

Research Article

From Orality to Textuality: A Linguistic Analysis of Moroccan Folktales Translated into English

Mouna Hajjaj^{1,*} , Jamaa Ouchoud² 

¹Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences, Cadi Ayyad University, Marrakesh, Morocco

²Department of English, Cadi Ayyad University, Marrakesh, Morocco

Abstract

Translation approaches based on equivalence perceive the source text as a written set of materials characterized by textual features. Their main aim is to convey the linguistic and cultural aspects of the source text to target readers. However, these approaches are challenged when translating orality since translators tend to textualize the oral source material. In this context, the translation process goes beyond the realization of equivalence between source and target texts, but tends to recreate the narrative, cultural, and performative aspects of orality. This article investigates the transmission from orality to textuality through a stylistic analysis of the Moroccan folktale: “*The Pomegranate and the Talking Drum*,” translated into English by Richard Hamilton. The article aims to explore how the translator textualizes the folktale by means of the linguistic means of the target language. Therefore, the article conducts a stylistic analysis of the translated folktale to demonstrate how the narrative, cultural, and performative aspects are recreated within the translation. The analysis shows that Hamilton uses different stylistic strategies to recreate these aspects. At the graphological level, he uses punctuation and paragraphing to reconstruct the narrative structure of the folktale. At the phonological level, he incorporates devices such as assonance and alliteration to recreate musicality within the folktale. Additionally, the translator introduces a set of lexical fields that contextualize the folktale within the Moroccan context. The study informs that the translation of orality involves rewriting and textual reconstruction to evoke the narrative, cultural, and performative aspects in the target text.

Keywords

Translation, Orality, Textuality, Moroccan Folktales, Linguistic Analysis

1. Introduction

Orality consists of the verbal culture that has never been committed to writing. It is a collective record of the linguistic and cultural heritage of oral societies. Joshi [1] emphasizes the power of orality as the dominant component in the Indian oral societies in transmitting knowledge, as Ramanujan claims that everyone is familiar with the Mahabharata, which is an Indian oral epic, because nobody reads it. It is considered a record

that marks the dynamicity of the collective’s consciousness (p. 86). Primary oral societies recall knowledge orally, which implies the essential existence of an interlocutor to stimulate the speaker’s thoughts. We can say then that oral cultures are tightly associated with communication. However, to easily retrieve already produced knowledge, oral cultures have only one way to do so, which is, in Ong’s terms [2], “Think memorable

*Correspondence: Mouna Hajjaj (m.hajjaj.ced@uca.ac.ma)

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thoughts” (p. 34). To put it in another way, oral societies' thoughts are based on rhythmic patterns and standard thematic setting, repetition, alliteration, and assonance for ready recall (pp. 11-14, 32-34). The cognitive skills for oral primary cultures, which are recalling and retrieving, and then elaborating knowledge, are described by Sadiqi [3] as complex (p. 2). Ong [2] highlights nine characteristics of oral primary cultures. Oral narratives use an additive style rather than a subordinative style, which leads to the fast pace of narration, whereas written discourse is featured with a subordinative style to organize and link ideas to elaborate and provide meaning. Moreover, orality is aggregative as it uses a set of separated units and phrases or formulae which are ready to use. In addition, oral primary cultures tend to use more epithets when narrating. Ong [2] highlights different examples of excessive use of epithets, which are mostly used, such as “the brave soldier” rather than “the soldier” as well as “the beautiful princess” rather than “the princess”. Orality is also redundant and copious. Ong [2] explains this feature through a closer comparison between chirographic and oral people. The scholar claims that writing sets up continuity and organizes thoughts. Therefore, chirographic people can retrieve the context by looking back at the text. This is not the case for oral cultures, as they keep repeating phrases to keep the speaker and listeners on track, as well as giving time to the speaker to come up with the next utterance or idea. Redundancy is an advantageous feature of orality, as when it comes to large audiences, the speaker must repeat the previous utterances for the listeners who may miss them. In other words, oral cultures reinforce both fluency and volubility, which can be realized through repetition and redundancy (p. 40).

Writing is a new experience for the human mind, as it has become a new medium to document oral records in a linear and logical way using chains and connections between ideas. In other words, writing leads to the organization of thoughts and their causative development [4]. Furthermore, the fact of committing a certain language to writing enlarges and enriches the language and makes it more powerful in terms of thought organization and its freedom from human thoughts and mind to writing commitment. Therefore, writing is considered an extension of orality [2]. Sadiqi [3] shows two main aspects of orality. Firstly, there is a hierarchy between oral and written cultures. Orality is the primary means of expression before writing; so, it is considered the starting point toward writing, as the latter never existed without orality. Secondly, orality is never inferior to writing. The author highlights this idea more by showing how orality is enhanced in Moroccan literature, especially in Driss Chraïbi and Mohamed Khair Ed-dine's writings, for orality is considered a nourishing component of literary writing. Orality is still considered a principal element in Moroccan culture since it is present and used in different aspects, be they religious, cultural, or legal, as the latter are always concluded orally. The author gives examples of the oral announcement for prayers, the oral words *Ikelma* (the word) for marriage and business contracts.

Moving forward, orality has become a valuable material for

investigation by different subject areas. Bandia [5] claims that an act of translation is needed for orality in all the different stages containing recording, textualizing, and representing (p. 125). Mirdha [6] claims that translation is always associated with orality since every uttered or spoken word is considered a text that can be translated (p. 31). Equally important, translation is not limited to textualizing and retelling orality; rather, it is a bridge that renders cultures and interprets traditions of the source culture across different languages [1]. In their conceptualization of orality, translation studies seem to direct it towards two main points of view: pragmatic and metaphorical. Firstly, the pragmatic perspective of orality in translation studies deals with orality as a set of textless materials that are translated through an intra-/ interlinguistic or intersemiotic translation. Translating orality through these three modes enables it to be multidisciplinary, as, when translated, it is opened towards different subject areas such as postcolonialism and gender studies. In other words, the focus of translation studies on the materiality of orality leads to its intersection with other areas of study. Secondly, a metaphorical perspective of translation on orality involves the fact that translation studies use orality to highlight and represent cultural differences and shed light on subcultures and minorities [5]. Interestingly, Moroccan and foreign translators tend to textualize or translate different Moroccan genres, mainly Moroccan folktales and proverbs, which leads to the start of building up a written corpus of Moroccan orality, mainly in Arabic, French, and English. For example, Moroccan folktales from different cities are collected and translated into English by El Koudia and Allen [7], Lebbady [8], Rahmouni [9], Hamilton [10], Hamri [11], and Mathers [12].

While it is true that translation is much needed for documenting orality, the latter opens up translation studies towards recent theories that question the applicability of translation procedures based on equivalence in terms of form and meaning. The present article investigates the translation strategies used when textualizing orality, specifically folktales, through a stylistic analysis of one Moroccan folktale, *The Pomegranate and The Talking Drum*, translated into English by Richard Hamilton. This article will show how the translator renders the various aspects of folktales, be they cultural, performative, or narrative, to the receiving audience.

2. Review of Literature

Mirdha [6] claims that the continuous shift from oral to written is mostly done in translation and transcreation practices. Hence, the act of translation is greatly linked to orality as the textualization of the latter contributes to its establishment as a collective narrative heritage. Mirdha [6] exemplifies the oral base of Indian culture and the importance of translation or transcreation in establishing its oral heritage to different narrative genres. For instance, reestablishing oral genres of the Indian culture from oral to textual, which leads to set-

ting up a corpus of folktales, folksongs, ballads, prayers, legends, and riddles (p. 32). Therefore, preserving this oral heritage serves, in the first place, to safeguard the different historical and cultural aspects of different social groups (p. 33). However, textualizing orality necessitates evoking and preserving its main features, be they cultural, narrative, or performative. The upcoming paragraphs demonstrate how translators and researchers deal with the translation of orality and its different aspects.

Haring [13] claims that orality necessarily requires an act of translation to shed light on hegemonic consciousness. However, the challenge in translating orality is shifting from an oral folkloric system to a textual one. Here, translators should call attention to the differences in orality and build translation and language tools to translate from orality to textuality (p. 10). The researcher exemplifies this idea through his analysis of the translation of oral narratives from the Haya of Tanzania. He claims that the translator uses devices of representation, which are typographical, to replace the performative aspects. He uses indentation or a new line to indicate pauses; he employs punctuation to highlight the intonation of characters or performers. Additionally, louder and deeper voices are respectively notated by means of capital letters or small capitals (p. 11). Haring [13] argues that translating orality necessitates exposing these performative aspects that differentiate orality by means of typographical devices.

In the same way, Coillie [14] explains that translating orality, specifically folktales, should consider recreating its orality. He demonstrates this idea by comparing four translations of the Rumpelstiltskin folktale, focusing on the stylistic changes in each version. His analysis of the four versions indicates that translators make deliberate interventions in terms of many levels, be they phonological, lexico-semantic, or syntactic, etc., to make the folktale enjoyable and performable for the target audience. Generally, at the phonological level, the four translators use alliteration, assonance, and rhythmic songs to enhance the folktale's orality. At the lexicosemantic level, there is frequent use of adjectives and superlatives to make the text more colorful and descriptive. At the syntactic level, the research notes that simple, short sentences are widely used to convey a telegraphic style. At the pragmatic level, there are many instances of direct speech and dialogue notations to describe characters' reactions.

Staphorst [15] claims that the challenges in translating orality lie in how it is textualized and presented in a new medium. He explains that translating orality necessitates both interlingual and intersemiotic translation, as the process tends to move the source material from the source language to the target language and aims to textualize performative features such as pauses and gestures by means of the linguistic tools of the target language (p. 554). Staphorst [15] mentions that the performativity of oral narratives must be intensified within the translation (pp. 559-560). Upon closer examination of two translations of African oral performances, Staphorst [15] notes

the changes and additions made by the translators to replace the performative aspects that may be lost in the translation process. He mentions that punctuation is a useful strategy to intensify the non-verbal elements. For example, facial expressions and sporadic reactions are replaced between square brackets, and asides are captured and placed in the first paragraph, between round brackets (p. 563). Abdelmajid et al. [16] also identify four challenges faced when moving from orality to textuality: language variation, symbolism and metaphor, structural differences, and performative aspects. Through a cultural and linguistic analysis of ten Moroccan folktales, Abdelmajid et al. [16] claim that translators should adhere to the structural and narrative features of the target languages, keep the linguistic variations while providing explanatory notes, and recreate the musicality of folktales by including rhythmic sentences and songs within the folktale.

Brumme (2010) mentions that written and oral modes are incompatible. Therefore, translating orality creates a shared space between the two modes. When shifting from orality to textuality, translators can create a balance by keeping the non-verbal elements, which do not block the narrative flow of the translated text, and adhere to the linguistic structure of the target language [17]. Luzzati and Luzzati (1987) claim that translating orality shall involve recreating an oralizing effect rather than abiding by the oral structure [17].

It is worth noting that the aforementioned studies tend to shed light on recreating the performativity of orality with its different genres using the linguistic means of the target language. Through linguistic and cultural analysis, the researchers convince their readers that evoking performance within the translation is a significant aspect to consider for the successful transmission from orality to textuality. Yet, evoking orality relies not only on its performative aspects but rather on the narrative and cultural features, which will guarantee the performativity and dynamicity of orality in the target language. The present article shows how the cultural, performative, and narrative aspects of Moroccan folktales are recreated and textualized through a stylistic analysis of one Moroccan folktale translated into English by Richard Hamilton.

3. Methods

In the context of Moroccan orality, there are different Moroccan and foreign translators who tend to translate collections of Moroccan folktales into French and English. Richard Hamilton¹ is one of the foreign translators who documents and translates Moroccan Folktales into English. Hamilton [9] translates thirty-nine Moroccan folktales into English from five storytellers in Marrakesh in his book, *The Last Storyteller: Tales from the Heart of Morocco*. Upon closer examination of Hamilton's collection of folktales, "The Pomegranate and The Talking Drum" was selected to investigate the reworking done in the translation process in terms of the linguistic level. The

¹ Richard Hamilton is a British author and journalist.

folktale studied consists of significant examples of linguistic devices used to textualize the studied folktale, which will serve to answer the research question of the present article.

4. Results

Folktale Synopsis: This folktale narrates the story of two sisters, Mimouna and Aicha. Mimouna tries to kill her sibling out of jealousy. A talking drum betrays the jealous sister.

4.1. The Graphological Level

Layout: Hamilton uses justified alignment and single spacing. The title of the folktale is in bold and centred on the first page. The title of the folktale appears with the name of the storyteller, Abderrahim El Makkouri. As mentioned earlier in the methodology section, Hamilton collects Moroccan folktales from five storytellers. Hence, he writes the name of the storyteller who narrates this version under each folktale's title, as it is exemplified in the following lines.

"The Talking Drum

Abderrahim El Makkouri"

Paragraphing: The paragraphing of Hamilton's translation goes along with narrative categories. Starting with the orientation or the initial situation, Hamilton introduces and describes the main characters, Mimouna and Aicha, by contrasting their description in one single paragraph. The latter will guide the target readers towards the upcoming paragraphs or events, basing their interpretations of events and characters' actions mentioned in the very first paragraph. In the same way, the ending situation is written in a short paragraph, concluding what finally happened to the villain, the wicked sister. Overall, the folktale consists of short, indented paragraphs, each devoted to describing a single event with a detailed description of the setting and characters' emotions and reactions. For example, the fifth paragraph in Hamilton's translation is the start of resolving the complicating event. This paragraph is devoted to portraying the minstrel and his broken drum as well as describing his journey in the forest when he finds Aicha's corpse. There is an overlap between these paragraphs and the direct speech acts of characters. The latter are differentiated by means of quotation marks as well as by separating each instance of direct speech in a single line.

Punctuation: Hamilton's use of periods and commas creates rhythm and controls the pace of events' development. He uses commas to list the contrastive descriptions of both sisters, as well as to indicate pauses in characters' conversations. For instance, pause is highlighted in Mimouna's dialogue when she confesses her misfortune. *"I did it, wailed Mimouna, as she burst into the room in floods of tears, 'I killed my sister. I would not share a pomegranate with her, so I killed her.'* (p. 235). As is shown in this example, four commas are used to build suspense when exposing Mimouna's villainous acts, including dialogue notation to describe her emotional state. Additionally, the narration of events goes smoothly and steadily

by placing commas after adverbial phrases and clauses. Quotation marks are used to differentiate characters' dialogue.

Capitalization: Hamilton capitalizes the proper names of the two sisters, Aicha and Mimouna, as well as the location of events, Marrakech. The word 'medina' is not capitalized in Hamilton's translation. Medina refers to the old town of a city or a walled area of a city. The non-capitalization of the word "medina" in Hamilton's version can be interpreted as a description of a specific place in the city.

4.2. The Phonological Level

Hamilton uses one literary device, which is alliteration, to create a rhythmic aspect. Alliteration is used when describing the pomegranate and the accidental fall of Aicha. For instance, *"Mimouna was eating a very ripe, perfumed pomegranate."* (p. 233). Another example is *"Aicha fell, smacked her skull against a rock and died instantly."* (p. 233).

4.3. The Lexico- Semantic Level

Hamilton uses proper nouns such as *Mimouna/ Marrakech / Aicha* within the folktale to identify the Moroccan context of the folktale. Common nouns in Hamilton's translation are distributed within various lexical fields. First, nouns which refer to location, such as *city/ square/ medina*, specify the location of events from Marrakech to specific places in the city. Second, nouns associated with the temporal setting, such as *night/ day/ darkness*, reflect the unspecified timing of events. Then, the lexical field linked to nature is highlighted in this version as the complicated action takes place in the woods. Nouns like *sun/ wood/ tree/ root/ stream/ dirt/ seed/ rock/ earth* are involved when picturing how the villain kills the victimized hero. Nouns associated with death and burial, such as *corpse/ grave/skull/ grave/ hole/skin*, are used to describe the crime committed by Mimouna and how the latter hides the corpse. The intensity of this lexical field enhances the suspense of the story as the translator engages readers within the event of death and burial through detailed description by means of word occurrences related to death and burial. The talking drum, as a musical instrument, plays a pivotal role in exposing the misfortune of Mimouna. The translator talks about the use of the talking drum and the circumstances where this instrument is used through inserting a few nouns indicating the aforementioned aspects, for instance, *nouns like drum/ leather/ instrument/ tune/ musician/ minstrel*.

Regarding the adjective use, the most dominant type is descriptive adjectives, as Hamilton describes the physical, personal traits, and emotional state of every character in the folktale. For instance, Aicha, the victimized hero, is portrayed as *pretty/ beautiful/pale/ kind/fair/ young*, whereas the villain, Mimouna, is described as *ugly/ greedy/ mean/ jealous/ furious/ terrified*. As the story develops, the translator adds new traits to characters depending on the action they perform in a certain narrative category. Taking the villain, Mimouna, as an

example to illustrate this idea, in the initial situation, she was described as ugly, mean, and jealous. In the preparatory events of the complicating action, Mimouna refused to share the pomegranate with her sibling. Here, the translator deepens the villain's description as greedy and furious. Furthermore, other elements are also described within the folktale, as the pomegranate is portrayed as *ripe/ perfumed/ delicious*. The forest and the heat are also described as shady and fierce, respectively. The talking drum, which is a key object in exposing Mimouna's fortune, is described as *marvellous* and *magical*.

Adverbs of manner are the most used in Hamilton's translation. They describe how actions are performed by characters. For instance, adverbs like *badly/ violently/ instantly* are used within the folktale as follows: "*she lashed out, striking her sister violently. Aicha fell, smacked her skull against a rock and died instantly.*" (p. 233).

Lastly, the verbs associated with the villain, Mimouna, are action verbs like *munch/bury/ drug/ strike/eat/ lash out*, whereas for Aicha, the victimized hero, state verbs like *think/try* are used.

Next, Hamilton renders his translation more creative and colorful by intensifying the description of characters and events using figurative language. Four types of figurative language used by Hamilton can be highlighted in the present analysis. First, personification is used when describing how the talking drum sings the lament of Aicha. "*But as he beat the drum with his fingers, the most extraordinary thing happened; it began to speak.*" (p. 234). Second, instead of keeping a rhythmic lament, Hamilton uses repetition, which also creates a certain musicality. "*I died from a pomegranate, the drum said, 'I died from a pomegranate'*" (p. 234). Third, metaphor is used when expressing the extent of grief and tears of the jealous sister, for instance, "... *She burst into the room in floods of tears.*" (p. 235). Lastly, the use of parallelism in the last passage of the folktale creates rhythm as that of the Moroccan closing formula, which normally consists of rhythmic phrases. The translator ends his version as follows: "... *everyone knew about the tale of the beautiful Aicha, who was killed because she ate the seed of a pomegranate, and her sister Mimouna, who was betrayed by a talking drum.*" (p. 235). Another example of parallelism is in the initial situation, where the main characters are described, for example, "*Mimouna was ugly and mean, while her sister was pretty and kind*" (p. 233).

4.4. The Syntactic Level

In Hamilton's translation, sentence types vary from one narrative category to another. In the initial situation where both sisters are introduced, and the events are contextualized, a mixture of complex and compound sentences is used. The preparatory events of Aicha's death were listed and portrayed using a set of compound sentences, for instance, "*Mimouna was furious and, because she had forbidden her sister to taste the*

fruit, she lashed out, striking out her violently." (p. 233). Compound sentences are used when narrating the complicating action, where successive events are listed. "*Aicha fell, smacked her skull against a rock and died instantly.*" (p. 233). Compound sentences with the conjunction 'but' are used once again in this translation to shift readers' attention from one event to another. "*He thought he should bury her properly, but as he turned her over and gazed at the fresh pale skin on her back, he had an idea.*" (p. 234).

4.5. The Pragmatic Level

Considering the use of direct speech, Hamilton makes deliberate additions where he includes different instances of it. There are about five instances of direct speech in Hamilton's version. The first is in the conversation between the two sisters. The second is the inner thoughts of the musician as this example shows: "*Maybe I can use her skin to repair my drum, he thought*" (p. 234). The third instance is the conversation between the helper, the musician, and Aicha's parents. The fourth instance is when the drum speaks. "*I died from a pomegranate, the drum said, 'I died from a pomegranate.'*" (p. 234). The last one is when the jealous sister, Mimouna, talks about her misfortune. These instances of direct speech just mentioned not only enhance the orality of the folktale and make it performable in the target language, but they also create a mysterious effect in the folktale, particularly the instance of the talking drum speaking. Furthermore, proximity is reflected by directly addressing the reader through the following example: "*Turning round, he expected to see a tree stump or root, but imagine his horror when he saw a foot sticking out of earth*" (p. 234).

5. Discussion

Hamilton uses different translation strategies at each level. In terms of the graphological level, he rewrites the folktale, adapting the paragraphing, which serves the narrative categories of the folktale. For example, he devoted the first paragraph to describing the main characters both in terms of the physical and personal levels and describes the setting of the story. Additionally, he transcreates the title of the folktale and includes the name of the storyteller centered in the middle of the page. This marks the orality of the folktale as a primary oral material. The performability of the folktale is enhanced by the significant use of punctuation. For example, there is a frequent use of commas to indicate pauses and create a steady musicality when narrating the folktale.

At the phonological level, the translator recreates the musicality of the folktale through frequent use of alliteration. Alliteration is used when describing the different narrative elements, such as food and places, within the folktale.

Moving to the lexico-semantic level, there are five lexical fields highlighted in Hamilton's translation in a varying way, as the thread between these lexical fields serves to enrich and

describe the events and other narrative elements in great detail. In other words, the temporal and spatial lexical fields just mentioned serve to build the intensity of suspense when they are merged with the lexical field of death and burial. Moreover, nouns associated with the talking drum are woven to draw an image of musicians who use a talking drum in Marrakech square. Beyond that, this lexical field is mostly used in the resolution where the musician finds the corpse of Aicha. Hamilton enriches his version by greatly using adjectives and adverbs. The translator also expands the folktale by describing how Mimouna buried her sister in the woods, as well as describing how the musician finds the corpse. He deliberately adds narrative elements like characters' names, Aicha and Mimouna, and the setting, Marrakech, to contextualize the events within the Moroccan context. Additionally, the use of literary devices like parallelism and metaphor renders the text more colorful and enjoyable and enlivens the reader's imagination.

At the syntactic level, there is a significant use of compound sentences to express the successivity of events. In addition, to grab readers' attention toward events, the translator greatly uses compound sentences with the conjunction "but".

In terms of the pragmatic level, Hamilton extends his version to include dialogue instances between the main characters, which helps to make the folktale performable in the target language and guarantees its dynamicity. The translator directly addresses readers, which leads to engaging them within the events and creating an effect between the author and the readers similar to the one between the storyteller and the listeners.

As discussed earlier, Hamilton uses expansion and addition to rewrite the folktale using textual features. He recreates the orality of the folktale through keeping the performable aspects like rhythmic phrases; he recontextualizes the folktale by means of adding characters' names, Mimouna and Aicha, and the location of events, mainly, Marrakech; he also restructures the narrative contract of the folktale by means of the graphological features and lexical fields.

6. Conclusions

As discussed earlier, the challenge in translating from orality to textuality lies in how translators recreate or evoke the aspects of folktales or any other oral genres by means of the linguistic features of the target language. The present article investigates how translators textualize folktales through a stylistic analysis of one Moroccan folktale translated into English by Richard Hamilton. The findings of this article demonstrate that the translator rewrites the folktale using different typographical and linguistic devices to recreate the narrative, cultural, and performative aspects. For example, punctuation is greatly used to list contrastive descriptions of characters and build suspense within the folktale. Hamilton also uses literary devices to enliven the folktale. The Moroccan context of the folktale is enhanced through the use of proper names of char-

acters and the location of events. To sum up, Textualizing orality necessitates reworking the folktale in terms of different linguistic levels to evoke its orality and enhance its cultural and narrative features.

Author Contributions

Mouna Hajjaj: Conceptualization, Investigation, Visualization, Writing – original draft

Jamaa Ouchoud: Methodology, Supervision, Writing – review & editing

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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Biography

Mouna Hajjaj holds a PhD in English Studies from the Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences, Cadi Ayyad University, Marrakech, Morocco.

Jamaa Ouchouid is a full professor at the Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences, Cadi Ayyad University, Marrakech, Morocco. His research interests include linguistics, translation, culture, and education.

Research Field

Mouna Hajjaj: Translation Studies

Jamaa Ouchouid: linguistics, translation, culture, and education