate strategies for translating CA dialects into English.

For some participants, like P8, translatability involves 'ensuring that the target text flows naturally for the reader'. P8 argued that translation methods should aim to create a 'seamless reading experience, even if it means downplaying the dialectal variations present in the source text'. This perspective highlights a tension between preserving the original's stylistic elements and achieving readability in the translation.

Not all participants agreed that CA dialogues and dialects are translatable. P24 and P28 strongly believed they are untranslatable, citing the difficulty of finding equivalent expressions in English. P24 pointed out that 'successful translation relies heavily on the translator's experience and deep knowledge of English-language references'. Similarly, P49 expressed scepticism about translating dialects, aligning with views in translation studies that often describe dialects as inherently untranslatable.

In analysing responses, I understand that perspectives vary widely. Some participants advocate for translating CA dialogues and dialects into formal English to ensure clarity and a smooth reading experience. However, a significant number—48 participants—believed that CA dialogues and dialects are indeed translatable. This analysis highlights the complexity of translating CA dialects and dialogues. In theme 4, we will delve deeper into the strategies participants suggested, exploring how these approaches align with the broader concepts of 'translatability' and 'untranslatability'.

4.4.3 Theme 3: The participants' views on the problem of the translatability of colloquial Arabic dialogue in contemporary Arabic novels into English

This theme investigates how participants responded to the problem of translating a colloquial dialogue or dialect from Arabic into formal English and/or English dialects. By having a general look at the most frequently used words in the participants' responses to this query, the following word cloud shows that most participants use words like 'dialects', 'English', 'translators', 'dialect translating', 'Arabic language', among others.

Figure 4.25: An NVivo generated word cloud of the most frequently used words for theme 3 (The participants' views on the problem of the translatability of the Colloquial Arabic dialogue in contemporary Arabic novels into English)

P11 proposed the idea of conducting a comparative study on the translation of different Arabic dialects and colloquial dialogues to figure out the causes of the problem. It is hoped that the current study will open the door wide for more future studies specialized in the translation of Arabic dialects and CA dialogues in contemporary Arabic novels into English.

The questionnaire data further reveals a multifaceted perspective on dialect translation among participants. For instance, P16 highlights the need for a systematic approach, acknowledging situations where target language equivalents are appropriate and others where a more literal translation is preferable.

P2 agrees with the previous view about finding the correct equivalents. He thinks that 'translators need to fully understand the cultural background of the text as this will help them find an equivalent in English'. He also thinks that being familiar with the dialect can help translators produce a better translation. This view presupposes that translators should be familiar with the dialect they translate.

The response given by P21 serves well theme 3. He simply acknowledges the difficulty in translating CA dialogues and dialects into English. It should go without saying that admitting that there is a problem in translating such types of texts is the first step towards finding strategies and looking at other translators' experiences (from different languages) in translating dialects.

There does not seem to be a final strategy to this problem according to P23 who believes that 'a translator must understand that there is no one correct way to convey Arabic dialects into English. It all depends on the context'. Many participants agree with this idea as we will see in theme 4 (Strategies).

Some other participants suggest that it is up to the translator to find solutions for this problem. One of them is P24 who thinks that the matter is related to the translator's accumulation of experience and sufficient knowledge of references in the English language because it is difficult to find an English equivalent for most Arabic dialects. Again, we find this view in harmony with some of the previous views that talked about the difficulty of translating CA dialogues and dialects and even their untranslatability. The issue of finding the suitable equivalents emerges once again.

The difficulty in translating dialects is also mentioned by P28 who says that she has never found it easy to translate dialects. She adds that 'instead of using formal English, she tries to use a more colloquial, informal way of speaking for dialogue that takes place in dialect'.

P30 devaluates what he terms as 'the conceptual separation of dialect/formal and the idea that dialect texts require a special approach' and says that this is not going to be the starting point when approaching a translation. Furthermore, he adds that a diglossic framing sometimes ignores choices made within the notionally formal passages that themselves evoke 'dialectal' echoes. The most important issue for him is the translator's familiarity with the socio-culturally formed 'voices' in the text ('literary' as well as 'street') and 'the degree to which they are familiar with the devices and stratagems available in their target language to express these same nuances of emphasis and rhythm, and the always ambiguous movement between registers'. P30's view reflects the conclusion that a translation should be a mirror of the social and cultural life expressed in the source text.

Many participants expressed concerns about the difficulty of translating dialects in CA dialogues. For instance, P31 points out the lack of clear rules for translating these dialects, which makes it more useful to acknowledge the challenge than to offer optimistic recommendations. P4 describes this as a 'hard task to tackle' because of the wide variety of dialects used across Arabic-speaking regions. Even within a single country, the number of Arabic dialects can make it hard for translators to capture the full meaning and nuance of dialogues.

I think this issue goes beyond simply replacing words or expressions from one language to another. Dialects are shaped by human culture and can be analysed through fields like dialectology and linguistics. P41 echoes this by explaining that translating Arabic dialects into English is particularly difficult due to the major differences between colloquial dialects and MSA. These differences extend to style, meaning, and grammar. P7 broadens this view, noting that translating any colloquial dialogue between languages presents challenges, emphasizing that this difficulty is not limited to Arabic and English but applies to all language pairs.

An analysis of theme 3, which examines participants' views on the challenges of translating colloquial Arabic dialogue in three contemporary Arabic novels into English, reveals that this task is often complex and demanding. Many participants characterized it as 'challenging', emphasizing the need for careful consideration and the application of diverse strategies to effectively render the dialect and capture the characters in the source text.

4.4.4 Theme 4: Translation Strategies

Prior to examining the translation strategies suggested by the participants, it is essential to first consider the approach adopted by Marilyn Booth in her translation of CA dialogues into English. In an interview with the translator of the three novels Marilyn Booth (1955 -), Claire Jacobson (who translates from French and Arabic) asks Booth the following question: *What are some of the most challenging aspects of Arabic translation for you, and how do you handle them (i.e. translating humour, idioms, dialects, etc.)?* Booth's answer regarding the translation of dialects is worth considering:

> 'Dialect carries so many political and identitarian resonances in Arabic, as it does in most other languages, but in Arabic it has been a particularly up-front issue for many historical reasons. I'm not going to go into those here, but it is important to say that it is impossible to convey that political significance in English and also the importance of what different Arabic dialects in a novel mean. Dialect has been a part of fiction in Arabic since the nineteenth century, but it has been contentious, and it is also impossible to translate. I've tried hard, but I'm not sure it has worked very well. I've tried different strategies, partly depending on the genre and the time: for Arabic vernacular poetry, trying to find an Anglophone equivalent (but then it is dated, as vernacular is!), or trying to find an informal voice.'
>
> Booth (2017)

In the above-mentioned interview, Booth even suggests more strategies to deal with the translation of Arabic dialects in contemporary Arabic novels into English. She states that she tends to 'use more Arabic within the English-language text (especially when it is dialect usages) than some translators do. One can find ways to convey what these usages mean without having

to resort to a glossary. Another way to deal with such difficulties is to talk about them in a translator's afterword, which may also be important in offering historical context to readers who want it' (Booth, 2017). Booth, then, proposes the two following strategies to translate Arabic dialects into English: (1) Transliteration and (2) adding an afterword. In adopting transliteration, she aims at avoiding the use of any glossary; and in adopting the afterword, she offers historical context to the readers who might be interested to know something about the dialect used in the novel and its translation. Indeed, the afterword in translation is an important element that explains the translator's strategy and highlights the main issues faced during the translational action. It even serves as a platform for translators to comment on their own work, offering a deeper understanding of the translation process (Norberg, 2012).

Booth's proposed strategies for addressing the translation of Arabic dialects into English, namely transliteration and the inclusion of an afterword, are worth examining. I appreciate Booth's approach of integrating Arabic within the English text to convey dialect nuances without relying on a glossary. This method aligns with the broader goal of preserving cultural authenticity while ensuring accessibility for readers. However, I would argue that the success of this strategy depends significantly on the readers' familiarity with Arabic, which might limit its effectiveness for a monolingual audience.

This theme elicited the most significant response from participants. Within the group of 50 participants, 41 individuals proposed their own translation strategies for addressing the challenge of translating CA dialogues and dialects found in contemporary Arabic novels into English. Notably, some participants extended their proposed strategies beyond literary contexts, suggesting approaches applicable to the broader range of Arabic dialects encountered in everyday communication.

Within the framework of this study, the questionnaire responses from 50 participants identified the following strategies for translating CA dialogues and dialects into English:

1. To fully understand the meaning of the source utterance and the context in which it was said.

2. To provide a fluent and natural translation that maintains the cultural and social standing of the speakers.

3. To use the appropriate idiom. Some Arabic words should be explained especially if they have strong effect on the text.

4. To be aware of tone, rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, assonance, and onomatopoeia in English.

5. To avoid the literal translation of the meaning.

6. To engage native speakers is crucial for translating dialects, as they offer insights beyond lexical meanings, and they delve into cultural nuances that can reveal unexpected semantic equivalents.

7. Translators should take time, think, research, and read constantly when approaching the translation of dialects.

8. Translators should be better at making decisions based on the context.

9. To rely on literal translation and then focus on the pragmatic context.

10. It is better for any literary translator to continue watching Arab cinema films because they display the entire levels of the dialect used and all its social and cultural backgrounds.

11. To find equivalent colloquial expressions in English.

12. To use a footnote to explain the meaning of a certain colloquial word or phrase upon first usage, and then transcribe the original Arabic word or expression when they occur again.

13. To consult other translators.

14. Above all, translators must have significant knowledge of both source and target languages to think of the best solutions available.

15. To give priority to meaning and its connotations in the first place and to be committed to the inner meaning of the text whether it was satirical, angry, or grumpy which could be the characteristic of expressions in various Arabic dialects. Paying attention to the literal meanings of words is of less importance to the foreign reader.

16. To use Arabic phrases - especially stock ‘filler’ phrases, ejaculations, or prayers - as a kind of nod to Arabic speakers.

17. A solution that works well for one text will not be appropriate for another. I do not compare translations with source texts unless I have a specific reason to do so, but when reading translations, I do make a note of dialogue and reflect on techniques that I might find useful in my own translations.

18. Translators can be creative in finding cultural equivalents in their local dialects, but that is a dangerous tool and would destroy the whole meaning if misused.

19. To maintain the text's spirit, and not to strip its singularity, whatever that is, to make the text 'readable'.

20. To avoid doing violence either to the source or the target language—so that the resulting translation is a pleasure to read.

21. To consider the overall context and style of the work.

22. To gain a deep understanding of the content.

23. To read the text out loud in your target language.

24. To preserve the author's style as much as possible.

25. To do research on how to use the best idiomatic language to preserve the context of the Arabic dialects.

26. To echo the dialect if English would allow to do so.

27. It is better to give the meaning without literariness.

28. To get to know the English idioms and their equivalents in Arabic and watch series related to the area or city which constitutes the setting of the novel.

29. Translators should be familiar, or be familiarised, with what semantics called 'code and reference' of the dialects targeted.

30. Translators should try to maintain the orientation as such and enrich their competence with contextual and conceptual word/term references to be able to approach the task competently and accomplish the mission with professionalism.

31. To consult Google and never take a single phoneme for granted!

32. To consult a professional translator who has the sufficient knowledge of the dialect and the English language.

33. Translators should have a linguistic instinct, which is able to decide when to keep a literal translation or interpretation and when to take the license necessary for less literal precision and more naturalness.

34. To decide on the strategy of translation beforehand: domestication or foreignization.

35. To try to find the best equivalents that lessen the amount of loss in meaning and other elements of literary texts.

36. Translators should search the internet for the intended meaning to convey it to the reader.

37. To ask someone who is familiar with the dialect.

38. To watch movies spoken in the dialect they are translating.

39. To translate Arabic dialects into English as a modern Classical Arabic.

40. To assign two translators for each text that includes Arabic dialects. Each translator should have sound knowledge of both languages and their dialects.

41. Translators may use informal English dialects or use different slangs or variations to reflect cultural and social differences.

42. To maintain the register and tone and render them into an equivalent English that is fluent, readable, and natural to a native speaker.

43. To avoid translating Arabic dialects into a specific English dialect. This is the first step to laying a correct foundation.

44. A softer tone might be used to channel a softer dialect like Levantine or Egyptian, while a stronger tone can be used to translate Gulf dialects. No doubt, this should be supported by giving the reader an immediate taste of the translated dialect by keeping some distinct and often-used vocabulary untranslated. That said, every text is different and would ask for a customized solution based on the translator's knowledge and instinct.

45. To immerse with or consult speakers of the concerned dialect and the translators working in the same field.

46. To consult linguists and people who speak the same dialects.

47. To use simplified-English translation, especially for those characters who live in low classes or do humble jobs.

48. To master the target language in a way to find a colloquial equivalent to the source text.

49. To maintain awareness and understanding of the tone and context is crucial when translating Arabic dialects into English.

50. To use footnotes as a useful tool to help clarify the meanings of words or phrases that are not present in the English language but carry out an important meaning in an Arabic dialect.

51. Translators must search more for better resources to find the correct words and expressions that are synonymous with phrases in the source language.

52. To consult a native speaker of the target dialect.

4.4.5 Theme 5: Representation of reality in the target text

This theme explores the participants' views on the ability of the translator to represent the same source text reality in the target text. It is more about comparing the source text characters with the newly produced target text characters. For this theme, it was remarkable that three participants gave priority to comment on this feature in the target text. They concentrated on whether the dialect spoken by that character was properly transferred into English in such a way that it kept the same personal, cultural, educational, and social features of the original character.

P21 advises translators of the literary dialectal dialogue not to worry about 'the words so much as about reproducing the impact that the original text makes on a typical reader'. This task entails that a CA dialogue in any one of the translated novels should make an impact similar to the impact the source text characters made on the reader of the Arabic text. P21 does not specify which mechanism can be used to do so.

Another participant, P28, comments by saying that not because she thinks Arabic dialects are a 'lower' register as such, but because the author has made a point of imitating how people really speak, and she wants to emulate that in the translation. She adds that: 'This is doubly important, as a lot of dialogue in English-language writing is much more formal than real speech'.

For those texts in Arabic dialects, regardless of their origins, P6 recommends simplified-English translation, especially for those characters who live in low classes or do humble jobs. This is theoretically advisable because a particular character in the source text would tend to use specific style of speaking, specific expressions, repeated phrases, etc. These features are better to be represented in the target text so they can leave the same impression or 'impact' of the reader of the source text.

In conclusion, the representation of reality was among the conditions of a good translation of any literary text. Colloquial dialogues and dialects are major components of the world of reality

of the source text. The extent to which translators succeed in representing such reality in the target text would be a concern for many readers as expressed by the views put forward by participants 6, 26, and 28.

4.4.6 Theme 6: Low and high registers

This theme relates to the notions of low and high registers used in the three source texts (the three novels) and their English translations. Among the 50 participants, 5 participants only highlight the distinction between low and high registers as a required condition when dealing with translating CA dialogues and dialects in the three contemporary Arabic novels into English.

P28 thinks that Arabic dialects are a 'lower' register, and she recommends that the author of the source texts have made a point of imitating how people really speak, and this should be emulated in the translation. She adds that this strategy is 'doubly important, as a lot of dialogue in English-language writing is much more formal than real speech'.

P29 points out that any translator would struggle to convey the difference between both modes of writing in English. By both modes P29 means the use of high and low registers in the source text. He believes that it is a daunting task for the translator to render the use of different variations in the Arabic source text and to convey to the reader of the English target text that the novel was written in two linguistic levels (Standard Arabic and Colloquial Arabic). This conforms to the common belief that informing the target text reader of the nature of the linguistic-dialectal variation is too difficult at times.

A clear reference to the notion of register is made by P30 who is concerned with the translator's ability to express in the target language these same nuances of emphasis and rhythm, and the always ambiguous movement between registers.

Another participant, P48, proposes to maintain the register and tone and render it into an equivalent English that is fluent, readable, and natural to a native speaker of English. This task is undoubtedly daunting. Theoretically speaking, what P48 proposed could be one strategy to convey the same dialectal elements in the target text but it is not an easy task to do.

The last participant who commented on the notion of register is P6. For those texts in Arabic dialects, regardless of their origins, he recommends simplified-English translation, especially for those characters who live in low classes or do humble jobs. This view is at the heart of the problem of translating dialects from one language to another.

The concept of maintaining register distinction in the target text emerged as a concern for a subset of participants. For these participants, preserving the source text's social stratification through the translation of register-specific language features (e.g., formality, informality) is considered paramount to effectively conveying the unique characteristics of the characters. However, as the results analysis will demonstrate, faithfully replicating the source text's register presents a significant challenge in the translation process.

4.4.7 Theme 7: Culture

Culture constitutes a pivotal component in any translational action. The questionnaire data show that participants were concerned about the connection between culture and dialects. P13 calls for engaging native speakers of the target languages in translating dialects, as they offer insights beyond lexical meanings, delving into cultural nuances that can reveal unexpected semantic equivalents. P13 connects the efficient translation of dialects to having knowledge of the cultural nuances of the target language. Furthermore, he considers culture to be an entity beyond the lexical meanings of utterances. He concludes by saying that 'culture can help discover semantic meanings in texts'. These meanings go beyond the lexical meanings to give new semantic horizons of words.

Knowing the culture of the source text may play an important role in translating Arabic dialects. This is what P18 thinks when he advises any literary translator to continue watching Arab films, because they display the entire levels of the dialect used and all its social and cultural backgrounds. It is very important then, according to P18 that translators should be familiar with the social and cultural backgrounds of Arabic dialects. As films make an important component of contemporary Arabic cultural life, they can be used as a main source of knowledge of Arabic dialects since they present the daily life medium used in communication. One disadvantage with watching films as an authentic source of Arabic dialects is that many Arabic dialects are less represented in cinema. The main dialect dominating Arabic cinema is Egyptian Arabic because the film industry in Egypt has been the dominating film industry in the Arab world.

P2 agrees with P13 and P18 by saying that 'translators need to fully understand the cultural background of the text as this will help them find an equivalent in English'. P2 makes it a point that understanding the cultural background of the text is one way to find the equivalent in the target language. This highlights the importance of understanding the culture of the source text to render it correctly in the target language.

P30 talks about the translator's familiarity with the socio-culturally formed 'voices' in the text ('literary' as well as 'street'). These voices are loaded with social and cultural connotations that shape the source text and target text alike. P30's opinion reflects a common belief among many translation scholars that literary translators should be immersed in the culture of both the source text and target text. Understanding the culture of both texts can improve the quality of the translation as the gaps between the two cultures can be filled with such knowledge.

Some participants were even extreme in giving priority to cultural context. When translating Arabic dialects into English, P34 recommends prioritizing cultural context, maintaining colloquial expressions, and staying aware of regional variations. He adds that 'striking a balance between authenticity and clarity ensures an effective translation for English-speaking audiences'. This prioritization of culture would be, the researcher thinks, a necessary step for translators to take to avoid causing any cultural misunderstanding by the readers of the target text.

Understanding the cultural differences between the source text and target text is what P35 focuses on in her response to this question. She does not only talk about understanding the differences between language, but she also talks about the differences between cultures. This becomes of much importance as far as dialects are concerned. Another participant, P42, maintains that 'understanding the cultural, social, and religious context of the sentences, references, and dialogues' plays a vital role in finding the semantic and pragmatic meanings of the dialectal sections and consequently in the attempt to find the most suitable components.

P44 emphasizes the role of culture in the translation of dialects. He says that the first option for the translator is to find an equivalent in the target language and not to resort to transliteration except when the source text word is culturally significant. He gives the example of translating 'God'. He comments that he finds no justification for the use of 'Allah' when the meaning is the same as God. One may argue that culture plays a role that is beyond what P44 believes. He thinks that it is important to find equivalents in the target language. We have many examples of words that are culturally specific in Arabic and were therefore transliterated in English and have as such become part of the English lexicon such as *jihad* and *hijab*.

The Freedictionary.com (2024), for example, includes the word *jihad* as an English word which relates to Islam with the following definitions:

1. An individual's striving for spiritual self-perfection.
2. A Muslim holy war or spiritual struggle for the propagation or defence of Islam.

However, the same dictionary gives a third meaning that is general one and does not apply only to the Islamic concept of jihad:

3. A campaign against perceived foes, especially such a campaign regarded as fanatical or immoderate: "*The war against smoking is turning into a jihad against people who smoke*" (Fortune).

Transliteration then, can expand the lexicon of any given language and add more words to its thesaurus. A transliteration does occur when translators cannot find any semantic, pragmatic, or cultural equivalents. Therefore, one may suggest that transliteration is a method for borrowing and creating new words between languages and even dialects.

P47 agrees that dialects, slangs, or variations are components of culture. He comments by saying that: 'the translator may use informal English dialects or use different slangs of variations to reflect cultural and social differences'. This means that these dialects are to be reflected in the target text because they constitute cultural elements in the source text.

The notion that identifying culturally specific target language equivalents serves as the foundation for translating dialects is echoed not only by P47 but also by P5 who emphasizes that 'in the process, considering the setting and level of the speaker's education or awareness of the situation is advisable so as to find the culturally specific proper equivalent'. In other words, P5 focuses on the setting, educational level of the speakers, and the awareness of the situation. These three elements would play, according to him, an important role in finding an equivalent that is culturally suitable for the source text.

This focus on the significance of culture was also voiced by P8 who emphasises the importance of comprehending the cultural nuances. She also suggests that complicated words should be made simpler. One might argue that this last suggestion can cause some distortion to the source text. Replacing complicated words with simpler ones may convey a different level of educational, social, and cultural standing.

Overall, it may be said that participants in the questionnaire emphasised the role of culture in the translational action. For them, comprehending the culture of the source and target text plays an important role in paving the way to finding the most suitable equivalent that could meet the cultural requirements of the translation. Being components of culture, dialects are to be approached carefully and properly to find the best strategy that can both convey the dialectal

variation in the source text and the educational, cultural, and social standing of the characters in literary works.

4.5 Discussion of the findings

The results of this study support the core idea of Skopos Theory which gives priority to the target text purpose and the role of the translator in creating the function (or purpose) of the translation. The 50 literary translators who responded to the questionnaire indicated their capacity to select various strategies for translating CA dialogue in contemporary Arabic novels into English. For dialects with which they were less familiar, they would seek consultation from another translator proficient in the dialect or from native speakers with a comprehensive understanding of it. The results of Part One of the questionnaire show the demographic information about the participants. This information relates to nationality, gender, age group, years of experience in literary translation, the dialects used by participants in daily speech and communication, the participant's educational level in translation studies (or any other discipline, if any), their most preferable literary genres, the nature of their job as translators and whether they have translated any CA dialogues or dialects during their career as literary translators.

When it comes to the nationalities of the participants, it is noted that they represent 15 nationalities. This indicates a variety of the population of the participants which makes the data collated more diverse and valid. The data also show that among these 15 nationalities there were 7 participants (14%) who are not Arabs: There were 3 British participants, 3 Americans and one Canadian. This indicates an interest in translating from Arabic among foreign literary translators whose mother tongue is not Arabic. The data also show that the Arab participants represent 12 Arab countries (more than half of the 22 Arab countries). The participants represent the following countries (ordered according to the number of participants): Syria (14), Iraq (6), Egypt (5), Saudi Arabia (4), Kuwait (3), Palestine (3), Sudan (2), Jordan (2), Lebanon (1), Morocco (1), Tunisia (1) and Yemen (1).

The presence of 7 non-Arab literary translators and the absence of participants from any of the following remaining Arab countries (Mauritania, Algeria, Libya, Qatar, Bahrain, the UAE, Oman, Djibouti, Eritrea, and Somalia) may indicate a lack of interest in these Arab countries in literary translation or even a lack of interest in taking part in a questionnaire investigating the translatability of colloquial Arabic into English.

The next piece of information collected from data is gender of the participants in the questionnaire. It is noted that 30 males and 20 females responded to the questionnaire. This indicates that the percentages of male literary translators according to gender is more than the percentage of female translators. However, this suggests that the number of female literary translators is reasonable. Overall, it seems that research on the percentages of male and female literary translators in the Arab world is limited. Excluding the 7 non-Arab literary translators who took part in the study, we end up with the following data:

Table 4.9: Numbers of Arab and non-Arab participants in terms of gender

The total number of male participants	30
The total number of female participants	20
The total number of non-Arab male participants	4
The total number of non-Arab female participants	3
The total number of Arab male participants	26
The total number of Arab female participants	17

This indicates that female Arab translators substantially contribute to the translation movement in the Arab world. 40% of the participants in the questionnaire are female. Further studies are needed in the future to bridge this gap in the literature on the exact numbers of male and female literary translators in the Arab world and beyond.

Analysing the age groups of the participants shows that most participants belong to the age group that falls between 41 and 55 years old. The number of participants who belong to this group was 22 (44%). This may be an indication that these 22 participants are old enough to have a good experience in translation. Additionally, there are 21 participants (42%) who fall within the age group 26 – 40 years old. This group could also be labelled as the one that has sufficient experience in literary translation. The results also show that there are six participants who are over 55 years old. This is a very good contribution to the population of the sample as this percentage (12%) constitutes literary translators who have spent a lot of time working in the field of literary translation. These participants can be described as experts in the field. The three above-mentioned percentages give the impression that most of the participants belong to age groups that can be described as having wide experience in literary translation.

These percentages can be mapped against years of experience in literary translation. Regarding this point, the data show that 22 participants (44%) have between 5 and 10 years of experience in literary translation. Furthermore, what is noticeable about the participants in the questionnaire is that 16 out of 50 participants have more than 16 years of experience in literary translation. This is important to give the study the validity in terms of the views expressed by the 50 participants. Experience plays a vital role in literary translation, as it involves the interpretation of a text in two different languages and a shift from one culture to another (Eco and McEwen, 2001). One may agree with Eco and McEwen because the accumulation of experiences can help literary translators avoid the mistakes they make at the very beginning of their translation career. This result may encourage publishers to work more with experienced literary translators. This can help the publication houses avoid retranslating the same literary work by many unexperienced translators.

This research explores how CA dialogues can be translated into English, focusing on the role of dialects in this process. Participants were asked about the dialects they use in daily life to determine if familiarity with one's own dialect influences their ability to translate Arabic dialects into English. The participants identified a variety of dialects, including Syrian, Jordanian, Saudi, Amazigh, Kuwaiti, Tunisian, Egyptian, American English, Palestinian, and Sudanese. Interestingly, 38% (19 participants) simply referred to their spoken dialect as 'Arabic' but often clarified it with terms like 'Egyptian Arabic' or 'Syrian Arabic'. This suggests that translators generally view their dialects as specific variations of the Arabic language, reinforcing the idea that these dialects stem from a shared linguistic base. A word cloud analysis revealed that 'Arabic' was the most mentioned term, highlighting its centrality in participants' perceptions of their language use. The following word cloud shows the most-frequently used words by participants when answering this question. The reference to Arabic was the most recurring word by participants:

Figure 4.26: The dialects used by participants in their daily communication

It is noted from the participants' responses that they use generic terms to describe the dialects they use in their day-to-day communication. We should always remember that these terms are used casually by dialect users to refer to the dialects they usually use when they communicate with each other.

P30, however, was very clear in answering this question. He answered that he uses Egyptian dialects, mainly Cairine, which is the dialect of Cairo. This answer is accurate as the participant clearly locates the dialect in its geographical spot.

Another participant says she uses a mix of Syrian and Kuwaiti as a daily communication dialect. This mix of dialects is phenomenal as it may lead to the idea of 'mixed dialects' where speakers of the language use a mix of two or more dialects in their daily speech. Given this case, new dialects may emerge in the future because speakers of dialects tend to mix two or more dialects together. Another participant, P31, also answers by saying that she uses two dialects. In this case, the two dialects are not mixed to make one, but they are used interchangeably. These two dialects are Lebanese and Palestinian. This phenomenon is widely spread in the communities of immigrants and refugees like the case of displaced Palestinians in most Arab countries and the Syrians who left for Egypt or other Arab countries after the Syrian revolution in 2011. A good example of this is some of the characters in Elias Khoury's *As Though She Were Sleeping*. They are originally Palestinians but the dialect they speak in the novel is more of a Lebanese dialect because these people have been living in Lebanon after the first Israeli-Arab war in 1948 and the displacement of thousands of Palestinians to the neighbouring Arab countries.

One of the participants did not use the word 'Syrian dialect' but she used the term 'Levantine Arabic' or 'Shami' in reference to the dialect she speaks. *Levantine* is the adjective of 'Levant' which historically includes Syria, Jordan, Palestine, and Lebanon. Some scholars argue that there is no one specific Levantine dialect because the region's contemporary geopolitics are complex, with national, ethnic, and sectarian tensions shaping its landscape (Harris, 2003).

Another participant from Iraq, P14, gave a very specific response by stating that she uses Baghdadi-Karkhiya dialect in her daily communication. The Karkhia dialect in Baghdad is a part of the Baghdadi Arabic, which has been influenced by both urban and rural dialects (Palva, 2009). This dialect shares some features with the Karaki and Salṭi dialects in Jordan, which have been influenced by Bedouin neighbours (Palva, 2009). The Iraqi 'Baghdad' dialect, including the *Kharkhia* dialect, has undergone phonetic changes and has rich vocabulary (Arif, 2021). One more participant from Iraq, P18, uses what he calls the dialect of Al-Najaf city in Iraq. Al-Najaf is considered a sacred city by Shia Muslims. The deployment of such dialect can be interpreted as reflecting the religious and cultural background of the speakers. There is scarcity of literature describing the syntactic and phonological features of this dialect. This presupposes that some dialects do exist and are spoken by many people, but their linguistic features have not been thoroughly studied yet.

Some participants answered this question by saying that they use Arabic or Standard Arabic in their daily communication. However, the main aim of this question was to ask participants about the dialects and not the standard language they use. In any case, the use of MSA in daily communication is looked at as a rare phenomenon in the Arab world. MSA is the formal written standard language of the Arab world, used in formal texts, politics, and religion (Kamusella, 2017). However, in daily communication, Arabic speakers use vernaculars, or informal spoken dialects, which differ substantially from MSA (Biadsy *et al.*, 2009). There is a tendency towards using these dialects in domains previously reserved for MSA, influenced by factors such as basic literacy, and contact with Western rhetorical models (Belnap and Bishop, 2003). This suggests that while MSA is not commonly used in daily communication, it still holds a significant role in the Arab world as the official language of the governmental institutions and correspondences.

P32 answered this question by saying: 'Arabic is seldom spoken in our household. To the extent that we do use it, the predominant dialects are Moroccan (in which I am not proficient) and Egyptian. We sometimes use MSA for speaking purposes.' This participant is from America.

She belongs to the age group whose members are more than 55 years old. She has more than 15 years' experience in literary translation. This view reflects the common inclination among non-Arabs who learn Arabic: they tend to learn MSA and use it in their day-to-day communication whereas it is rare to find someone in the Arab world using this formal language for such type of communication. This might be the status quo of dialects in the Arab world. It is noted that most non-Arab learners of Arabic would learn formal Arabic to use it to communicate with all speakers of *Arabic*. In this context, *Arabic* refers to MSA. However, we should take into consideration that a farmer from the countryside of Egypt, Syria or any Arab country finds it difficult to communicate with others using MSA. In everyday communication, the vast majority of MSA speakers gravitate towards using their own regional dialects.

P41 uses the Hadhrami dialect, which is a dialect spoken in Yemen and other parts of Asia where the Hadhrami people migrated to. Another participant, P45, uses a Saudi dialect spoken in the eastern parts of Saudi Arabia. P47 gave a very generic term to describe the dialect he uses by labelling it as 'Arabian Gulf dialect'. This indicates that some participants tend to label a locally used dialect as a nationally used one.

The responses to this question show a variety of dialects used by the participants as a communication tool in their daily interaction with others. The results support the existing literature about the diversity of dialects among literary translators between Arabic and English. Knowing one or more than one Arabic dialect can give some translators the priority to be selected for translation assignments where a specific dialect is concerned. Literary translators are advised to add to their CVs any details about their knowledge or ability to speak or understand a particular Arabic dialect so they can be potential receivers of any translation tasks. Publishers may tend to prefer a literary translator who has good experience of a specific dialect and of MSA. I think that there is limited justification for the notion that a literary translator might decline to translate a novel solely due to its use of colloquial Arabic in dialogue. In fact, local dialects are increasingly featured in world literature, often serving as foundational elements within literary works.

The responses to the question about the participants' educational qualifications in translation show that half of the participants (25 participants) did not study literary translation at all, but they studied other different specializations. They said they work as literary translators simply because they know two languages or more. However, the necessity for literary translators to study translation is not explicitly addressed in literature about translation studies. The current

study has found out that literary translators should not necessarily study translation to become professional translators. Additionally, it should be noted that literary translation requires passion, training, and dedication.

When asked about the literary genre they usually translate the most, 39 participants (78%) said they prefer to translate novels. This can lead to conclude that the novel is the most acclaimed literary genre among the 50 participants. Literary translators often prefer to work with a diverse variety of genres, including graphic novels, crime fiction, and ethnopoetry (Washbourne and Van Wyke, 2018). This is caused by the unique nature of literary translation as a genre, which is imitative but distinct from the original work (Robinson, 2017).

When the participants were asked whether they have translated any dialectal or colloquial dialogues into English or vice versa during their career as literary translators, 38 participants said they did. This indicates that the participants are familiar with the translation of dialects in contemporary novels. Having worked on translating dialects makes them experts in their own field. This also means that the exposure to CA dialogues and dialects is not a transient phenomenon. It is part of the daily work of literary translators.

The percentage of dialects in literary translation varies across different languages and cultures, with English-language publishers translating only about 2 percent of their output (Venuti, 1996). The treatment of geographical dialects in literary translation is a complex issue, with the choice of translation strategy influenced by the cognitive environment of the recipients and the balance of processing effort and communicative gain (Szymańska, 2017). The translatability of dialects in literary texts is one of the key issues in translation where literary translators adopt various strategies and procedures to depict in the target text the dialect used in the source text.

One of the main findings of the questionnaire conducted in the framework of this study is that there is a broad consensus that literary translators should have good knowledge of the dialects they might find in the literary works they translate. 49 participants (98%) either strongly supported this idea (34 participants, 68%) or supported it directly (15 participants, 30%). There is only one participant, P28, who said she is not sure.

Some scholars, such as Madkour (2016), have noted that translating literary texts—particularly those with dialects—presents challenges and requires a comprehensive grasp of linguistic nuances and cognitive abilities. Therefore, while it may not be a strict requirement for literary translators to have knowledge of the dialects they translate, it is highly beneficial for them to

possess this knowledge to effectively convey the nuances and cultural context of the original text.

The results of the questionnaire show similar results to what is there in literature. 17 participants (34%) *strongly agreed* that translating novels that include passages of dialectal dialogue has been a challenge in their translation career. In addition, 23 participants (46%) agreed with the previous statement. This means that 40 participants (80%) consider translating dialectal dialogue a challenge even though all participants in the questionnaire are professional literary translators. When looking closely at dialects, they seem to be easily translatable, but as we delve deeply into more culturally immersed dialectal expressions, we get to know how challenging such translation becomes. This aligns with Koppel and Ordan's (2011) assertion that translating dialects poses distinctive challenges, involving both interference from the source language and the broader implications of the translation process.

The participants were also asked about the strategy they follow when they come across any CA dialogue or dialect they do not understand while translating Arabic novels into English. In this question the participants were given the chance to select more than one strategy (of the ones given in this question) or to add any other possible strategies. The first option (The use of online search engines such as Google) was selected by 36 participants. The second option (consulting a translator who speaks or understands the dialect concerned) was selected by 39 participants; and the third option (trying to understand the meaning from the context) was favoured by 35 participants. These three results show that most of the 50 literary translators prefer to consult another translator who speaks or understands the dialect. The literature in translation studies has increasingly addressed the role of collaboration among literary translators. Marin-Lacarta (2024) offers significant insight into this topic, proposing an expanded understanding of the translation process that includes collaboration at multiple stages, such as selecting texts, attracting publishers, engaging in self-publishing, and promoting translated works. To these collaborative tasks, I might add the activity of verifying meanings in sections containing dialects within literary texts. Collaborative efforts to ensure accurate interpretations of specific Arabic dialects, for instance, could benefit the translation process. In cases where a translator encounters a challenging dialect—such as an Iraqi translator grappling with Moroccan Arabic in a novel—they may reach out to a native Moroccan translator to gain clarity and ensure precise translation. Such cross-dialect support underscores the potential of collaborative practices to enhance accuracy and cultural authenticity in literary translation.

Additionally, various studies have examined the potential benefits of collaborative practices among translators. For instance, Al-Shehari and Al-Manna (2022) observed that trainee translators frequently collaborate with Wikipedia editors, professional translators, and subject-matter experts to enhance the quality of their translations. Such collaborative efforts contribute not only to the accuracy and reliability of the translated text but also serve to improve the translators' skillset and cultural awareness. I think this type of cooperation is particularly advantageous when translating dialects, as it fosters a more nuanced and contextually accurate translation, thereby enriching the overall quality and reliability of the work.

The challenge of translating CA in contemporary Arabic novels into English has led to several suggested strategies from the 50 literary translators. One key takeaway from this research is the importance of collaboration among translators working between Arabic, English, and other languages. Many translators highlighted the value of consulting one another to clarify the meaning of dialects in the source text. While some participants preferred using online resources or interpreting the meaning from context, collaboration with other professionals stood out as a favoured approach.

Other strategies were also proposed by individual participants. For example, P1 suggested consulting a native speaker of the specific Arabic dialect, such as someone familiar with an Omani dialect. While this can be effective, it requires caution, as overlapping features among dialects across Arab countries can lead to misunderstandings. To improve this approach, translators could consult multiple speakers to reach a consensus on the intended meaning of the dialectal expressions.

P14 recommended seeking books that address the topic. However, this method has limitations due to the lack of scholarly research on Arabic dialects and the scarcity of Arabic-English dialect dictionaries. The creation of such dictionaries is particularly challenging given the wide variety of dialects and the many forms a single word can take in colloquial Arabic.

Both P26 and P28 proposed consulting the author of the source text. While this is a viable option for contemporary works where the author is accessible, it is not applicable to classical literature by deceased authors. Even with living authors, practical barriers, such as communication difficulties, may limit the feasibility of this approach.

P31 offered a similar strategy to P1, suggesting discussions with people who speak the relevant dialect, even if they are not professional translators. This approach can be helpful for understanding simpler or moderately complex dialectal passages. However, for more

challenging sections, collaboration with experienced literary translators might be more effective. Likewise, P32, P42, and P49 agreed that consulting native speakers—whether or not they are translators—is often the best strategy for deciphering difficult dialects in the source text. The vast diversity of Arabic dialects across the Arab world can hinder effective communication and understanding among translators. Misinterpretations or disagreements about the nuances of specific dialects might discourage collaboration.

These insights reflect the diverse methods some of the 50 literary translators use to navigate the complexities of translating colloquial Arabic dialogue, highlighting the need for creative and context-sensitive approaches in this field.

4.5.1 Discussion of the results of the evaluation scale of the translated excerpts from the three novels

This study attempts to develop a literary translation evaluation scale which addresses translating the dialectal dialogues in the three novels selected for this study.

4.5.1.1 Discussing the evaluation of the translation of Excerpt 1

This excerpt is taken from Latifa Al-Zayyat's *The Open Door* and its translation into English by Marilyn Booth. The source text uses Egyptian Arabic in the dialogue. Participants in this study generally rated the translation of this excerpt highly for its accuracy, fluency, adherence to English norms (such as grammar, syntax, and vocabulary), and readability for a general audience.

However, fewer participants believed the translation effectively preserved the author's original style, including elements like tone, mode, register, and dialect. Specifically, only 19 participants (38%) thought the translation fully maintained these elements, while 21 participants (42%) felt they were only partially preserved. Regarding the context and the cultural and social standing of the characters in the source text, 26 participants (52%) agreed this aspect was preserved, 15 participants (30%) thought it was partially preserved, and 9 participants (18%) believed it was not preserved.

These findings highlight two key factors that should be considered when evaluating translations of literary texts containing dialects:

1. Preservation of context and the cultural and social standing of characters/speakers from the original text.

2. Preservation of the author's style, including tone, mode, register, and dialect.

Focusing on these two aspects ensures a more comprehensive and inclusive evaluation of the translation's quality.

4.5.1.2 Discussing the evaluation of the translation of Excerpt 2

This excerpt is from *The Open Door* by Latifa Al-Zayyat, translated into English by Marilyn Booth. The original text features Egyptian Arabic in its dialogue. Like the first excerpt, this translation was rated highly by most participants for its accuracy, fluency, adherence to English norms (such as grammar, syntax, and vocabulary), and readability for general readers.

However, the translation received lower evaluations for preserving important cultural and contextual elements. Only 24 participants (48%) believed the translation preserved the context and cultural and social standing of the characters from the original text, while 17 participants (34%) thought these aspects were only partially preserved, and 9 participants (18%) felt they were not preserved at all. These findings suggest a gap in how effectively the translation represents the characters of the source text.

A similar pattern emerged when participants evaluated the translation's ability to preserve the author's style, including tone, mode, register, and dialect. In this case, 22 participants (44%) agreed that these elements were preserved, 21 participants (42%) said they were partially preserved, and 7 participants (14%) felt they were not preserved at all.

Overall, these results show that participants gave lower ratings to aspects related to the accurate representation of the characters in the translated text and the retention of the author's distinctive style, particularly regarding tone, mode, register, and dialect.

4.5.1.3 Discussing the evaluation of the translation of Excerpt 3

This excerpt is from *The Open Door* by Latifa Al-Zayyat, translated into English by Marilyn Booth. The original text includes dialogue in Egyptian Arabic. Unlike the translations of Excerpts 1 and 2, the translation of Excerpt 3 received lower ratings from the 50 participants in the questionnaire.

The primary issue lies in Booth's literal translation of the culturally specific Arabic phrase (على العين والراس), which appears twice in the original text. In the English translation, this phrase was rendered as 'By my head and eye' and was not repeated. However, 'By my head and eye' does not convey a clear or familiar meaning in English. The intended meaning, essentially 'your wish is my command', is already expressed elsewhere in the translation, making the literal rendering unnecessary and potentially confusing.

This example highlights a key limitation of literal translation when dealing with culturally specific expressions, as it may fail to capture the intended meaning in a way that is natural or comprehensible to the target audience. This likely contributed to the lower evaluations given by participants for this excerpt.

4.5.1.4 Discussing the evaluation of the translation of Excerpt 4

Excerpt 4 is taken from Elias Khoury's *As Though She Were Sleeping*, a novel that incorporates Lebanese Arabic in its dialogue. The translation of this excerpt by Marilyn Booth received high evaluations across all six parameters of the evaluation scale, including accuracy, fluency, adherence to norms of the target language, preservation of the author's style, representation of the cultural and social context of the characters and readability. One contributing factor to this positive evaluation is the relatively simple dialect used in the excerpt, which made it easier to render effectively in English.

In this excerpt, the Lebanese Arabic phrase *'عيب يا ميليا شو نحن بدفن هيدا عرس'* was translated as '*Ayb.* For shame – are we burying someone, girl! It's a wedding, after all'. This translation successfully conveys the intended meaning, capturing both the reproachful tone and the cultural context. However, one notable feature is the inclusion of the transliterated Arabic term '*Ayb*' alongside its paraphrased meaning 'For shame' in English. While this strategy adds an authentic flavour to the dialogue, it raises questions about its necessity and effectiveness.

The decision to transliterate *'Ayb'* while also providing its paraphrased equivalent reflects Booth's broader approach to handling dialects in translation. As discussed in the methodology chapter, Booth frequently employs transliteration as a key strategy, particularly for culturally loaded terms.

Booth's reliance on transliteration demonstrates a balancing act between staying faithful to the source text and ensuring accessibility for the target audience. However, this example also highlights a potential pitfall: the risk of prioritizing cultural preservation over linguistic cohesion. While '*Ayb*' effectively conveys a sense of Lebanese culture, it could have been omitted without compromising the overall meaning of the sentence, as the paraphrase *'For shame'* is sufficiently clear and expressive.

4.5.1.5 Discussing the evaluation of the translation of Excerpt 5

Excerpt 5 is taken from Elias Khoury's *As Though She Were Sleeping*, which features dialogue in Lebanese Arabic. The translation of this excerpt received positive evaluations from most participants, with only a small number expressing concerns. Out of 50 participants 4 felt the

translation was inaccurate; 5 said it lacked fluency; 5 believed it failed to preserve the context and cultural or social standing of the characters in the source text; 7 thought it did not fully adhere to the norms of the target language, such as grammar, syntax, and vocabulary; 8 felt the translation did not preserve the author's style, including tone, mode, register, and dialect and 6 participants considered it unacceptable for a general reader.

One area of criticism focused on the translation of the phrase *'يا عدرا دخيل اسمك'* into *'O Virgin, help me!'*. This phrase is a direct reference to a Christian supplication commonly used by Levantine Christians. Some participants suggested a clearer translation, such as *'O Virgin Mary, please help me!'*, to better capture the religious and cultural nuance.

This example highlights the broader challenge of translating religious expressions from Arabic into English, a task that requires cultural and linguistic sensitivity. While there is significant research on translating Islamic expressions, much less attention has been given to Christian expressions in Arabic, likely because Arabic is not always the primary liturgical language in many Arabic-speaking churches. Translating such expressions becomes even more complicated when they originate in colloquial Arabic, as they are deeply tied to specific cultural and regional contexts.

This case underscores the importance of further studies on the translation of Christian expressions from Arabic into English, particularly those embedded in colloquial dialogue. Addressing this gap in research would provide translators with clearer strategies for accurately conveying religious and cultural meaning while ensuring readability for a broader audience. Bridging this gap is essential to improve the quality of translations and to foster greater understanding of the cultural and religious contexts within Arabic literature.

4.5.1.6 Discussing the evaluation of the translation of Excerpt 6

Excerpt 6 is taken from Jokha Al-Harthi's *Celestial Bodies*, a novel that features Omani Arabic in its dialogue while the narrative is written in MSA. This excerpt was selected for its length and its effective use of Omani Arabic as a tool for literary dialogue. The participants' evaluations of the translation showed a generally positive response across various criteria:

- 25 participants (50%) rated the translation as accurate.
- 22 participants (44%) found it fluent.
- 27 participants (54%) felt it preserved the context and cultural and social standing of the characters from the source text.

- 21 participants (42%) said it adhered to the norms of the target language, including grammar, syntax, and vocabulary.
- 23 participants (46%) believed it preserved the style of the original author (tone, mode, register, and dialect).
- 27 participants (54%) considered it acceptable for a general reader.

The translation received generally favourable feedback, with over half of the participants giving positive evaluations in most areas. However, some issues were noted, particularly regarding the treatment of dialects. For example, while 46% of participants believed the translation preserved the author's style (including tone, mode, register, and dialect), an equal percentage (46%) said it only partially met this standard, and 8% felt it did not meet this parameter at all.

A recurring challenge highlighted by participants was the lack of clear markers in the target text to signal shifts from dialect to formal English. This can impact the reader's ability to fully grasp the nuances of the original text, particularly when these shifts play a role in the characterization or cultural setting.

The results suggest a broader trend among participants to award slightly lower ratings to translations of dialect-heavy texts. This points to the inherent difficulty in representing characters and their cultural backgrounds accurately in the target language. The challenge is amplified when moving from a specific dialect, such as Omani Arabic, to formal English, which often lacks equivalent expressions or cultural connotations.

Some participants in the questionnaire tended to follow Booth's approach of retaining cultural markers and idiomatic expressions because of their familiarity with the shared linguistic structures and cultural contexts in which these dialects were used. They agreed that the transliteration Booth used in the three translations could convey the cultural and social characteristics of the dialects used in the dialogue.

Many other participants proposed various strategies for addressing the translation of colloquial Arabic dialects in the three novels, emphasizing that transliteration alone is insufficient for accurately conveying their meaning. Among the 50 participants, one of the most favored strategies was the inclusion of footnotes to clarify the contextual significance of the dialect in specific instances.

4.6 Discussion of the thematic analysis results conducted by NVivo

Following is a discussion of the results of the qualitative analysis which was conducted with the help of NVivo. To organize this analysis, seven themes were created on NVivo. These themes were derived from the research questions.

4.6.1 Discussion of the results of analysing theme 1 (Translating Colloquial Arabic dialogues and dialects into formal English)

This theme addresses RQ1: *Where is the line between what can and cannot be accurately translated when converting Colloquial Arabic dialogues in contemporary Arabic novels into English?*

The results indicate a preference among some participants (4 participants) for translating CA dialogues into formal English, given the lack of viable alternatives for rendering dialects across languages. They argue that using regional English dialects, like Liverpool English, would seem odd and create mismatches with the cultural context of the original Arabic text. However, translating CA dialects into formal English does have downsides, as it can obscure character distinctions related to social and educational backgrounds.

Translators generally avoid rendering dialects in formal English due to translatability issues, preferring to use compensatory techniques or strategies that consider the reader's familiarity and expectations. Skopos Theory supports this, advocating that a translation's purpose should guide the choice of formal or informal language as appropriate. This approach aligns with some participants' call for 'equivalents' in the target text, although the specifics are challenging.

The study introduces the idea of dialectal equivalence, a theoretical approach aimed at finding suitable equivalents for dialectal expressions. Past successful cases, such as Turkish dramas dubbed into Syrian Arabic, show the potential for using dialects strategically, although dialects carry unique cultural and class markers, making their translation complex.

Participants' responses reveal a dilemma: while some favour formal English translations, others support translating into dialectal equivalents. This concept, however, remains largely theoretical, as practical application requires further research. Translating dialect to dialect might be an ideal solution but would require careful consideration of the cultural and social nuances embedded in each dialect.

4.6.2 Discussion of the results of analysing theme 2 (Translatability and untranslatability)

The problem of translatability, discussed by Jakobson (1959/2000), has been one of the vocal issues in translation studies since then. When it comes to the translation of dialects and colloquial expressions (whether in contemporary literature or in daily life communication), the issue of translatability or untranslatability of dialects would emerge. (For more discussion about the different implications of translatability and untranslatability please refer to the literature review chapter).

The results of the questionnaire show that CA dialogues and dialects in the three contemporary Arabic novels are translatable indeed. This aligns with the previous research on the topic despite the common belief that these are untranslatable at times. Arabic dialects are indeed translatable, as shown by a range of studies. Sajjad *et al.* (2013) present a dialectal Egyptian Arabic to English statistical machine translation system that leverages dialectal to MSA adaptation.

When analysing the results of the questionnaire, it is noted in the responses categorised under this theme that most participants implicitly referred to this important theme, but they avoided to use straightforward terminology like ‘translatability’ or ‘untranslatability’:

Some participants, like P10, concentrated on the significance of the source text and the endeavour to render the meaning while considering faithfulness to the original text. The notion of ‘faithfulness’ was given high priority by this participant. This is an explicit indication that CA dialogues and dialects are translatable if faithfulness to the original text is guaranteed.

The participants’ responses dictate that the translatability of dialects depend on achieving two factors: faithfulness and accuracy. Previous research in this field found out that the translation of Arabic dialects necessitates a high level of faithfulness and accuracy, as demonstrated by several studies. Darwish *et al.* (2014) emphasize the need to account for lexical, morphological, and phonological differences in dialects to improve dialect detection accuracy. Elbadrashiny *et al.* (2014) highlight the importance of accuracy in transliteration, achieving a 69.4% accuracy in converting Dialectal Arabic text written in the Latin script.

One of the participants, P49, supports the idea that CA dialogues and dialects are translatable. However, she argues, this should be supported by giving the reader an immediate taste of the translated dialect by keeping some distinct and often-used vocabulary untranslated. She clarifies this point by adding that ‘every text is different and would ask for a customized

solution based on the translator's knowledge and instinct'. In my view, translators should have ultimate authority in determining the most appropriate strategies for rendering CA dialogues and dialects into English. This has also been observed in many responses where participants said that it is up to the translator's knowledge and experience to decide on which translation method to follow when dealing with dialects.

It is found out from the responses that 'translatability' may have different meanings for some participants. For example, responses from the questionnaire suggest that P8 understands translatability to mean 'keeping the English [text] flowing naturally'. This assumes that it is important for the translator to use translation strategies which can help the target text reader read the translated text smoothly without the need to reconsider the various dialectal variations in the source text. This feature could be positive and negative at the same time. On the one hand, one advantage of such translation strategy is that it makes the mission of the target text readers easy as they will not notice the difference in the use of two linguistic variations in the text (Standard Arabic and colloquial Arabic for instance). On the other hand, the target text will show lack of an important component which was originally built into the source text. In other words, such smooth reading will hide a clear feature that was visible to the source text reader; that is the use of written dialect in the source text.

It is also evident from the data collected from the questionnaire that not all participants assume that CA dialogues and dialects are translatable. Two participants in the questionnaire, P24 and P28 strongly believe that CA dialogues and dialects are untranslatable. P24 justifies her position by the difficulty to 'find an English equivalent for most Arabic dialects'. But the matter, she adds, is related to the translator's accumulation of experience and sufficient knowledge of references in the English language. The potential for negative language transfer from Arabic to English further underscores the need for a strong command of both languages (Sabbah, 2016). P49 also thinks that she often assumes that it is not possible to translate dialects in general.

Parini (2022) contributes to the study of dialect translation by examining how dialects in media carry deeper identity implications beyond mere geographic indicators. He highlights that early research on dialects in literature focused on the challenges of (un)translatability, a foundation that his study builds upon, by analysing how Sicilian dialect in the Italian film *La mafia uccide solo d'estate* (The Mafia Kills Only in Summer), directed by Pif (2013), is handled in English subtitles. Parini demonstrates that dialect in this film serves not only to mark regional origin

but also as a powerful tool for character identity, subtly delineating ‘good’ characters from ‘bad’ ones through language variation. This insight suggests that dialects shape audience perceptions of characters and, by extension, that translators should strive to preserve this nuanced effect in translations.

From my analysis of the results in theme 2 (translatability and untranslatability), I conclude that some literary translators working between Arabic and English view Arabic dialects and colloquial expressions as untranslatable. Their proposed strategy is to render these expressions in formal English, aiming to ensure both linguistic accuracy and smooth flow while remaining faithful to the source text. However, most participants believe that CA dialogues and dialects in contemporary Arabic novels are, in fact, translatable. As I examine the results in theme 4 (Strategies), I will explore how certain translation strategies and procedures relate to the ideas of ‘translatability’ and ‘untranslatability’.

4.6.3 Discussion of the results of analysing theme 3: the participants’ views on the problem of the translatability of colloquial Arabic dialogues in contemporary Arabic novels into English

This theme addresses participants’ perspectives on the challenges of translating colloquial Arabic dialogues and dialects into formal English or English dialects. In discussing this theme, participants frequently used terms such as ‘dialects’, ‘English’, ‘translators’, ‘dialect translation’ and ‘Arabic language’. Having established in theme 2 (translatability and untranslatability) that colloquial Arabic dialogues and dialects are largely considered translatable—despite a minority viewing them as untranslatable—the objective of theme 3 (Participants’ Views on the Problem) is to determine whether translating Arabic dialects in contemporary Arabic novels into English poses a substantial challenge for literary translators.

The results of the questionnaire show that some participants think that the problem is two-faceted. There is the first view which necessitates finding equivalents in the target language and there is the opposing view which states that it is better to adhere to the literal translation of the source text dialect. It is believed that finding the suitable equivalents could be a suitable strategy in translating dialects and colloquial expressions. On the other hand, the impact of literal translation manifests itself in causing confusion to the reader.

Some scholars support the literal translation of dialects. Dyvik (2005) suggests that translations can be used to extract semantic knowledge, which could be relevant in the context of dialects. Sharma (2005) adds a sociolinguistic perspective and discusses the emergence of dialect

consciousness in non-native varieties of English. The results of the questionnaire for this theme fit into these studies which suggest that while literal translation may not always be ideal, it can provide valuable insights into the semantic and sociolinguistic aspects of dialects.

One of the starting points to deal with the issue of translating dialects in literary works is to admit the problem. Claiming that it is easy to translate colloquial expressions will not help find a strategy (or strategies as will be discussed in theme 4) to deal with this problem. Admitting that there is a problem in translating such types of texts is the first step towards finding such translation strategies by looking at other literary translators' experiences (from different languages) in translating dialects.

Some participants express challenges in identifying effective strategies for translating CA dialogues and dialects into English. P23 emphasizes that 'a translator must understand that there is not one correct way to convey Arabic dialects into English. It all depends on the context'. While context can sometimes aid translators in interpreting meaning, it can be argued that, when it comes to CA dialogues and dialects, context alone may not always suffice to fully capture the nuances of dialectal expressions. Some scholars argue that context plays a key role in understanding semantic meaning. Translating Arabic dialects into English is a complex task that demands careful attention to context. Farghal and Almanna (2022, 306) discuss the significance of context in determining the meaning of Arabic words and addressing semantic features in translation. However, further research is necessary to establish whether understanding context alone is always sufficient for interpreting Arabic dialectal expressions, as these dialects encompass a wide range of phrases that cannot always be understood from context alone. This challenge involves considering elements such as the historical setting, cultural nuances, and the intended audience of the original text (Nida, 2001, 13). For instance, systemic-functional linguistics highlights the importance of the 'context of situation' in shaping the meaning system of a text, suggesting that translation efforts should focus on recreating this situational context in the target language.

While previous studies emphasize the role of context in interpreting the source language, further investigations are needed to understand how context influences the translation of colloquial expressions and dialects. The current study advocates for such research to include a variety of Arabic dialects rather than focusing on a limited subset. This approach is consistent with Skopos Theory and Nord's translation model, which serve as the theoretical framework for this study.

The questionnaire results confirm the challenges associated with translating Arabic dialects. For example, P28 noted that translating dialects is never an easy task. She explained that instead of relying on formal English, she opted for a more colloquial and informal tone to reflect dialogue originally written in dialect. As highlighted in the literature review, this perspective aligns with many scholars who recognize the difficulties of translating Arabic dialects and advocate for strategies that utilize a more informal, conversational approach.

P30 introduces a perspective that requires detailed examination. He challenges the conventional distinction between dialect and formal language, as well as the idea that dialect texts demand a unique translation approach. Instead, he argues that this separation can overlook important nuances, such as how passages considered 'formal' may still carry echoes of dialectal speech. For P30, the critical issue lies in the translator's ability to understand the socio-cultural 'voices' within the text—whether literary or colloquial—and to utilize the tools and strategies of the target language to effectively convey these nuances. This involves capturing shifts in tone, emphasis, and register, which are essential for preserving the text's meaning and authenticity.

These insights closely align with the current study's research questions, which explore how the voices of literary characters are represented in both source and target texts. Of particular importance is ensuring that spoken dialects, presented in written form as dialogue, retain their social, cultural, and educational nuances during translation. For instance, if a character in an English novel speaks in Scouse[4] (a distinct dialect from Liverpool), it is vital to represent the unique features of this dialect in the translation. Scouse has distinctive expressions and vocabulary, making it challenging to understand even for some native English speakers. Accurately translating such dialects requires careful consideration to maintain the authenticity and depth of the original text.

When discussing this theme, it is found that many participants voice concern that translating CA dialogues and dialects poses a big challenge. One of the participants, P31 voices her fear that there is no specific rule to follow. To voice such fear, she adds, is better than making positive recommendations. The task of translating such colloquial expressions and dialects is even described by P4 as 'a hard task to tackle, with the vast diversity of dialects in usage.' One

[4] The accent and dialect of English spoken in Liverpool and the surrounding Merseyside area. The Scouse accent is distinctive due to influences from Irish and Welsh immigrants, as well as Scandinavian sailors who frequented the Liverpool docks. People from Liverpool are sometimes called 'Liverpudlians', but more commonly referred to as 'Scousers'.

may agree that, given the various Arabic dialects within even the one country, it becomes difficult for the translator to deal with the task of translating dialect (s). The matter seems to go beyond the mere replacements of words, expressions, and dialectal sections. Dialects are human products and can be dealt with from the point of view of dialectology or linguistic studies. Another participant, P41, addresses the same difficulty saying that: 'Translating Arabic dialects into English is a very challenging task due to the significant differences between the dialects and MSA'. One cannot here deny the presence of stylistic, semantic, and syntactic differences between Standard Arabic and Arabic dialects. The main differences between Arabic dialects and Standard Arabic lie in their phonology, morphology, lexicon, and syntax (Biadsy *et al.*, 2009). These differences are further emphasized by the lack of a standard orthography for dialectal Arabic (Habash *et al*., 2012).

It is concluded from discussing the results of theme 3 (the participants' views on the problem of the translatability of colloquial Arabic dialogues in contemporary Arabic novels into English) that translating CA dialogues and dialects is not always an easy task to do. Moreover, it is described by my many participants as 'challenging'. It also requires a lot of attention and trying various strategies and procedures to approach the dialect and how it creates the image of characters in the source text.

4.6.4 Discussion of the results of analysing theme 4: translation strategies

This theme emerged as the most discussed among participants, receiving the highest number of comments. Of the 50 participants, 41 shared the translation strategies they commonly use when translating CA dialogues and dialects in contemporary Arabic novels into English. Some of these strategies were not limited to literary contexts but were also applicable to translating Arabic dialects used in everyday communication.

The strategies and procedures proposed by the participants have already been detailed in this chapter (Findings and Discussion) under Section 4.4.4: Theme 4: Translation Strategies. It is important to note that several participants suggested more than one strategy, and there is significant overlap among these approaches. To ensure clarity and accessibility, the strategies have been organized into sub-themes, allowing for a structured discussion of key observations and notable findings within the data.

4.6.4.1 Sub-themes of the strategies

The translation strategies suggested by the 50 literary translators who responded to the questionnaire were classified into sub-themes as shown in the following table:

Table 4.10: The sub-themes of the translation strategies as suggested by the 50 participants

Sub-themes of the strategies	The translation strategies supporting sub-themes
1. General strategies	14, 17, 20, 23, 24, 30, 34, 39, 41, 44, 47 and 48
2. Understanding the context of the source text	1, 8, 9, 15, 21, 22 and 49
3. Consulting 'dialect experts'	6, 13, 32, 37, 45, 46 and 52
4. Maintaining the cultural and social standing of the speakers	2 and 9
5. Finding the suitable equivalent in the target language or dialect	3, 11, 18, 28 and 35
6. Understanding the register and tone of the source text	4, 42 and 49
7. Literal translation	9 and 33
8. Avoiding literal translation	5, 15 and 27
9. The use of footnotes	12 and 50
10. Doing research on dialects	7, 25, 31, 36 and 51
11. Watching authentic material	10, 28 and 38
12. The use of source text words (transliteration)	16
13. Translating the source text dialect into a target text dialect	26
14. Translating the source text dialect into formal English	43
15. Familiarization with the dialect	29

1. *General strategies:* The participants proposed general theoretical strategies that can be applicable to specific texts. These cannot be applied to all types of texts or dialects. This sub-theme was reflected in strategies 14, 17, 20, 23, 24, 30, 34, 39, 41, 44, 47, and 48. When looking at these strategies, we find that they cover a wide range of translation problems that could face translators of different text types. They can be followed when translating CA dialogues and dialects, but they are not always the ultimate strategies. The most noticeable strategy is that translators should have knowledge of the cultures of both the source text and target text.

2. *Understanding the context of the source text:* This strategy highly recommends that translators should understand the context of the source text and the dialect used in the text. This sub-theme was reflected in strategies 1, 8, 9, 15, 21, 22, and 49.

3. *Consulting 'dialect experts':* According to the participants in the questionnaire, those experts could be either the native speakers of the target dialects, or other translators, or linguists. This sub-theme is reflected in strategies 6, 13, 32, 37, 45, 46 and 52. When looking at these views, we can partially agree with the importance of understanding the context to produce a good

translation of the source dialect. However, it should be remembered that understanding the context cannot always help translate Arabic dialects into English.

4. *Maintaining the cultural and social standing of the speakers:* This sub-theme is reflected in strategies 2 and 19. It is important for translators of dialects in literary works in general to keep as much as possible the same cultural and social standing of characters in the source text. This standing is reflected in the use of dialectal dialogue. One strategy that may overlap with the strategies recommended here (strategies 2 and 19) is the use of footnotes to explain any cultural or social indications expressed in the dialects used in the source text. The dialect used by any given character in the source text is loaded with specific characteristics reflecting the cultural and social standing of that character. The views of the 50 participants in the questionnaire agree with the common literature published on this issue. The representation of dialect in novels can reflect characters, but it is a complex and often filled with challenges and risks. Toolan (1992) discusses the challenges of representing urban black South African speech in the works of white South African writers like John Maxwell Coetzee and Nadine Gordimer, suggesting that power dynamics and socio-political context can influence this portrayal. The results of the questionnaire suggest that translators of CA dialogues and dialects should be aware of making sure that their translations of the dialects in contemporary Arabic novels reflect to some extent the cultural, social, and educational standing of the characters in the source text.

5. *Finding the suitable equivalent in the target language or dialect:* Some participants referred to what they call 'cultural equivalent'. This sub-theme was reflected in strategies 3, 11, 18, 28, and 35. Participants suggested in these strategies that translators of colloquial dialogues and dialects in literary texts should work hard on finding the suitable equivalent. They tend to describe this equivalent as 'cultural' because dialects are viewed as major components of culture. This result fits into the literature about the relationship between culture and dialects. Research has invariably shown a relationship between culture and dialects. Falck *et al.* (2010) found that historical dialect differences can act as cultural barriers to economic exchange, with cross-regional migration flows being positively affected by dialect similarity. This indicates that dialects can influence cultural identity and economic interactions between various groups of people. Therefore, it is understandable that the participants who addressed this sub-theme recommend finding a cultural equivalent when translating colloquial dialogues and dialects. This may lead to propose the idea of finding 'dialectal equivalent'.

6. *Understanding the register and tone of the source text:* This sub-theme was shared among participants who focused on the role of tone and register of the source text. This sub-theme was reflected in strategies 4, 42, and 49. This study supports this strategy as it is crucial for any translation to convey the same register and tone of the source text. Any deviation from these two components of the source text may inflict a loss in the features of the source text. Not understanding the register and tone of the source text will hide some of the main characteristics of the source text like the characters' social, cultural, and educational standing and their own feelings.

7. *Literal translation:* There were only two suggestions for the literal translation of dialects. This sub-theme was reflected in strategies 9 and 33. Literal translation of dialects cannot be rejected as a useless strategy. A literal translation approach can, in certain instances, prove beneficial in elucidating the underlying dialectal structures.

8. *Avoiding literal translation:* This suggestion contradicts the previous sub-theme. It was reflected in strategies 5, 15 and 27. This view given by some participants is another evidence that the translation of colloquial dialogues and dialects is approached differently by translators. This suggests that translators can decide on which strategy to follow if it serves the purpose of the translation, or its Skopos.

9. *The use of footnotes:* Two participants only proposed this strategy. This sub-theme is reflected in strategies 12 and 50. These two views agree with Booth's strategy in her translations where no footnotes are used at all. In disagreement with Booth's strategy, the current study highly recommends the use of footnotes to help readers understand any ambiguous dialectal words or phrases. Footnotes play a crucial role in providing cultural and background information, particularly in literary and religious texts (Haroon, 2019) and (Blight, 2005).

10. *Doing research:* This strategy entails searching the internet and relevant references to find the suitable meaning of the dialects used in the source text. This sub-theme is reflected in strategies 7, 25, 31, 36, and 51. One of the potential weak points of this strategy is that some dialectal structures are not always available online or they have not been thoroughly studied by anybody so far. This is why other strategies (like consulting a native speaker of the dialect or a translator could be a better strategy).

11. *Watching authentic material*: This material could be movies or drama series in the dialects of the source text or the target text. This sub-theme is reflected in strategies 10, 28 and 38. This

is a very practical strategy as it gives translators a lot of knowledge and experience on new dialectal phrases and expressions they have never heard of before.

12. *The use of source text words (transliteration)*: This strategy is suggested by one participant only. This sub-theme is reflected in strategy 16. Transliteration is indeed the strategy favoured by Booth in most of her translations.

13. *Translating the source text dialect into a target text dialect:* This sub-theme is reflected in strategy 26. It is noted that this strategy is not favoured by most participants. One of the weak points of translating a source text dialect into another target dialect is the cultural, social, and personal features the readers usually associate with the target text dialect. There are a lot of factors hindering, for example, translating the dialect of Damascus to the Scouse dialect of Liverpool.

14. *Translating the source text dialect into formal English:* This sub-theme is reflected in strategy 43. This is the most common practice by most translators of dialects used in literary works.

15. Familiarization with the dialect: This sub-theme is reflected in strategy 29. One may argue that such familiarization with the source text dialects can be achieved by following the strategies proposed by the 50 participants in the questionnaire.

Considering theme 4 (strategies), we can see a variety of translation strategies and procedures proposed by the participants. This theme includes 52 different translation strategies and procedures to approach the translation of CA dialogues and dialects in contemporary Arabic novels into English. Some participants did not only propose strategies to be used in the framework of this study, but they also proposed strategies that can be used when translating any Arabic dialects into English.

4.6.5 Discussion of the results of analysing theme 5: Representation of reality in the target text

This theme examines participants' perspectives on the translator's ability to accurately represent the reality of the source text in the target text, particularly through the portrayal of characters. The findings of the questionnaire reveal that three participants emphasized the importance of preserving the personal, cultural, educational, and social characteristics of the source text characters when rendering them into the target language. P21 described this process as ensuring 'the impact of the source text', suggesting that translators should strive to create a similar effect on the target audience. For instance, a character's dialect, reflecting low

educational background or distinctive word usage, should be appropriately mirrored in the target text.

P21 advised translators to prioritize reproducing the impact of the original text over literal translation, advocating for a focus on conveying the essence of the dialogue. This perspective implies that translating CA dialogue should aim to evoke the same impression in target readers as it does in the source text audience. However, P21 did not specify practical mechanisms for achieving this, and such goals are often constrained by real-world challenges.

P28 highlighted the need to replicate the author's intent to reflect authentic speech patterns, noting that this is especially critical given the formal tone often found in English-language writing. Conversely, P6 recommended using simplified English for characters from lower social classes or those performing humble roles, aligning with the source text's stylistic nuances to maintain the intended impact.

It can be concluded that the accurate representation of reality, including colloquial expressions and dialects, is essential for producing high-quality literary translations. These linguistic features are intrinsic to the characters' world and the authenticity of the source text. The degree to which translators succeed in recreating this reality is subject to scrutiny by readers familiar with both the source and target texts.

4.6.6 Discussion of the results of analysing theme 6 (Low and high registers):

This theme investigates participants' views on the use of high and low registers in the source text and whether literary translators should maintain the same register in the target text. In literary translation, analysing register is crucial for understanding the fictional context within the text (Marco, 2000). Five participants emphasized the importance of distinguishing between high and low registers when translating CA dialogues and dialects in the three contemporary Arabic novels into English.

P28 highlighted that Arabic dialects are typically considered a 'lower' register, reflecting everyday speech, and argued that translators should replicate the source text's efforts to imitate natural speech patterns. This perspective aligns with studies that classify Arabic dialects as low register and MSA as high register. Hellmuth (2022) explains that diglossia in Arabic differs from bilingualism, with regional spoken dialects naturally acquired and used in daily life, while MSA is formally learned and reserved for official contexts.

Other participants in the questionnaire also stressed the need to convey the distinction between high and low registers in translation, ensuring the target text reader understands the differences in character dialogue. However, the findings suggest that faithfully reproducing the source text's register in the target text remains a real challenge for translators.

4.6.7 Discussion of the results of analysing theme 7 (culture):

Culture constitutes a pivotal component in any translational action. P13 calls for engaging native speakers of target languages in translating dialects, as they offer insights beyond lexical meanings, delving into cultural nuances that can reveal unexpected semantic equivalents. P13 considers culture as an entity beyond the lexical meanings of utterances. He concludes by saying that 'culture can help discover semantic meanings in texts'. These meanings go beyond the lexical meanings to give new semantic horizons of words.

Understanding the culture of the source text is crucial when translating Arabic dialects. P18 highlights this by recommending that literary translators watch Arab films, as these often showcase various levels of dialect use along with their associated social and cultural contexts. However, it is important to note that films cannot be relied upon as a comprehensive or fully accurate source for all Arabic dialects, as many are underrepresented in cinema.

P2 also agrees with P13 and P18 by saying that 'translators need to fully understand the cultural background of the text as this will help them find an equivalent in English'. P2 makes it a point that understanding the cultural background of the text is one way to find the equivalent in the target language. This highlights the importance of understanding the culture of the source text to render it correctly in the target language.

I noticed also that some participants gave priority to the cultural context. When translating Arabic dialects into English, P34 recommends prioritizing cultural context, maintaining colloquial expressions, and staying aware of regional variations. He adds that 'striking a balance between authenticity and clarity ensures an effective translation for English-speaking audiences'. One may argue that this prioritization of culture is a necessary step for translators to avoid any cultural misunderstanding by the target text readers.

To conclude the discussion of the results of this theme, this study suggests that understanding the cultural differences between the source text and target text is a starting point to approach the translation of any dialects included in the source text. Understanding the cultural, social, and religious context of sentences, references, and dialogues plays a vital role in finding the

semantic and pragmatic meanings of the dialectal sections and consequently in the attempt to find the most suitable components.

It is noted, then, that Marylin Booth does not use any footnotes in the three translations because footnotes interrupt the reading process as she says. I may strongly disagree with Booth's justification because footnotes are a significant strategy given the fact that we are witnessing an overload of information between languages and cultures. In literary texts we may face a lot of culturally specific phrases that require more elaboration by the translator. Hence, the translator becomes an elaborator of the source text to the target text readers. When there are dialects or colloquial language in the source text, the *translational action* (Christiane Nord's term) becomes more demanding. Therefore, a variety of strategies could be put in place by literary translators to convey the message embedded in a dialect without causing any distortion to the variational structure used in the source text.

4.7 Summary and Conclusion

This chapter focused on analysing the responses of 50 participants to a questionnaire designed to address the study's four research questions. The participants, all professional literary translators working between Arabic and English, provided valuable insights into various issues related to the translation challenges—or untranslatability—of CA dialogue in three contemporary Arabic novels into English.

The study adopted a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative analyses to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the data. The quantitative method was used to collect demographic and professional information about the participants, as outlined in Part One of the questionnaire. This section gathered data on participants' nationalities, genders, age groups, years of experience as literary translators, the dialects they commonly use in daily communication, educational backgrounds (in translation studies or other disciplines), preferred literary genres, and modes of work within the translation field.

The qualitative method was employed in Part Two and Part Three of the questionnaire, where participants shared their perspectives on key concepts such as 'dialect', 'register', and 'diglossia'. They also discussed their opinions on the challenges of translating CA dialogue into English. Part Three asked participants to evaluate six selected excerpts from the three novels under study and their respective translations. This section culminated in a crucial open-ended question where participants provided their views on best practices and strategies for translating CA dialogues and dialects in contemporary Arabic literature.

The mixed-methods approach was vital to this study as it allowed for a detailed examination of both numerical trends (such as participant demographics) and in-depth insights (such as their strategies and evaluations). By combining these methods, the chapter offers an analysis of the complexities involved in translating colloquial Arabic dialogue into English.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND FURTHER RESEARCH

5.1 Introduction

This concluding chapter serves to summarize aims of the study which were outlined in Chapter 1 and provide definitive answers to the four corresponding research questions. Subsequently, a discussion on the study's originality and potential impact, along with its limitations, is presented. Finally, the chapter offers recommendations and proposes avenues for further research studies in the domain of translating colloquial Arabic dialogues and dialects into English.

5.2 Aims of the study

This study aimed to investigate the translatability (or untranslatability) of the CA dialogues and dialects used in three contemporary Arabic novels translated into English by Marilyn Booth. I conducted this study within the framework of a case study focused on three Arabic novels written by three different Arab novelists from distinct dialectal regions in the Arab world. I selected these novels because they were translated into English by the same translator: the American translator and academic Marilyn Booth. The novels include *The Open Door* (2015) by the Egyptian novelist Latifa Al-Zayyat, *As Though She Were Sleeping* (2007) by the Lebanese novelist Elias Khoury, and *Sayyidat al-Qamar* (later translated as *Celestial Bodies*) (2019) by the Omani novelist Jokha Al-Harthi.

In this study, I investigated the various strategies employed by literary translators when translating CA dialogues and dialects in three contemporary Arabic novels into English. I argue that translating such dialogues into formal English often obscures the cultural, social, and educational characteristics of the characters as portrayed in the source text. To explore this, I designed a case study incorporating a questionnaire, in which 50 literary translators working between Arabic and English participated. They shared their insights and experiences in translating CA dialogues and dialects into English. My findings suggest that translating Arabic dialects into formal English is not always the most effective strategy. By evaluating selected excerpts from the three novels and their English translations, I analysed the specific strategies Marilyn Booth employed when translating CA dialogues.

Although my study is not an evaluation of Booth's translations, I developed a 'literary translation evaluation scale' to assess the translation of CA dialogues in these novels. I shared

six excerpts from the novels, along with their translations and the evaluation scale, with the 50 participants. My goal was to gather their perspectives on the translatability of CA dialogues and dialects in these novels and, more broadly, contemporary Arabic novels.

The rationale for developing the 'literary translation evaluation scale' in the context of the three contemporary Arabic novels lies in its purpose as a tool to assess the translation of CA dialogues and dialects. While the study is not an evaluation of Booth's translations per se, the scale was created to facilitate a focused and structured exploration of how effectively the cultural and linguistic features of CA dialogues are rendered in English translations.

By sharing six excerpts from the three novels alongside their translations with 50 participants, the scale enabled the researcher to:

1. Gauge participants' perspectives on the challenges and strategies involved in translating CA dialogues and dialects into English.

2. Examine the translatability of CA, focusing on how well the nuances of spoken language, including regional and social characteristics, are preserved in the target text.

3. Generate broader insights into the practice of literary translation from Arabic to English, particularly in the context of preserving linguistic authenticity and cultural impact.

This approach provides a structured framework for evaluating translation practices, fostering a deeper understanding of how linguistic and cultural realities in contemporary Arabic novels are navigated and represented in English.

One of my primary objectives was to identify strategies for addressing the broader challenge of translating dialects—not just colloquial Arabic dialogue in novels. I also examined the terminology associated with translating dialects in the context of contemporary Arabic literature. This became particularly important after discovering, through the questionnaire, that many literary translators misinterpret terms such as dialect, colloquialism, slang, diglossia, and register, among others.

Through this investigation, I explored the multifaceted strategies used by 50 literary translators to render dialectal speech—such as the vernacular spoken by an Egyptian layperson in a contemporary Arabic novel—into English. My core inquiry centered on how faithfully the translated dialect is perceived by the target audience compared to how the source text's dialect

is experienced by its original readers. This question formed the foundation upon which I built the subsequent research questions in the study.

5.3 Summary of findings and answers to the research questions

Four central research questions, outlined at the commencement of this investigation, served as the driving force for this study:

RQ1: *Where is the line between what can and cannot be accurately translated when converting Colloquial Arabic dialogues in contemporary Arabic novels into English?*

This study showed that colloquial Arabic dialogues in the three contemporary Arabic novels are translatable into English. However, such translatability can be achieved by following many strategies. This study gathered 52 strategies adopted by the literary translators who took part in the questionnaire. These different strategies can be used depending on the purpose of the translation (skopos), the source text culture reflected in the dialect used, and the translator's choice to employ some colloquial or dialectal expressions in the target text. Based on the findings of this study, I concluded that colloquial and dialectal Arabic expressions can be effectively translated by employing one of the strategies suggested by the 50 participants in the questionnaire, with careful consideration of the text type and its intended audience. This conclusion draws heavily on the insights and opinions of the 50 participants, who are experienced literary translators working between Arabic and English. Their professional expertise highlights the importance of tailoring translation strategies to preserve the cultural, linguistic, and contextual integrity of the source text while ensuring that the target text resonates with its readers.

RQ2. *What changes occur when colloquial language in Arabic is translated into a more formal style in English?*

This study's findings reveal a significant discrepancy arising during the translation process, specifically when literary translators elevate the source language's informal register to a more formal register in the target language. This discrepancy should be avoided during translation by attempting a type of text that can be received by the target text reader in the same way it was received by the source text reader.

RQ3. *Does translating regional or colloquial Arabic into formal English change how the original characters in contemporary Arabic novels are understood by readers?*

This study highlights how translating dialect into formal language can significantly alter the way characters are portrayed in the source text. Dialects such as Egyptian Arabic, Omani Arabic, and Lebanese Arabic (which are the focus of this investigation) play a crucial role in shaping a character's identity. For instance, when a farmer speaks in Egyptian Arabic, it conveys specific social, cultural, and educational characteristics to the audience. Dialects serve as important markers that influence how readers perceive and associate with the characters who use them.

The findings of this study suggest that translating dialect into formal language is not always the best approach for literary translators. When dialects like Egyptian Arabic, Omani Arabic, or Lebanese Arabic are rendered into formal English, it often creates a disconnect between the original sociocultural context of the characters and how they are represented in the translated text. This can obscure important aspects of their identity. Therefore, literary translators have a responsibility to ensure that the unique features of the original dialects are conveyed to the target audience. When colloquial dialogue or dialect is present in a novel, it should be reflected in the translation in a way that retains the distinctiveness of the source text's dialectal features.

RQ4. *What practical strategies can be recommended to translators working on literature when translating Colloquial Arabic into English?*

This study, acknowledging the inherent challenges associated with interdialectal translation within Arabic, proposes a multifaceted approach for literary translators seeking to effectively render colloquial Arabic dialogues and dialects into English (and potentially other target languages). The recommended strategies are grounded in the professional experiences of the 50 literary translators who participated in the study's questionnaire. Here, some of the most crucial strategies are highlighted:

(1) Prioritizing cultural and social authenticity: This necessitates a nuanced understanding of the characters' socio-economic backgrounds as reflected in their dialectal choices.

(2) Strategic use of idiom: The judicious incorporation of idiomatic expressions is critical. While some Arabic words may be directly translatable, others may warrant additional explanation, particularly if they exert a significant impact on the text's meaning, tone, and register.

(3) Collaboration with native speakers: Engaging with native speakers of the target dialect proves invaluable during the translation process. Their expertise extends beyond mere lexical

equivalents, delving into the realm of cultural nuances that may reveal unexpected semantic correspondences in the target language.

(4) Seeking equivalent colloquialisms: The translator should strive to identify appropriate colloquial expressions within the target language that effectively mirror the intended register and informality of the source text's dialect.

(5) Utilizing footnotes for clarity: Employing footnotes strategically allows the translator to elucidate the meaning of specific colloquial terms or phrases upon their first appearance. Subsequent occurrences can be accompanied by the original Arabic expression in parentheses, offering readers a glimpse into the source text's linguistic texture.

(6) Preserving authorial voice: Maintaining the author's stylistic fingerprint is important. The translator acts as a conduit, ensuring the characters' voices resonate authentically within the translated text.

(7) Echoing dialect when feasible: In instances where English allows for a degree of informality that mirrors the source dialect, the translator should consider echoing these characteristics to preserve the intended effect.

(8) Register and tone: Faithfully rendering the register and tone of the source dialect is crucial. This necessitates identifying an equivalent register in English that reads fluently, naturally, and remains readily comprehensible to a native English speaker. However, this strategy should be adopted carefully.

(9) Simplified English for social stratification: For characters hailing from lower social classes or engaged in menial occupations, employing a slightly simplified form of English can effectively convey their socio-economic standing.

(10) Footnotes for untranslatable nuances: Footnotes continue to serve as a valuable tool for illuminating the meaning of words or phrases that lack direct English equivalents yet hold considerable significance within the context of the Arabic dialect.

Given the impracticality of examining all contemporary Arabic novels featuring dialectal Arabic dialogue, this study focuses on the translation of three novels from Egypt, Lebanon, and Oman. These novels exemplify the use of Arabic's diglossic nature, employing Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) for narrative sections and CA for dialogue. This dual use highlights a

significant gap in scholarly understanding regarding how diglossia in Arabic impacts literary translation.

The study investigates the strategies employed by translators to recreate the effect of this linguistic duality for the target text reader. It assumes that source text readers, familiar with both MSA and CA, are attuned to the distinctions between these variations in the original text. In contrast, the study explores whether translating CA dialogues into formal English or using an equivalent English dialect can better preserve the original nuances for the target audience. Drawing on the responses of 50 literary translators and addressing the research questions, the findings reveal that translating CA into formal English often creates gaps in character representation. These gaps can obscure vital personal, cultural, educational, and social attributes, diminishing the authenticity and richness of the translated work.

The starting point of this research is to accept the presence of CA dialogues and dialects in contemporary Arabic novels as a reality because many Arab novelists have been using colloquial Arabic as the tool for the dialogue between the characters. It is worth mentioning here that the main concern of the study is novels whose dialogue is written in CA. This study does not entertain by any means the idea that contemporary Arabic novels should be wholly written in local dialects. It concerns itself only with the translation of these sections of dialogue from colloquial Arabic into English. It also considers the possible strategies and procedures of using formal English or another dialect in producing the target text. The failure to choose the most suitable strategy to translate these CA dialogues and dialects may have undesired consequences on the target text receivers. Ignoring the presence of colloquial Arabic dialogues in the source text and translating them into formal language in the target text is not always the right choice. Additionally, informing the target text reader that a dialect was used in the source text can create a better impact than hiding such an important feature.

It is noted from the literature available on the translation of CA dialogues into English that there is a lack of certain strategies when dealing with this seemingly difficult task. The results of the questionnaire, which was conducted in the framework of this study, reveal that literary translators approach the topic from different, and sometimes contradictory, perspectives.

This study is basically conducted as a case study of three Arabic novels representing three distinctive geographical and dialectal regions in the Arab world: Egypt, the Levant (Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, and Palestine), and the Gulf (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, The Emirates, Oman, and Bahrain). The novels selected for this case study are *The Open Door* by the Egyptian

novelist Latifa Al-Zayyat (1923 – 1996), *As Though She Were Sleeping* by the Lebanese novelist Elias Khouri (1948 - 2024) and *Celestial Bodies* by the Omani novelist Jokha Al-Harthi (1978 -). The three novels were translated into English by the American translator Marilyn Booth (1955 -).

5.4 Originality and contribution to translation studies

This research establishes its originality by addressing the challenges of translating CA dialogues and dialects in three contemporary Arabic novels into English. It aims to generate new insights within this under-explored area, contributing to the broader field of literary translation studies. A key aspect of its uniqueness lies in the methodology: this study employs 50 literary translators as primary data sources, offering a novel approach that, to the best of my knowledge, has not been previously applied to investigations of Arabic dialect translation.

The involvement of 50 literary translators is pivotal to this study, as they bring diverse expertise, practical experience, and nuanced perspectives to the complex process of translating colloquial Arabic. Their insights allow for an in-depth understanding of the strategies, challenges, and decision-making processes involved in bridging linguistic and cultural divides between Arabic and English in the context of dialectology. By drawing directly from the lived experiences of these translation practitioners, the study is uniquely positioned to uncover practical and theoretical dimensions of dialect translation that have remained largely unexplored in prior research.

Existing scholarship highlights the complexities of translating Arabic dialects into English but often narrows its focus. For instance, Akan *et al.* (2019) investigate linguistic challenges, while Baawaidhan (2016) examines the application of foreignization and domestication strategies. Additionally, dialect-specific studies, such as Alfadly and AldeibaniFull's (2013) work on the challenges faced by Yemeni English majors, emphasize the multifaceted nature of the task. These studies underscore the importance of considering linguistic, cultural, and socio-economic factors in translation. The contribution of 50 literary translators enriches this dialogue, offering a broader and more comprehensive understanding of the field's practical and theoretical challenges.

5.4.1 Expanding the scope of analysis

This study makes an original contribution to the field of translation studies by incorporating CA dialogue samples from three distinct Arabic dialects: Egyptian, Lebanese, and Omani in the questionnaire. These dialects represent three geographically and linguistically diverse regions within the Arab world—North Africa (Egyptian Arabic), the Levant (Lebanese Arabic), and the Gulf (Omani Arabic). This inclusion is particularly significant because it moves beyond the traditional focus on one or two dialects, offering a broader and more comprehensive examination of the challenges involved in translating Arabic dialects into English.

By integrating these three dialects into its case study and questionnaire, the research provides a unique platform for analysing the linguistic, cultural, and contextual connotations of each dialect. This approach encourages a deeper and more critical reflection on the translatability of Arabic dialects, highlighting not only the distinct characteristics of each region but also the shared challenges they pose for literary translators. Such a multi-dialectal analysis expands the scope of inquiry in this under-researched area, enriching the academic discourse on Arabic-English translation and offering valuable insights for literary translation practitioners and scholars alike.

5.4.2 Developing a novel evaluation tool

Another dimension of originality in this study lies in the development of a literary translation evaluation scale specifically designed to include the assessment of the translation of CA dialogues in the three selected novels. Although its scope is currently confined to the objectives of this research, the scale establishes a foundational framework that draws inspiration from the seminal works of Anthony Pym (https://www.youtube.com/user/AnthonyPym) (Pym, 2015) and Jeremy Munday (Munday *et al.*, 2022; Farias de Souza, 2015).

Rather than being constructed entirely de novo, the scale builds upon the critical insights and evaluative principles articulated by Pym and Munday, adapting them to the unique challenges posed by the translation of CA. This adaptation not only addresses a specific need within this study but also holds potential for broader application. It serves as a stepping stone toward the design of more comprehensive evaluation tools that can be applied across the fields of literary

translation and translation studies, thus contributing to methodological advancements within the discipline.

5.4.3 Empowering literary translators who participated in the study

This study empowers literary translators working between Arabic and English by providing them with a platform to share their perspectives on a frequently debated issue they encounter in their work. It stands as one of the rare opportunities for such translators to contribute their insights within an academic research context. Through their participation, the study highlights the highly effective strategies and techniques they use to translate CA dialogues in contemporary Arabic novels into English. These approaches are not confined to literary texts but also resonate across the expanding media landscape. In today's digital age, Arabic dialects have moved beyond the pages of novels to feature prominently in podcasts, films, television dramas, and social media content.

Answering a questionnaire allows literary translators to articulate their challenges, preferences, and methodologies, affirming the significance of their work in a broader context. It provides them with a formal channel to express their expertise and influence discussions on translation practices, thereby fostering a sense of agency and professional recognition. Translators who participated in the study could assess the impact of their contributions by observing the outcomes of the research, such as published findings, recommendations for translation practices, or references to their strategies in academic or professional circles. Additionally, the adoption of their suggested approaches in the media and literary industries could reflect the value of their input.

5.5 Impact of the study

This study addresses a critical gap in the research on Arabic dialects and their translation into English and other languages, offering an innovative contribution to the fields of literary translation and dialectology. By exploring the complexities of translating CA dialogues and proposing effective strategies, the research not only enhances the understanding of these unique linguistic challenges but also establishes practical methodologies to navigate them.

The originality of the study lies in its potential to significantly impact three key stakeholder groups:

(a) Literary translators: This research equips literary translators with a detailed framework of strategies and procedures for translating CA dialogues and dialects. These tools are practical and adaptable, offering translators actionable guidance to address challenges in their daily practice. By fostering a deeper awareness of effective techniques, the study elevates the quality of translations while enriching the translator's repertoire.

(b) Scholars of translation studies: The study introduces a novel methodological approach by employing a mixed-methods design and centring literary translators as primary data sources. This originality is amplified by its use of tools like NVivo for data analysis, setting a precedent for innovative qualitative research in translation studies. Furthermore, the study invites interdisciplinary collaboration with linguistics and dialectology, creating pathways for scholars to explore the intricate interplay of translation, dialects, and cultural context. Its methodological advancements inspire future researchers to adopt similar approaches across diverse linguistic and cultural settings.

(c) Readers of translated Arabic literature: By explaining the rationale behind translators' decisions regarding CA dialogues and dialects, the study helps readers to develop a nuanced understanding of translated works. It fosters greater cultural empathy, encouraging readers to appreciate the socio-cultural and educational contexts of characters in the source text. This heightened awareness deepens their engagement with translated Arabic literature and challenges preconceived notions.

The impact of this research extends beyond the confines of the three contemporary Arabic novels and their translations, making an original contribution to the field of translation studies by offering translational strategies and procedures that can be applied to a wide array of source texts. The CA dialogues and dialects analysed in the study are not limited to the realm of literature; they are pervasive in everyday communication across diverse forms of discourse. These include traditional media such as television, radio, and cinema, as well as emerging formats like social media platforms and podcasts, highlighting the broader applicability of the findings.

This research also advances the scholarly discourse by encouraging deeper investigation into the translation of Arabic dialects beyond the texts translated to English. While Arabic dialects and other languages exhibit distinct semantic, syntactic, and morphological features, they also share universal linguistic commonalities. The study underscores the importance of identifying

and leveraging these shared features to facilitate effective and culturally nuanced communication in the target language. By broadening the scope of inquiry and providing a framework for translating Arabic dialects across multiple contexts and languages, this research significantly enriches translation studies, offering both theoretical insights and practical tools for future scholarship and practice.

5.6 Study limitations and further research

While this study sheds light on the translatability of CA dialogues in three contemporary Arabic novels through the exploration of four research questions, it is crucial to acknowledge the following limitations of the study:

1. Scope of dialects investigated: The research focused on three distinct Arabic dialects (Egyptian, Lebanese, and Omani) representing three geographically diverse regions within the Arab world. This choice was driven by the fact that all three novels employed for analysis were translated by the same translator. In recognition of this limitation, the study emphasizes the need for further investigations into the translatability of other Arabic dialects into English and into other languages. Additionally, exploring variations within the same dialect spoken in different Arab countries could yield valuable insights.

2. Genre specificity: The study's scope is restricted to CA dialogues in three contemporary Arabic novels. The questionnaire did not address the translatability of CA dialects used in other burgeoning media landscapes, such as social media platforms, podcasts, or any new forms that increasingly utilize dialects as their primary communication medium. Further research is encouraged to explore the translatability of these dialects across various genres beyond novels.

3. Limited source material: A significant limitation lies in the scarcity of existing research and literature on the translation of CA dialogues and dialects into English (or other languages). This scarcity can be partially attributed to the general disapproval of dialect use in Arabic literature by critics, scholars, and readers alike. It is important to reiterate that this study's focus is specifically on literary dialectal dialogues within contemporary Arabic novels, as exemplified by the three novels analysed. To address this limitation, the study advocates for further investigations into the translation of colloquial Arabic into English. Such research would not only benefit literary translators but also have a broader impact on other translators and interpreters who encounter Arabic dialects in their professional careers.

4. Participant demographics: The participants in the questionnaire were exclusively literary translators working between Arabic and English. The sample did not encompass literary translators working between Arabic and other languages. Given the growing trend of translating Arabic novels into various languages, further studies are recommended to examine the translatability of CA dialogues in contemporary Arabic novels into languages beyond English.

This study has confirmed two key points: (a) Contemporary Arabic novels heavily utilize colloquial Arabic as a dialogue tool. These dialogues are rich with cultural, social, educational, and personal characteristics that reflect the characters and the Arab world they inhabit. While characters are fictional, their speech is grounded in the reality of Arabic society and (b) Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) will likely remain the primary language of Arabic literature. However, some authors will continue to use Arabic dialects for dialogue due to their inherent authenticity. This study demonstrates the translatability of Arabic dialects in contemporary Arabic novels and proposes various strategies for this crucial task.

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APPENDICES
Appendix A
Participant Information Sheet (PIS)

The Translatability of the Colloquial Arabic Dialogue into English:

A Case Study of three Arabic novels translated by Marilyn Booth: *The Open Door*, *Celestial Bodies*, and *As Though She were Sleeping*

Participant Information Sheet

What is the purpose of the study?

The study is being undertaken by Mahdi AlSoliman in the School of Psychology and Humanities at the University of Central Lancashire as part of their PhD. The study is being completed under the supervisory of Dr. Robert Kasza. The aim of the study is to analyse the problems that arise from translating colloquial Arabic dialects in novels into English. The three novels have been selected for this study because they are highly loaded with colloquial Arabic passages of dialogue.

The three novels are well-known in the Arab literary circles and among readers of Arabic as well. What is more, these three novels have been translated into English by the same translator: Marilyn Booth (1955 –). These novels are: *Al-Bab Al-Maftuh* (*The Open Door*) by the Egyptian novelist Latifa Al-Zayyat (1923 – 1996); *Sayyidat Al-Qamar* (*Celestial Bodies*) by the Omani novelist Jokha Al-Harthi (1978 –) and *Kannaha Naema* (*As Though She were Sleeping*) by the Lebanese novelist Elias Khouri (1948 –).

Why have I been invited to take part?

You have been invited to take part in this research project questionnaire because you belong to the group of literary translators between English and Arabic.

More reasons for selection are as follows:

1. You are a native speaker of Arabic or have competent level of understanding Arabic.
2. You may have come across some literary texts written in colloquial Arabic during your professional and/or academic work in translation.
3. You have expressed an interest in taking part in this study by responding to our email or via the relevant platforms (Proz.com and Linkedin).

Do I have to take part?

No, it is entirely up to you if you want to take part or not. Participation in the study is voluntary. If you do decide to take part, all questions are optional so you may omit any questions. You will be able to withdraw at any point for any reason before submitting your answers by closing the survey browser.

What will happen if I take part?

The study involves taking part in an online survey, which will be completed anonymously. The survey asks 20 questions and some of which will ask your views about the translation of dialects from Arabic into English in contemporary Arabic novels. The survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete, depending on how much information you choose to share. Before you complete the survey, you will be asked to read and consent to a series of statements before proceeding.

If you are interested in taking part, please keep a copy of the participant information sheet here and retain this for your records before starting the survey.

How will my data be used?

The project does not intend to collect or process any personal data. All data you provide will be anonymous. However, there are some comment boxes in the survey. Whilst we ask that no personal data is provided, the detail you provide in the comments means there is the potential for personal data to be included in the responses. The University processes personal data as part of its research and teaching activities in accordance with the lawful basis of 'public task', and in accordance with the University's purpose of "advancing education, learning and research for the public benefit".

Under UK data protection legislation, the University acts as the Data Controller for personal data collected as part of the University's research. The University privacy notice for research participants can be found on the attached link: https://www.uclan.ac.uk/data_protection/privacy-notice-research-participants.php

The answers that you provide within the survey are saved on Microsoft Forms. Further information on how your data will be used can be found in the table below.

How will my data be collected?	The data will be collected via an online survey (on Microsoft Forms).
How will my data be stored?	The data will be downloaded from the online survey platform and stored in secure protected folders on the University network (Microsoft One Drive)
How long will my data be stored for?	The data will be stored for 7 years following the end of the study.
What measures are in place to protect the security and confidentiality of my data?	Data will be protected and kept confidential on the research student's university Microsoft One Drive.
Will my data be anonymised?	The questionnaire only intends to collect anonymous data. However, whilst we ask that no personal data is included in

	any of the comments boxes if this does happen, we will remove any personal identifying information.
How will my data be used?	Answers provided in the questionnaire will be used as part of the PhD thesis and associated publications.
Who will have access to my data?	The supervisory team members will have access to the data collected.
Will my data be archived for use in other research projects in the future?	If possible, the data from this research project is intended to be open access or stored in University of Central Lancashire Data for future use in accordance with the Research Data Management Policy.
How will my data be destroyed?	The data will be embedded into the research project.

Are there any risks in taking part?

There are not any perceived disadvantages or risks involved from taking part in this research project. The purpose of the study is neither to evaluate the original literary novels in Arabic nor to criticize the translations into English. The purpose is to propose or create a kind of theoretical and, if possible, a practical framework for dealing with translating dialects in contemporary Arabic literary works into English. If you feel uncomfortable when answering any questions, you can choose not to answer these questions, or you may decide you no longer wish to take part and, in this case, you can close the survey browser.

Are there any benefits from taking part?

There are no anticipated direct benefits to you. However, we hope that the collective responses will add insight into this area and that translators of contemporary literary works from dialectal Arabic into English might find some guidelines and advice on where to start and how to make their selections in their negotiation with a text that includes sections of dialogue written in this dialect or another.

What will happen to the results of the study?

The results of the study will form part of the PhD thesis and the student will publish his findings in a separate book that conforms to the standards of the public readers. Once the book is out, it will be available in book outlets, libraries, and bookshops (and probably a Kindle version). Please note that you will not be identifiable from the results as no personal data will be obtained and presented.

What will happen if I want to stop taking part?

This survey is intended to be completed anonymously and it will therefore not be possible to withdraw your data once you have submitted your responses. When you select ‘submit survey’ at the bottom of the last page, the data will be submitted. Up until this point, you can stop at any time and data provided to that point will not be saved.

Data withdrawal

As no personal data is collected, and no specific responses from specific people are tracked, it will not be possible to withdraw the data after the completion of the survey.

What if I am unhappy or if there is a problem?

If you are unhappy, or if there is a problem, please feel free to let us know by contacting Mahdi AlSoliman via MAlsoliman@uclan.ac.uk / Dr. Robert Kasza via RKasza@uclan.ac.uk and we will try to help. If you remain unhappy or have a complaint which you feel you cannot come to us with, then please contact the Ethics, Integrity, and Governance Unit at OfficerForEthics@uclan.ac.uk

The University strives to maintain the highest standards of rigour in the processing of your data. However, if you have any concerns about the way in which the University processes your personal data, it is important that you are aware of your right to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office by calling 0303 123 1113.

Who can I contact if I have further questions?

You can contact the principal investigator on the following address:

Mahdi AlSoliman

University of Central Lancashire, School of Psychology and Humanities, Preston, Lancashire, the UK

PR1 2HE

Email: MAlsoliman@uclan.ac.uk

Contact details of investigatory team:

1. Dr. Robert Kasza, School of Psychology and Humanities, University of Central Lancashire, Preston, Lancashire, UK, PR1 2HE, Email: RKasza@uclan.ac.uk

2. Second Supervisor 1: Dr. Daniel Waller, Research and Enterprise Service, University of Central Lancashire, Preston, Lancashire, the UK, PR1 2HE, Email: DWaller@uclan.ac.uk

3. Second Supervisor 2: Mr. Adham Mardini, School of Business, University of Central Lancashire, Preston, Lancashire, the UK, PR1 2HE, Email: AMardini1@uclan.ac.uk

Consent

- I confirm that I have read and understood the information provided on the information page of this survey, for the study titled ‘’The Translatability of the Colloquial Arabic Dialogue into English: A Case Study of three Arabic novels translated by Marilyn Booth: *The Open Door*, *Celestial Bodies*, and *As Though She were Sleeping”.*

Yes No

- I understand that my participation is voluntary, and I am free to stop at any time, until I submit the survey by clicking on the ‘Submit’ button on the last page of the survey.

Yes No

- I understand that the answers I provide are completely anonymous and I can therefore not be identified in any way. I understand if personal data is included within comment boxes, the researcher will remove any identifying information.

Yes No

- I agree to take part in this study

Yes No

- I confirm that I am over 18 years of age

Yes No

Appendix B

The questionnaire

Part One: The profile of the participating translators

1. Nationality: .....

2. Gender: ◯ Male ◯ Female ◯ Other

3. Age group:

- 18 - 25 years old
- 26 – 40 years old
- 41 – 55 years old
- More than 55 years old

4. Years of experience in literary translation:

- Less than 5 years
- 5 – 10 years
- 11 – 15 years
- More than 15 years

5. The dialect(s) I use in daily speech and communication: ……

6. What level of education have you achieved in translation studies?

- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- PhD
- I have studied a different discipline, but I know two (or more than two) languages.
- Other, please specify: ……

7. What is the literary genre which you usually translate the most?

- Novels
- Plays

- Poems
- Novellas and short stories
- Literary articles
- Other; please specify: ……

8. How can you describe your career as a literary translator?

- A freelancer
- Other; please specify: ……

9. Have you ever translated any dialectal dialogues from Arabic into English or vice versa?

- Yes
- No
- I am not sure.

Part Two: Dialect and translation

10. I am familiar with the meanings of the following terms:

Term	Strongly agree	Agree	I am not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Dialect					
Register					
Diglossia					

11. It is important for literary translators to have good knowledge of the dialects they might find in the literary works they translate.
    - Strongly agree
    - Agree
    - I am not sure
    - Disagree
    - Strongly disagree

12. The use of dialects in contemporary novels plays an important role in creating the genuine atmosphere the novel wants to convey.
    - Strongly agree
    - Agree
    - I am not sure
    - Disagree
    - Strongly disagree

13. Translating novels that include passages of dialectal dialogue has been a challenge in my translation career.
    - Strongly agree
    - Agree
    - I am not sure
    - Disagree
    - Strongly disagree

14. When translating Arabic dialects in novels into English, it is important for me as a literary translator to read some academic books on how to deal with such translations.
    - Strongly agree
    - Agree
    - I am not sure
    - Disagree
    - Strongly disagree

15. When translating Arabic dialects in novels into English, it is better to translate them into socially and culturally 'equivalent' dialects.
    - Strongly agree
    - Agree
    - I am not sure
    - Disagree
    - Strongly disagree

16. When I cannot understand any given Arabic dialect in the Source Text, I usually do the following: (You can apply more than one option):
    - I try to use online search engines (for example, Google).
    - I consult a translator who speaks or understands the same dialect.
    - I try to understand the meaning from context.
    - Other; please specify:

17. Arabic dialects should be translated into formal English as it is impossible to find an equivalent dialect in English that can reflect the same socio-cultural features of the original dialects.
    - Strongly agree
    - Agree
    - I am not sure
    - Disagree

- Strongly disagree

18. Translating Arabic dialectal dialogues into formal English can distort the social and cultural image of the characters in the Source Text.
    - Strongly agree
    - Agree
    - I am not sure
    - Disagree
    - Strongly disagree

Part Three: Translated samples from collected data:

19. You are kindly asked to read the following **six** excerpts from three Arabic novels and evaluate the specific dialect-related aspects in the English translations. The evaluation scale of the texts here is developed from both Anthony Pym's (Pym, 2015) (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GKbMwltm_f0) and Jeremy Munday's general notes on the assessment of translation. and Jeremey Munday (Munday et al., 2022 and Farias de Souza, 2015).

Excerpt 1	
The Arabic Original Text	**The English Translation**
وقطع الصمت صوت نحيب، وقفزت ليلى كالملدوغة من السرير ثم وقفت مُسمَّرة في وسط الحجرة حين عرفت في الصوت صوت أبيها، واختلط النحيب بدعاء يقطعه ما بين الحين والحين صوت أمها هادئًا منخفضًا: -يا رب تقدرني يا رب، دي ولية يا رب! -كفاية يا سيدي البنت تسمعنا. -الستر يا رب الستر.! وانخفض الصوت تدريجيًّا وأعقبته غصة ثم صمت.	A sobbing wail sliced through the silence and Layla jumped out of bed as if stung. But immediately she recognized her father's tones in that wail. She stood transfixed in the middle of the room. She heard pleading invocations to God cut into the sobbing– "Lord, give me strength! She's just a helpless girl. Oh God!"–interrupted from time to time by her mother's voice, calm and low. "That's enough, *ya sidi*! The girl can hear us." "Protect us, Lord, protect us! Shield us from harm." The voice grew fainter until, with a final choked sob, it was silent."

Based on the following translation evaluation scale, please select what best describes the English translation of the above text:	◯ The translation is accurate (it accurately conveys the meaning of the Source Text): Yes Partially No ◯ The translation is fluent (it reads smoothly and naturally): Yes Partially No ◯ The translation preserves the context and cultural and social standing of the characters/speakers of the Source Text: Yes Partially No ◯ The translation adheres to the norms of the target language, and considers its grammar, syntax, and vocabulary: Yes Partially No ◯ The translation preserves the style of the original author: It preserves such elements as tone, mode, register and dialect: Yes Partially No ◯ The translation is acceptable to the general reader. Yes Partially No

Excerpt 2	
The Arabic Original Text	**The English Translation**
وبعد فترة قصيرة قامت سامية هانم التي اعتادت أن يؤمّن الجميع على أقوالها ممتعضة. وألقت بالفرو على كتفيها وقالت: - بنتك ملحلحة أوى يا سنيه هانم.	It was not long before Samia Hanim rose to her feet, agitated. She was accustomed to listeners who hung wide-eyed on every word she uttered.

وهي تشد على حرفي اللام والحاء وتمد كلمة أوي.	She tossed her fur across her shoulders as she took her annoyed leave. 'Your daughter is terribly spirited, Sania Hanim.' She spit out the consonants and drew the word 'spirited' out."
Based on the following translation evaluation scale, please select what best describes the English translation of the above text:	◯ The translation is accurate (it accurately conveys the meaning of the Source Text): Yes Partially No ◯ The translation is fluent (it reads smoothly and naturally): Yes Partially No ◯ The translation preserves the context and cultural and social standing of the characters/speakers of the Source Text: Yes Partially No ◯ The translation adheres to the norms of the target language, and considers its grammar, syntax, and vocabulary: Yes Partially No ◯ The translation preserves the style of the original author: It preserves such elements as tone, mode, register and dialect: Yes Partially No ◯ The translation is acceptable to the general reader. Yes Partially No

Excerpt 3	
The Arabic Original Text	**The English Translation**
وقال علي بك: -يا ست هانم إحنا قلنا حاجة؟! على العين والراس يا ست هانم على العين والراس.	"Did we suggest anything but, *madame*?" exclaimed Ali Bey. "By my head and eye, whatever you say, *madame* your wish is my command."
Based on the following translation evaluation scale, please select what best describes the English translation of the above text:	◯ The translation is accurate (it accurately conveys the meaning of the Source Text): Yes Partially No ◯ The translation is fluent (it reads smoothly and naturally): Yes Partially No ◯ The translation preserves the context and cultural and social standing of the characters/speakers of the Source Text: Yes Partially No ◯ The translation adheres to the norms of the target language, and considers its grammar, syntax, and vocabulary: Yes Partially No ◯ The translation preserves the style of the original author: It preserves such elements as tone, mode, register and dialect: Yes Partially No ◯ The translation is acceptable to the general reader. Yes Partially No

Excerpt 4	
The Arabic Original Text	**The English Translation**
منصور الذي احتلّت ابتسامة عريضة شفتيه الرفيعتين، كاشفة عن أسنان صغيرة بيضاء، لم ينتبه إلى بكاء عروسه إلّا حين سمع أمها تنهرها قائلة: "عيب يا ميليا شو نحن بدفن، هيدا عرس".	Mansour, the thin line of his lips wholly captured and partly transformed by a broad smile that revealed his small lustrous teeth, was oblivious to his bride's weeping until he heard her mother scolding her. Shame on you, dear – Milia, stop it! *Ayb*. For shame – are we burying someone, girl! It's a wedding, after all.
Based on the following translation evaluation scale, please select what best describes the English translation of the above text:	◯ The translation is accurate (it accurately conveys the meaning of the Source Text): Yes Partially No ◯ The translation is fluent (it reads smoothly and naturally): Yes Partially No ◯ The translation preserves the context and cultural and social standing of the characters/speakers of the Source Text: Yes Partially No ◯ The translation adheres to the norms of the target language, and considers its grammar, syntax, and vocabulary: Yes Partially No ◯ The translation preserves the style of the original author: It preserves such elements as tone, mode, register and dialect: Yes Partially No ◯ The translation is acceptable to the general reader.

	Yes	Partially	No

Excerpt 5	
The Arabic Original Text	**The English Translation**
"العروس"، قال السائق. "مالها العروس"؟ سأل منصور. "بسّ صرخت يا عدرا دخيل إسمك راحت الغطيطة، ووقف التلج، العروس عملت عجيبة"، قال السائق.	The bride –, said the driver. What about the bride? She screamed *O Virgin, help me*! And the fog disappeared. She screamed and the snow stopped. The bride made a miracle.
Based on the following translation evaluation scale, please select what best describes the English translation of the above text:	◯ The translation is accurate (it accurately conveys the meaning of the Source Text): Yes Partially No ◯ The translation is fluent (it reads smoothly and naturally): Yes Partially No ◯ The translation preserves the context and cultural and social standing of the characters/speakers of the Source Text: Yes Partially No ◯ The translation adheres to the norms of the target language, and considers its grammar, syntax, and vocabulary: Yes Partially No ◯ The translation preserves the style of the original author: It preserves such elements as tone, mode, register and dialect: Yes Partially No

	◯ The translation is acceptable to the general reader. Yes Partially No

Excerpt 6	
The Arabic Original Text	**The English Translation**
تأفّفت سالمة: "قومي يا ميا اجلسي وأرضعي البنت". اعتدلت ميا جالسة فصاحت ظريفة: "الأفعى اللي عند ولدي ترضع راقدة مثل الكلبة... ما ترضى تجلس.. وسمَّتْ البنت رشا.. وولدي مسكين سكت.. أيش بيقول؟.. بتلدغه لو تكلّم.. بدل ما يسمّوا حبيبة ومريم وفاطمة يسمّوا هذي الأسامي مرفْت ورباب ونانباب وشاكاب وداداب وقلع عين إبليس... دنيا!.. وأنت يا ميا من اسمها بنتك؟".. ردّت ميا دون أن ترفع عينيها عن وجه الرضيعة: "لندن"، أطرقت ظريفة في سكون مفاجئ ثم نزعت جسدها الضخم عن الأرض وقالت: "أحسن أقوم أجهّز لك الغدا".	Get up, Mayya, sit up now and nurse the girl, muttered Salima, showing her disgust with her guest. Mayya struggled into a sitting position. The viper who's with my boy nurses laying down, Zarifa sang out. Like a bith dog. Won't even sit up. And she named the girl Rasha. My wretched son didn't say a word – well, what's he going to say? She'd bite the boy's flesh and poison him if he so much as said a word. Instead of naming them Habiba or Maryam or Fatima, they give them these names – Mervat, and Rabab, and Naabab, Shaaakaaab, Daaaadaaaab, or maybe, why not? She-who-gouges-out-Satan's eye? What a world it is? And you, Mayya, now what's your baby named? Mayya was staring into the baby girl's face, nestled at her breast. London. There was a sudden silence. Zarifa dropped her hand. Then she heaved her immense body off the floor. Must get myself moving, she muttered. Have to make lunch for you.
Based on the following translation evaluation scale, please select what best describes the English translation of the above text:	◯ The translation is accurate (it accurately conveys the meaning of the Source Text): Yes Partially No ◯ The translation is fluent (it reads smoothly and naturally): Yes Partially No ◯ The translation preserves the context and cultural and social standing of the characters/speakers of the Source Text: Yes Partially No ◯ The translation adheres to the norms of the target language, and considers its grammar, syntax, and vocabulary: Yes Partially No

	◯ The translation preserves the style of the original author: It preserves such elements as tone, mode, register and dialect: Yes Partially No ◯ The translation is acceptable to the general reader. Yes Partially No

20. Can you please share your own thoughts and insights about the best practices you recommend for translators to follow when translating Arabic dialects into English?

Thank you

Appendix C

The ethical approval by the University Committee for Ethics and Integrity – BAHSS's (Business, Arts, Humanities and Social Science) Review Panel

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08 August 2023

Mahdi AlSoliman / Robert Kasza
School of Psychology and Humanities
University of Central Lancashire

Dear Mahdi / Robert

Re: BAHSS Ethics Review Panel Application
Unique Reference Number: BAHSS2 01053

The BAHSS Ethics Review Panel has granted approval of your proposal application 'The Translatability of the Colloquial Arabic Dialogue into English: A Case Study of three Arabic novels translated by Marilyn Booth: The Open Door, Celestial Bodies, and As Though She were Sleeping'. Approval is granted up to the end of project date. *

It is your responsibility to ensure that:

- the project is carried out in line with the information provided in the forms you have submitted
- you regularly re-consider the ethical issues that may be raised in generating and analysing your data
- any proposed amendments/changes to the project are raised with, and approved by, the Ethics Review Panel
- you notify EthicsInfo@uclan.ac.uk if the end date changes or the project does not start
- serious adverse events that occur from the project are reported to the Ethics Review Panel
- a closure report is submitted to complete the ethics governance procedures (existing paperwork can be used for this purpose e.g. funder's end of grant report; abstract for student award or NRES final report. If none of these are available, use the e-Ethics Closure Report pro forma).

Yours sincerely

Richard Davies
Deputy Vice-Chair
BAHSS Ethics Review Panel

* for research degree students this will be the final lapse date

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NB - Ethical approval is contingent on any health and safety checklists having been completed and necessary approvals gained as a result.