

Literary Translation as an Impediment to Intercultural Understanding: Perspectives from Translation Specialists and Interculturalists

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Abstract

With the significant position culture has gained in translation studies, various assumptions have come to see literary translation in the light of intercultural communication, considering it a bridge and a facilitator for intercultural understanding. Drawing on the qualitative phase of an exploratory study, this article investigates this relationship through a thematic analysis of face-to-face and e-mail interviews conducted with a purposive sample of eight experts (n=8): four translation specialists and four intercultural specialists. The findings reveal expert perceptions that literary translation can sometimes widen the gap and stand as an obstacle for achieving successful intercultural communication between the source-language community and the target-language audience. As participants identified cultural knowledge as essential to intercultural understanding, they perceived that adopting domestication strategies and other procedures for translating culture-specific items (CSIs) (such as, omission, localization, transformation, and globalization) can contribute to the impediment of intercultural understanding by depriving the target-language audience of knowing and discovering the culture of the source-language community that is reflected in the text. Consequently, in line with exploratory findings, this article proposes that translator education curricula and practicing translators should critically balance cultural adaptation with strategies that preserve source-culture knowledge to support mutual global understanding and intercultural literacy.

Keywords: Literary Translation, Procedures of Translating CSI, Cultural Knowledge, Intercultural Understanding, Equivalence & Untranslatability

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1. Introduction

Historically, translation has played a pivotal role in disseminating knowledge and bringing different civilizations into contact. Most nations' development and achievements are indeed indebted to translation. Kelly (1979) argues that "Western Europe owes its civilization to translators. Likewise, the Arabs owe their civilization to the voluminous works of Greeks they had translated" (p. 1). Translation, in a wide sense, is viewed as a communicative activity that ties people from different cultural and intellectual backgrounds (Blum-Kulka, 1986; Hatim & Mason, 1997; Reiss, 2004; Schäffner, 2003; Steiner, 1975).

Indeed, translation as an activity has existed for centuries; yet, it has not reached its peak until it emerged as an independent academic discipline in the second half of the 20th century under the frame of "Translation Studies" (Bassnett, 2013). Thenceforth, the translation field has undergone a number of shifts and transformational changes. The contemporary theories and approaches have broadened its scope and dethroned the previous prescriptive assumptions that delimited translation within linguistic-centered methodologies. The cultural turn, as an influential movement that was put forward by Bassnett and Lefevere in the 1990s, has attached great importance to the socio-cultural factors in translating texts. Bassnett and Lefevere argue that in this trend "neither the word, nor the text, but the culture becomes the operational 'unit' of translation." (Lefevere & Bassnett, 1990, p. 8). Translation theory, thereafter, is not only concerned with linguistic aspects of units, but also with their cultural aspects. Literary texts – mainly prose, therefore, are considered the best realm where cultures are reflected and represented. Thus, translating them can be a good source of cultural knowledge for the target language community. As cultural differences and the social background of literary texts may cause various difficulties for translators, contemporary theorists have generated a wide range of strategies and procedures to facilitate the process. However, it should be noted that the field of translation is still full of issues and polemics. Starting from the plethora of ununified definitions of translation itself, moving to the issues of equivalence and untranslatability, various strategies and procedures for tackling culture-specific items, and so forth.

On the other hand, this significant role of culture that has gained in translation during this period has led a number of theorists to link a mutual relationship between [literary] translation and intercultural communication. More specifically, the examination of the prominent researchers' works in the field of translation indicates that most of them consider [literary] translation as a bridge of intercultural communication (Alvarez & Vidal, 1996; Davies, 2012; Newmark, 1995; Pym, 2004; Quale, 2003; Schäffner, 2003; Tymoczko, 2007). At this juncture, it is crucial to distinguish between key concepts: 'intercultural communication' refers to the active process of exchanging information across cultural boundaries, whereas 'intercultural understanding' denotes the cognitive and empathic outcome of that exchange (Katan & Taibi, 2021). However, it should be pointed

out that empirical investigations into how specific translation strategies impact intercultural understanding remain limited. While foundational scholars noted this theoretical gap, such as J. House (2009), who notes that the linkage that is drawn by previous scholars is still weak and “failed to place this linkage on a firm linguistic basis” (House et al., 2009), more recent scholarship in cultural mediation and intercultural competence (e.g., Katan, 2016; Malamatidou, 2018) continues to call for interdisciplinary approaches. Davies (2012) declares that these assumptions are associated with the ‘conduit metaphor’, and that translators are agents of intercultural communication because they “throughout history have often been seen as go-betweens, facilitating the relations between two parties who do not have enough in common to deal directly with each other” (2012, p. 374). These pre-existing assumptions entail that there is something invisible within this linkage that needs to be revisited. Furthermore, with the limited research evidence on this relationship – and particularly the scarcity of an intercultural researchers’ perspective, in addition to the plethora of issues found within translation theory, concerns have arisen to address this gap and reinvestigate it from both lenses – intercultural and translational.

It is that scrutiny which this article takes up, drawing on the qualitative interview material gathered from a purposive sample of eight experts (four translation specialists and four intercultural specialists) via face-to-face and e-mail interviews to ask, in a more pointed way than the literature usually allows, whether the theories and techniques that translators rely on can themselves stand in the way of the target audience's access to the cultural event of the source community. The article does not attempt to settle the broader question of whether literary translation is, in general, a bridge or a barrier. Its narrower aim is to show, largely in the words of the specialists interviewed, the specific potential mechanisms through which translation can impede rather than promote intercultural understanding. To address this gap, this study asks three primary research questions:

1. How do translation and intercultural specialists perceive the role of literary translation in facilitating or impeding intercultural understanding?
2. Which specific translation strategies, particularly concerning culture-specific items (CSIs), are perceived to pose the greatest risk to source-culture transmission?
3. How do experts view the balance between domestication and foreignization in supporting mutual intercultural literacy?

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Translating culture and the question of untranslatability

Producing similar meanings and messages, at one or more levels, in the target text as intended by the original author is often regarded as a primary goal of literary translators. This “sameness,” perceived by many scholars as the concept of equivalence, is regarded as a central concept in translation studies, and Munday (2012) states that “the notion of equivalence has been a key issue in translation studies throughout the 1970s and beyond.” The concept has nonetheless caused heated debates among scholars of the field (Baker,

1992, p. 6), and Vanessa Leonardi (2005) goes so far as to assert that “the notion of equivalence is undoubtedly the most problematic and controversial area in the field of translation theory.” Some researchers argue, moreover, that absolute equivalence will never be achieved no matter how skilled the translator is. Landers (2001, p. 6), for example, argues that “best efforts will never succeed in capturing in all its grandeur the richness of the original.” It follows that the issue of untranslatability, and mainly cultural untranslatability, deserves close attention, since it is what could drive translators to make major shifts and changes that hamper or lose the real source-text message.

Building on this, non-equivalence, or the issue of untranslatability, stands as one of the major dilemmas facing the translator of literary texts. Catford (1965) distinguishes between two types: linguistic, where no lexical or syntactical substitute exists in the target language for a source-language item due to language differences, and cultural, where the target-language culture lacks a relevant situational feature for the source text. Catford maintains that resolving such problems depends largely on the translator's creativity. Wilss (1982), by contrast, takes a more optimistic view, suggesting that “translatability of a text [is] guaranteed by the existence of universal categories in syntax, semantics and the (natural) logic of experience” (Wilss, 1982, pp. 49-50). More recent scholarship, however, emphasizes that addressing these elements requires active cultural mediation rather than simple linguistic substitution, positing that a translator's choices directly impact the reader's intercultural competence (Katan & Taibi, 2021). In short, dealing with the issues of equivalence and untranslatability demands experience and skill on the translator's part, and it is precisely at the point where that experience and skill fall short that cultural untranslatability threatens to compromise the message the target reader ultimately receives.

The cultural turn generated a wide array of strategies meant to help translators manage the culture-specific items (CSIs) embedded in literary texts. Davies (2003) proposed seven such procedures: preservation, addition, omission, globalization, localization, transformation, and creation. These procedures do not sit in a vacuum; they are generally understood as falling within Venuti's broader dichotomy of domestication and foreignization. Domestication, for Venuti, refers to the replacement of the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text with elements that are intelligible to the target language, an operation he describes as “an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values” (Venuti, 1995, p. 20). Venuti himself favors foreignization, arguing that translation's proper aim is to “bring back a cultural other as the same, the recognizable, even the familiar” (Venuti, 1995, p. 18) only at the cost of restraining what he terms the ethnocentric violence of translation.

These theoretical positions matter for intercultural understanding because they govern, quite directly, how much of the source culture actually survives the passage into the target language. Where domestication and its related procedures dominate a translator's choices, the specificities of the source community risk being smoothed away before they ever reach the target reader.

2.2. Literary Translation and Intercultural Communication: Any Drawbacks?

While literary translation is frequently positioned as a bridge for intercultural understanding, this assumption requires critical nuance. Literary translation is often said to function as a bridge for intercultural understanding, yet this assumption is rarely investigated deeply. Eirlys E. Davies (2012), in her article “Translation and Intercultural Communication: Bridges and Barriers,” is among the few translation researchers to acknowledge some drawbacks in this relationship, though only in a general way, and largely from the angle of the openness of readers to translated works and how some translations can exacerbate intercultural conflict regarding the content of the original text.

To begin with, Davies does not deny translation's essential role in bridging the gap between cultures, insisting that it can also serve as a way to combat negative stereotypes about other cultures, a point she strengthens with Clark's (2000) observation that “the translation of valued texts is one way of overcoming any perceived hostility” (as cited in Davies, 2012, p. 370). Even so, she reckons that “it is too naïve to assume that all translated books promote better understanding of the cultures from which they originate” (p. 370). This is because certain translated books are deliberately selected by Western publishers with the purpose of showing a negative image of others, thereby strengthening prejudice. In this respect, she cites the skeptical attitudes of Amireh (1996) and Faiq (2004) toward the West's enthusiasm for the translated novels of Nawal El Saadawi, who, according to Amireh, “is acclaimed not so much because she champions women's rights but because she tells Western readers what they want to hear” (p. 371).

Davies illustrates the point further with the example of the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), a project that provides free English translations of articles drawn from Middle Eastern media under the slogan “bridging the language gap between the Middle East and the West.” As she notes, “several authoritative critics have accused it of deliberately selecting articles which portray the Arabs in a negative light, presenting the opinions of extremist anti-Western fanatics as [if] they represented mainstream Arab thought” (Baker, 2006, 2007; El Oifi, 2005; Whitaker, 2002, as cited in Davies, 2012, p. 371), a case, in her words, “where translation is used for burning bridges rather than building them” (ibid.). From these examples she deduces that translated texts do not always promote better intercultural understanding, concluding that “what crosses the bridge via translation may not necessarily be something which helps one culture to understand another” (p. 372).

It is worth noting, however, that Davies does not place the blame on the translator, who is also an individual and a member of a culture, one who “may in effect open a few doors, shed light on dark corners, [and] make the Other's voice audible for those willing to listen to it” (Davies, 2012, p. 384), nor does she blame the strategies the translator adopts. What she blames instead is “many other factors which may be beyond their control, including the materials they are asked to translate and the way their work is received by its target

audience” (Davies, 2012, p. 384). In short, it is the content of the source text and the original author's intention that are held responsible, which means that achieving intercultural communication, for her, depends less on the translator's abilities and more on the willingness of the interlocutors to step outside their own frameworks, with the translator serving merely as the one who shows them the path.

Davies's account, useful as it is, leaves an important question unanswered: could the issues found within translation studies itself, together with the extremist strategies of dealing with cultural elements discussed earlier, also affect the linkage between literary translation and intercultural understanding, independently of the source text's content? It is this gap, together with the need to integrate current intercultural communication frameworks with translation theory, that motivates the present inquiry.

3. Method and tools

Understanding how translation specialists and interculturalists actually perceive the relationship under study requires more than reviewing what theory says; it requires asking the people who work with these concepts day to day. The present section outlines how that firsthand perspective was obtained, focusing on the qualitative phase of the study and the interview procedures that made it possible to hear directly from practitioners and researchers in both fields.

Semi-structured and structured interviews of representative participants are among the most common methods of data collection in qualitative research (Sandelowski, 2000). While researchers have primarily relied on face-to-face interviews, advances in technology now offer several alternatives, including telephone, videoconference, and e-mail interview methods (Oltmann, 2016; Redlich-Amirav and Higginbottom, 2014). Accordingly, in addition to semi-structured face-to-face interviews, this study also employed structured e-mail interviews to accommodate distance constraints, since the e-mail format “offers a convenient and practical alternative to overcome geographical barriers and financial concerns that hinder face-to-face interviews” (Walker, 2013). Open-ended questions in this instrument were based on the initial responses and included additional probing questions to elicit further detail.

Selecting appropriate participants is one of the more challenging tasks in qualitative research, and in this study that selection was purposeful: the participants addressed were those who could inform the research questions and enhance understanding of the phenomenon under study, namely specialists in translation studies and in intercultural communication. Since the study concerned both fields at once, two versions of the interview were conducted. The first was prepared for four translation specialists, including professional literary translators and university professors of translation theory. The second was prepared for four intercultural experts, including university professors, intercultural trainers, and intercultural researchers.

Table 1. *Interviews' information and backgrounds*

Interviewee	Specialty	Type of Interview	Duration
Interviewee 1	Professional Translator	Semi-structured face-to-face	35 minutes
Interviewee 2	Univ. Professor of Translation	Semi-structured face-to-face	62 minutes
Interviewee 3	Univ. Professor of Translation	Structured e-mail interview	--
Interviewee 4	Literary Translator and Novelist	Structured e-mail interview	--
Interviewee 5	Professor and Cross-cultural Expert	Structured e-mail interview	--
Interviewee 6	Intercultural Trainer and Researcher	Semi-structured face-to-face	15 minutes
Interviewee 7	Cross-cultural Facilitator	Semi-structured face-to-face	10 minutes
Interviewee 8	Intercultural Communication Prof.	Semi-structured face-to-face	12 minutes

To ensure the reliability of the data, a triangulated approach to data collection was applied so as to understand the phenomenon from a holistic point of view, with the instruments constructed around items drawn from the study's literature review and delimited by the three research questions. Specifically, we triangulated the perspectives of translation experts with those of interculturalists, as well as the data from face-to-face and e-mail modes. Divergent or dissenting views were retained analytically rather than forced into a single consensus. The precise open-ended questions used in both the semi-structured face-to-face and the structured e-mail interviews provided consistent information that served the reliability and dependability of the research, and the same open-ended questions used with the intercultural specialists revealed consistency in their responses. Reliability was further ensured by recording all face-to-face interviews, with the interviewees' permission, and transcribing them verbatim.

As for validity, defined as the degree to which an instrument measures what it is intended to measure, Burns (1999, p. 160) argues that "validity is an essential criterion for evaluating the quality and acceptability of research." To achieve content validity, all questions asked in the interviews were grounded in the literature reviewed earlier in the study. The informants were selected purposefully and were knowledgeable about the fields of translation and intercultural communication. In the semi-structured face-to-face interviews, interviewees were informed beforehand of the issue under investigation to delimit the conversation, with open-ended questions kept clear and straightforward; the structured e-mail interviews, in turn, opened with a general overview of the phenomenon under investigation and a statement of the research's scope and purpose. Additionally, to address researcher reflexivity, the authors critically monitored their own preconceptions regarding domestication and foreignization throughout the study. Above all, the triangulated approach to data collection and analysis enhanced the validity of the findings and minimized bias.

Regarding research ethics, an institutional ethics exemption was applied due to the low-risk nature of expert interviews. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. To ensure confidentiality and anonymization, all identifying details were removed, participants were coded as Interviewee 1 through 8, and data were securely stored.

The interview data were analyzed qualitatively through thematic analysis, defined as a process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data. As Namey et al. (2008, p. 138) explain, thematic analysis “moves beyond counting explicit words or phrases and focuses on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas,” with codes developed for these ideas then applied to the raw data as summary markers for later analysis. The data were analyzed in three steps: first, the recorded audio of the face-to-face interviews were transcribed verbatim and read alongside the structured e-mail interviews; second, the data were summarized and linked to the three research questions; and third, the responses were classified into themes guided by those questions. Researchers independently coded the transcripts, resolving any coding disagreements or theme refinements through consensus discussions, without the use of specialized software. The final themes set for this analysis were the general attitudes toward the relationship between literary translation and intercultural communication, the ways and extent to which literary translation could hamper intercultural communication, the ways of managing cultural difference in literary translation to ensure intercultural understanding, and, exclusively for the intercultural specialists' interviews, cultural knowledge and the curiosity to know others as a backbone of intercultural communication.

4. Results

4.1. Translation Specialists' Perspectives

The Kind of Relationship between Literary Translation and Intercultural Communication

Before turning to the ways in which literary translation can hamper intercultural understanding, it is worth noting briefly how the translation specialists framed the relationship itself, since the impediments they go on to describe are impediments within a link they otherwise consider strong.

Asked to characterize the relationship between literary translation and intercultural communication, the four translation specialists showed unanimous agreement that the link between the two is strong. Interviewee 1 described translation as “the link between cultures; it is the strongest link between two cultures,” adding that “communication between cultures wouldn't happen unless there is a translation in the middle,” since reading others' literature in one's own language is what allows a reader to know how other people think and behave. Interviewee 2 likewise called literary translation “a means of intercultural communication par excellence,” explaining that to translate literature is to transfer source-text specificities to the target audience, with the translator acting as “a cultural mediator [who] seeks the smooth flow of source-text messages to her/his target audience.” Interviewee 3 held that “the relationship is a crucial one: you can't have good translation without taking into consideration intercultural communication,” while Interviewee 4 described translation as building “the bridge for the readers to cross very easily as to know about others' cultures and even their literature.” Across all four accounts,

the literary translator emerges as central to this relationship, cast as a bridge-builder by Interviewees 1 and 4 and as an intercultural mediator by Interviewees 2 and 3.

When pressed further on whether literary translation always functions as a bridge and facilitator of intercultural communication, however, the same interviewees introduced significant qualifications. Interviewee 1, who initially confirmed that translation has always been a bridge for intercultural communication, revised his position by the end of the interview, stating that “it depends on the choice of the text we translate. If, for example, a novel is written by a supremacist or a racist writer in England or America, would translating that novel bring cultures together? Definitely not. So, it depends on the choice of the original text; the translator can bring cultures together or take them apart.” Interviewee 2 agreed that translation is a facilitator of intercultural communication but insisted that “communication through translation can be ideologically driven,” explaining that “it facilitates intercultural communication. Yet, it also FORCES changes.” Interviewee 3 conditioned her agreement on execution, arguing that “if done well, literary translation can always function as a bridge for intercultural communication,” since a good author “surely captures a vital essence of her or his own culture” in the work. However, this outcome remains contingent on the accuracy of the translation. Interviewee 4 likewise affirmed that literary translation “is a bridge by nature,” while stressing that “it’s about the translator who takes the responsibility to make the source text surviving in another culture,” a responsibility that requires the translator to be bicultural.

Taken together, these responses establish the relationship between literary translation and intercultural communication as strong in principle, yet consistently qualified in practice: each interviewee’s confidence in translation as a bridge is tied to a condition, the choice of source text, the translator’s fidelity, or the translator’s own cultural competence, that sets up the more detailed account of impediment discussed in the following section.

The Impediment of Intercultural Understanding through Literary Translation

Having established that the strength of this bridge is conditional, the interviewees were asked directly where and how it tends to give way. Interviewee 1 stated: “Look, nowadays there is something like what Newman calls it... service translation. Which is translating just to get money; to get the text done and get paid. It is called service translation. As I said, if the translator uses extensive deviations from the source text, this will dilute the original text. The translator should not be like he is writing his own novel and giving it a title; no, it has to be faithful where faithfulness is needed, and to make adaptation and localization where it is needed. But faithfulness should be the dominant part. Ok. And s/he should allow himself to make changes only to sensitive issues.”

Interviewee 2 offered a different account: “Anxiety/fear is an essential element in life, and it is always present in the process of translation. Translators choose their strategies depending on what they are afraid of. If they are afraid of source text (ST) ideas, they rely on domestication, a strategy that can also be followed when the translator is afraid of censorship. If he is afraid of doing harm to the ST meaning, he relies on total

foreignization. This is a truth, not an exaggeration. Nevertheless, interference in ST meaning cannot easily be avoided because neither cultural specificities nor political situations are totally identical; sometimes interference is forced by the spatiotemporal distance.”

Interviewee 3 was more concise: “The main impediment is an assumption that, to make a work of literature more 'mainstream,' it must be 'whitewashed' in ways that end up exoticizing the work and masking the original intent of the author.”

Interviewee 4, finally, stressed the sheer difficulty of the task: “Translating literature is a huge pain, a big challenge. Translating literature requires knowing its culture, history, the author, and the environment where it was written. Mastering language is not enough. [...] If you don't know about the source culture and target culture, then your communication will fail. That's why translating literature is very hard; you need a skillset in order to be a good translator.”

Taken individually, these four responses point to distinct mechanisms of impediment, which the following discussion draws out one by one. The interviewee (1) refers to service translation, where translators do their jobs to get paid. He believes that money and the market play a major role in the process of translation. The translator gets his/her work done and gets paid even at the expense of faithfulness. The latter, therefore, should be the dominant part of any translation, and changes should be made only to sensitive issues. The interviewee (2) acknowledges that anxiety and fear are inevitable in the translation process. Hence, the translator chooses to adopt the strategies that could reduce his/her fear. He asserts that the translator can adopt domestication if s/he is afraid of ST ideas and censorship, or adopt foreignization to do no harm to the ST. However, he asserts that the translator's intervention in the source text cannot be avoided. The interviewee (3) believes that the chief impediment to intercultural communication (ICC) is to 'whitewash' the source text, which leads to exoticizing the work and blurring the original author's intent. In other words, literary translation could be viewed as impeding intercultural communication when the source text message is distorted and deviated. Last but not least, the interviewee (4) stresses that translating literature is not an easy task. He believes that if the translator is not interculturally competent (being bi-cultural), intercultural communication through his/her translation will utterly fail.

These four accounts, service-driven translation, translator anxiety, market-driven whitewashing, and insufficient cultural competence, set the stage for a more specific impediment raised independently by the same interviewees: the problem of equivalence itself.

Equivalence, Untranslatability, and Their Effect on Intercultural Understanding

The issues of equivalence and cultural untranslatability were raised directly with the translation specialists, who largely agreed that these issues can turn literary translation into a barrier rather than a bridge when they are not managed well.

Interviewee 1 responded: “To some degree, yes. There might be things that can't be translated, like jokes, cultural words... especially in literature, it is not easy. Why? Because the original writer wants to flex his muscles – linguistic muscles- to show how strong he is in his language. That's why sometimes it is difficult to translate journal articles, because writers use language in a way to show off how strong they are. I saw many examples like this. And even experienced translators can get lost because of complex and long sentences - it's not easy. So, if something is untranslatable, I think it will affect intercultural communication. It will detract from the full message, and definitely the message won't be complete. Ok, that is one of the shortcomings of literary translation. There is always something that can be lost in translation.”

Interviewee 2 took a more qualified position: “I think the notion of untranslatability is getting old-fashioned because digital technology helps surpass this problem, yet untranslatability will never cease to exist if we speak about translation from a philosophical perspective.” Interviewee 3 was more severe: “In the hands of unskilled translators, this is almost always the case. The work in translation becomes obscure, a work of exoticization, not of expression or clarification.”

Interviewee 4 acknowledged the same barrier while pointing to a remedy: “Barriers are found anywhere, especially when we talk about ICC and literary translation (LT), equivalence and untranslatable items are dealt by the translator by negotiating and interpreting the meaning, by giving explanations in the footnotes. It is at least better for me to borrow them from the source text and explain them in footnotes.”

Read together, these four responses converge on a shared judgment. The interviewees agree that issues of equivalence and cultural untranslatability could lead literary translation to stand as a barrier to intercultural communication if they are not managed well. The interviewee (1) confirms that these issues are some of the shortcomings of literary translation, where something can always be lost. He believes that untranslatability affects intercultural communication because the message is not complete. Whereas the interviewee (2) views untranslatability as becoming old-fashioned with the help of digital technology. However, he agrees that untranslatability always exists in translation, at least from a philosophical perspective. The interviewee (3) agrees that these issues lead LT to stand as a barrier to ICC if the translator is not skillful enough. She believes that these could cause the text to be blurred and obscure if the translator does not provide clarifications. In the same vein, the interviewee (4) confirms that it is a fact that barriers exist between LT and ICC; however, those issues provide a chance for the translator to negotiate and interpret the meaning by giving explanations in the footnotes (or borrow the expressions and explain in the footnotes).

What emerges from these four responses, then, is a shared recognition that untranslatable and non-equivalent items are not neutral technical problems, and it is this same recognition that carries over into the interviewees' account of the specific strategies used to manage cultural difference in the text.

Domestication, Omission, Transformation, and Globalization: Depriving the Target Audience of the Source Culture

The most direct evidence for the claim that translation techniques can impede intercultural understanding comes from the interviewees' discussion of domestication, omission, transformation, and globalization, the very procedures Davies (2003) catalogued as ways of dealing with culture-specific items.

Interviewee 1 gave the most extended account: "It can also be called Naturalization or localization. Right, in literary translation there is an exception, I believe. Because it is not like other (types of) translations, which the accuracy of the source text is needed, you have to convey facts if you are translating the science books or religious texts. So, this needs the translator to stick to the original as much as possible. I call it defensive translation. In other words, you have to be able to defend your translation, you give all the facts included in the source text and stick to the original as close as possible. To be faithful. I think in literary translation, you can get away with being unfaithful. Without that, you won't be able to produce a readable and enjoyable text in the receiving culture. Not all of the source culture can be translated. There are sensitive issues that cannot be translated. Novelists in the West have the freedom to talk about sexual scenes and describe them, and sometimes they use vulgar language; the Arabic translators cannot translate that. They may hint or give something, but they cannot go into a full description of the source text and seem in the same way." He added: "There are different factors in literary translation. The translator is translating the novel to be sold in the local market. So, the Market of the novel is important. If he doesn't consider that, he will fail, and the literary text will not be published," and further: "It depends on the end use of the translation; who is going to use it. If it is for academic purposes then yes, you can translate everything as in the original. If not, I think the translator has a degree of freedom to be unfaithful to the original. Mainly, in certain parts that can be problematic to the local culture."

Interviewee 2 offered a more condensed formulation: "Cultures are resistant to translation, and at the same time they are in constant search of opening up to other cultures." Interviewee 3 declined to give a blanket verdict: "This is a very word-by-word, case-by-case issue. I have seen brilliance using domestication, omission, addition, and substitution strategies in a literary translation. And I have seen abominations using these same strategies."

Interviewee 4, finally, resisted the premise that these strategies are inherently harmful: "They are just strategies, not rules that should be abided by. In this global era, we need to go beyond domestication and foreignization, because they were a certain product of a historical era; they can be put within the postcolonial era as a kind of resistance. We have a lot of misunderstandings, be they political, religious, or cultural; we have this kind of confusion. So, we are in need of literary translation more than ever before to play the role of easing these kinds of misunderstandings. Adaptation and other techniques of translation are not used with an intention of resistance like Domestication and Foreignization do. They

are used to achieve communication; the translator uses them because s/he wants his text to be accessible and easy for the reader to understand.”

These four accounts, read together, reveal the extent to which translation procedures and strategies of domestication, omission, transformation, and globalization are perceived by the participants to deprive the target audience of accessing the source text culture.

The interviewee (1) opines that it is true that these strategies and techniques can reduce some cultural elements from the source text, and it is excusable, for him. Unlike other types of translation, he believes that there is an exception in literary translation, where the translator is allowed to be unfaithful and not to translate all the ST culture. He believes that there are sensitive issues that should not be translated. Without that, he argues, the translator will not be able to produce a readable and enjoyable text in the receiving culture. He also mentions that there are some different forces behind that, mainly the market. He believes that if the translator sticks to the source text and intends to translate everything, the product will not be sold and will not even be published. He again stresses the fact that the product depends on the purpose and the users, and he confirms that the translator has a degree of freedom to be unfaithful to the origin.

In addition to what he asserted earlier on domestication and foreignization, the interviewee (2) emphasizes that cultures are resistant to translated texts, and at the same time they are continuously open to other cultures. That is, he believes that the receiving cultures are resistant to the invasions of cultural specificities of the source text through translation, which does not mean they are closed to other cultures. On the other hand, the interviewee (3) stays in the middle by referring to the fact that she has seen good literary translation using those techniques and also has seen bad examples using the same strategies.

Last but not least, the interviewee (4) believes that one should go beyond domestication and foreignization, which are used as a way of resistance in the postcolonial era. His claim denotes that he agrees that these two strategies deprive the target audience of the ST cultures. He goes further, saying that as this global era witnesses a number of misunderstandings and confusion, literary translation is needed now more than ever, as he insists that those strategies and procedures are not norms or rules to abide by. In commenting on the other techniques of translation such as adaptation, he opposes the fact that they prevent the target text (TT) reader from knowing ST culture. On the contrary, he considers using them a way to make the text accessible and easy for the reader to understand, and therefore achieve communication.

Even where the interviewees diverge on how much blame the strategies themselves deserve – such as Interviewee 4’s explicit resistance to blanket claims about adaptation and his defense of its communicative value – the underlying pattern among the majority of respondents is consistent: domestication, omission, transformation, and globalization are largely identified as procedures capable of reducing or removing the cultural elements of the source text.

4.2. Intercultural Specialists' Perspectives

Cultural Knowledge as the Backbone of Intercultural Understanding

The intercultural specialists approached the question from the opposite direction, starting from what intercultural communication requires before asking what literary translation can or cannot supply.

Interviewee 5 explained: “Intercultural communication focuses on communicating and sharing information with people whose cultures are different from one's own. Thousands of languages and dialects are spoken by people all over the world, and language serves as an integral component of each culture. In addition to language, people exhibit certain attitudes, values, and beliefs inherent in their cultural upbringing and established norms. These behaviors are strongly influenced by history, geography, sociology, politics, religion, economics, literature, the arts, etc., and are then manifest in verbal and nonverbal communication practices.” She added: “Many times we do not take the time to reflect on our own culture and view it through the lens of other cultures. How others see us may be radically different from how we perceive ourselves. When looking inward, however, we must be careful to avoid perpetuating any ethnocentric tendencies and hegemonic notions. Instead, we must approach other cultures with a sense of wonder, openness, flexibility, and sincere interest, enabling us to embrace diversity and inclusion. Adopting these attitudes will ensure cultural understanding, leading to competence and contributing to harmony and success in our interconnected world.”

Interviewee 6 agreed: “Absolutely, cultural knowledge, awareness, and sensitivity are crucial in intercultural communication. Understanding that people have different norms, customs, and ways of life is required in intercultural communication. Thus, effective intercultural communication necessitates a willingness to know others' cultures and accept the differences and adapt to them.”

Interviewee 7 pointed to empathy as the central element: “I would like to refer to empathy as the main element in intercultural communication; because to achieve it, the eagerness of knowing others' styles of life is inevitable. (...) Yes, I can agree that if you lack cultural knowledge, you may fall into misunderstanding with the other party.”

Interviewee 8 summed up the same point: “True, knowing some cultural characteristics, values, and behaviors of people from other countries is central in intercultural communication. People should be more open and curious to know others' ways of life; I can go further to say that they need to invest in cultural learning.”

Read together, these four accounts show a general agreement on what intercultural communication requires before literary translation is even brought into the discussion. The interviewee (5) indicates that ICC focuses on sharing information with people from different cultural backgrounds. She insists on the fact that, from an intercultural lens, people should not use their own culture as the center and evaluate other cultures based on it. Instead, they must advance towards other cultures 'with a sense of wonder, openness, flexibility'. She believes that embracing these attitudes can lead to harmony and success in

our interconnected world. In the same vein, the interviewee (6) agrees on the fact that cultural knowledge and openness to knowing the cultural other are crucial in intercultural communication. He believes that knowing and accepting cultural differences are necessary for effective intercultural communication. The interviewee (7) focuses on empathy as the main element in ICC because achieving it requires cultural knowledge. He then agrees on the importance of knowing others' ways of life so as not to fall into misunderstanding. Similarly, the interviewee (8) agrees that it is of central importance to know others' cultural characteristics, values, and behaviors to be used in intercultural settings. He stresses the fact that people need to be curious and open to other cultures, and they need to invest in taking courses for cultural learning.

This shared starting point matters because it establishes the standard against which literary translation is judged in what follows: if cultural knowledge is the backbone of intercultural understanding, then any translation practice that withholds cultural knowledge from the target reader is perceived to work, by definition, against that understanding.

The Kind of Relationship between Literary Translation and Intercultural Communication

Much like their counterparts among the translation specialists, the intercultural specialists acknowledged a strong link between the two fields while resisting the idea that the link is automatic.

Interviewee 5 gave the most detailed account: “A mediator serves as a bridge or facilitator between the sender who encoded the message and the receiver (translator) who must decode the message, keeping the audience in mind. However, the addition of a mediator rather than just a translator does not necessarily guarantee that the translation is communicated as intended. Translation is indeed a form of intercultural communication. Therefore, the mediator must be well-versed in both languages and cultures in order to preserve the author's intended meaning. S/he must be cognizant of how the different languages are structured, the meaning of idioms, punctuation/writing styles, and most importantly references to culture in terms of history, religion, and customary practices. After conducting research on the culture, which will enable the mediator to better understand the culture, the mediator must determine how best to accurately represent the culture and how his/her representation will be received by the audience.”

Interviewee 6 stated: “Sometimes literary translation serves the purpose of intercultural communication; particularly when a translator makes the cultural load as well as communication styles of a certain nation, embedded in the text, accessible for a reader who's culturally different... literary translation can act as a source of cultural information for the target readers.”

Interviewee 7 offered a more guarded view: “Well, it is well known that translation in general is a form of intercultural communication, where translators always stand between the two or more cultures/nations. However, it does not mean that intercultural understanding relies completely on translation.”

Interviewee 8 held: “Translation serves as a means of communication between people from different cultural backgrounds. The translator plays a mediating role for both sides; that is, if done well, s/he transports norms, behaviors, and customs of society X to a society Y and hence empathy is achieved.”

These four accounts converge on a strong link between the two disciplines, while each interviewee, in a different way, makes that link conditional. The interviewees agree upon the fact that there is a strong link between the two disciplines. The interviewee (5) affirms that it is true that translation is a form of intercultural communication, but the translator, as a mediator, does not necessarily mean that his/her translation is communicated as intended. In other words, she believes that translation is just a form of intercultural communication but not always a vehicle for having an effective intercultural understanding. To succeed in that, the translator needs to conduct research on the cultures and determine how best to accurately represent them to the audience. Correspondingly, the interviewee (6) relates his view on the linkage between LT and ICC to the work of the translator who transports the cultural load and communication styles embedded in the source text to the target audience. Through this condition, he views literary translation as serving the purpose of intercultural communication, as it can function as a source of cultural knowledge for the target readers. Likewise, the interviewee (7) indicates that intercultural understanding does not always rely on translation despite the fact that translation is known as a form of intercultural communication. The interviewee (8) views literary translation as a means of communication between people from different cultural backgrounds. However, he believes that it also depends on how good and accurate the translation is.

The Impediment of Intercultural Communication through Literary Translation

The intercultural specialists' account of impediment is, in several respects, more explicit than that of the translation specialists, since it approaches translation from the outside, as a process that either succeeds or fails to deliver what intercultural communication requires.

Interviewee 5 gave the most extended response: “In today's digitally empowered world, software programs can efficiently translate one language into another. However, translation, as already mentioned, is not an exact science, as it simply converts words in one language into another. This process neglects examination and consideration of cultural nuances and linguistics. This literal translation process enabled by machines is not mediated but rather automatic. Therefore, the human element, which is so essential to cultural understanding and empathy, is ignored.” She added: “Although translation strategies have existed throughout time and are still used today, all ideas and words cannot be translated precisely, with the intended meaning exactly captured. Words or underlying beliefs stated in a work may have no equivalent meaning in another language or culture,” and continued: “Sometimes the strategies of adaptation, compression, elimination, and borrowing from yet a third language may distort the original meaning of the author. If these strategies are used exclusively without applying a cultural perspective, the result will be the creation of an entirely new work rewritten by the translator. In this example, the

translator is viewing the work through his/her own cultural lens whereby eliminating the rich nuances of culture that are embodied in the original work. When this occurs, intercultural communication has indeed failed.”

Interviewee 6 stated: “As I said, translation does not always serve the general aim of intercultural communication, which is increasing understanding across cultures. Not all translations can do that. Translators make use of different procedures in dealing with the message of the source text to provide an aesthetic experience to the reader; and that can cause some loss of information, mainly cultural. Hence, the translator is no longer sharing cultural specificities of the source text. In this way, intercultural understanding through translation fails.”

Interviewee 7 said: “Good point, this is what I meant when I said intercultural understanding does not rely completely on translation. Translators have the power to bring the cultures together and also to take them apart. If they stay faithful to the original text, they can allow the target reader to penetrate the ST culture(s) and empathize with its audience and thus promote intercultural understanding. If the reverse, they will impede it.”

Interviewee 8 offered: “Some translators intend to omit or change culturally incongruous elements so that the text can become comprehensible, and that is permissible when it comes to tiny cultural distinctions. Yet, if the cultural distinctions are very big, then the translator should find a way to convey them. If not, s/he can end up stripping readers of their rights of acquainting with others' culture(s).”

These four accounts, read together, spell out in some detail what makes intercultural communication fail through literary translation. The interviewee (5) acknowledges that despite the ability of software programs to translate from one language to another, the human element in the process of translation is fundamental. She explains that the software programs cannot examine and consider the cultural nuances of the source text, and hence cultural understanding and empathy are impossible to reach. She adds that the translator who adopts the strategies of adaptation, compression, elimination, and borrowing from a third language without applying a cultural perspective may distort the original meaning of the author and lead to the creation of entirely new work. She confirms that when that occurs, the failure of intercultural communication is inevitable. Equally, the interviewee (6) opines that the adoption of some translation procedures in translation to give an aesthetic experience to the reader can lead to the loss of the source text's cultural specificities and hence decreases understanding across cultures. The interviewee (7) reiterates that promoting or hampering intercultural understanding through literary translation depends on the translator, who has the power to bring cultures closer or take them apart. He elaborates on his response, arguing that if the translator manages to be faithful to the source text, the target reader will be able to penetrate the source culture and empathize with its audience. The interviewee (8) believes that it is excusable for literary translators to delete or change cultural elements regarding small distinctions between the source text and the target, for there is no absolute equivalence. However, when it comes to big cultural differences, the translator must look for a way to convey them accurately, lest

not depriving the target reader of knowing and becoming acquainted with people who belong to the source text.

Read together, these four accounts converge on a single claim, expressed in slightly different vocabulary by each interviewee: translation strategies pursued for the sake of readability, aesthetic effect, or convenience, when not accompanied by a cultural perspective, are perceived to remove precisely the cultural material that intercultural communication depends on, and in doing so they potentially impede rather than promote intercultural understanding.

Managing Cultural Difference to Ensure Intercultural Understanding

Having identified the ways literary translation can hamper intercultural communication, both groups of interviewees were also asked how cultural differences might be managed to avoid that outcome. Among the translation specialists, Interviewee 1 offered three recommendations: “I think the translator himself must be unbiased to deliver the message of the original text. Unbiased, I mean, if the translator has his own political, religious, or whatever cultural or social views should let the message flow as in the original text without making gains out of it. Ok, for example, if George Orwell's novel 1984 is translated by a socialist wouldn't be the same as the capitalist. So, it is hard for textual translators to think and bring the translation into their lines of thinking about the life or society of the source text. so, I think there is always a group of words dropped; that's why I say a novel must be translated by a novelist and a poem must be translated by a poet. That's it. Don't give a literary text to a general translator to translate.” He added: “I believe translation must be institutionalized, and there should be some norms to abide by. So that our next generations will have access to literature, scientific, and academic works from other cultures.”

Interviewee 3 proposed a specific working method: “My method to manage cultural differences, to ensure intercultural understanding, is for all translation to be done by a pair of co-translators, one from the source language, one from the target language. Both need to have a good knowledge of each other's culture, language, and literary traditions, and both must have equal power and mutual respect in the working relationship. Each item in the translation, and especially items which are laden with potential cultural misunderstanding, should be negotiated between the two translators.” She added: “The success of any literary translation is related foremost to the knowledge the two co-translators have of each other's language and culture and their skill in the field of wordsmithing itself. They both must also have the utmost respect for the author's intentions and seek to carry over those intentions from one language into the other.”

Interviewee 4 emphasized cultural awareness: “One of the challenges in literary translation is how to manage the cultural differences. I think the translator needs to know the differences and similarities existing in the two cultures. And s/he needs to take into consideration that some cultural issues may be offensive to other cultures. To achieve intercultural understanding, s/he needs to avoid offensive words, which can make the

target audience hate the text and the source audience. s/he needs to know what is appealing to his/her audience. That does not mean s/he is going to distort the text. It means transporting the items that can be offensive to the target audience in a smooth way; the translation should be very witty, not wordy.”

Among the intercultural specialists, Interviewee 5 called for broader translator training: “Although acclaimed masters of language, translators must be skilled in additional disciplines to accurately perform their responsibilities in authentication of work. Besides demonstrating familiarity and possessing deep cultural knowledge, translators must be mindful of contingent elements integral to their work. For example, the historical period in which the work takes place; the economic, geopolitical, religious, sociological environment; and any other global trends that may have influenced the work. Translation accompanied by this inclusive knowledge enables the translator to put the work in perspective and more accurately depict the writer's intention.”

Interviewee 6 stressed fidelity and consultation: “A successful translator must bear in mind that s/he is not an author but only a message conveyor. S/he should act as an active link in the communication process; if he cannot manage cultural differences and flaws in the original text, he should contact the original author or at least those who belong to the source text, or anyone familiar with the contents of the text. Thus, the translator can make people come closer and live in harmony.”

Interviewee 7 pointed to empathy and respect for authorial intention: “Ensuring intercultural understanding is determined by the degree of placing the (Target) reader into the cultural background of the original. This requires a proficient translator who respects the author's intention as well as the text's properties.”

Interviewee 8 called for training reform: “One of the ways should be developing intercultural competencies of translators by integrating them into the curriculum and their training. As they can demonstrate a high level of intercultural knowledge, skills, openness, and flexibility to detect the cultural differences and similarities during their process of translating.”

What these recommendations share, across both groups, is an implicit acknowledgment that the impediments described earlier are not inevitable and can, in principle, be managed. The interviewee (1) provides three main ways: the translator should not be biased, letting the message flow as in the original without personal gain; not all translators can translate literature, meaning a novel must be translated by a novelist and a poem by a poet; and translation should be institutionalized through norms and rules that respect the source text's properties. The interviewee (3) recommends that all translation be done by a pair of co-translators, one belonging to the source language and one to the target language, both with equal power and mutual respect, negotiating any item loaded with potential misunderstanding. The interviewee (4) acknowledges that managing cultural differences is one of the most challenging tasks of the translator, and stresses that the translator should primarily be aware of the differences and similarities between the two cultural systems,

avoiding offensive words and concepts and knowing what is appealing to the target audience.

The interviewee (5) proposes that besides language mastery, translators are obliged to be skilled in additional disciplines to gain deep cultural knowledge, familiarizing themselves with the historical and social conditions surrounding the production of the original work. The interviewee (6) stresses that translators must bear in mind that they are conveying someone else's message, not producing their own literary work, and should consult the original author or someone familiar with the source text when cultural differences prove difficult to detect. The interviewee (7) proposes that the translator must keep empathy in mind throughout the process of translation, respecting the author's intention and the text's properties. The interviewee (8) recommends integrating intercultural competence courses into the curriculum and training of translators. But the very need for such careful management, articulated independently by translation specialists and interculturalists alike as participant proposals rather than established prescriptions, is itself evidence that literary translation is not perceived to by default protect the target audience's access to the source culture.

5. Discussion

Read together, these accounts converge on a single claim, expressed in slightly different vocabulary by each interviewee: translation strategies pursued for the sake of readability, aesthetic effect, or convenience, when not accompanied by a genuine cultural perspective, are perceived to remove precisely the cultural material that intercultural communication depends on. It is this claim that the discussion now takes up directly, against the theoretical framework outlined earlier.

The interviewees, from the perspective of intercultural communication, confirm the importance of openness and curiosity in knowing the cultural other in intercultural communication. These inclusive elements are viewed by the interviewees (from the intercultural lens) as a way to achieve empathy with others and hence ensure an effective intercultural understanding. On the other hand, the author in some types of his/her literary works usually reflects the vital essence of his/her own culture (see Interviewee 3) as well as the culture of his/her society. Therefore, the translated literary text can be considered a good source of cultural information/knowledge for the target reader (see Interviewee 6).

There is a unanimous agreement among all participants on the relationship between intercultural communication and literary translation. Participants believe that literary translation is (or should be) a bridge for intercultural communication. However, they opine that not all that crosses the bridge can promote intercultural understanding. In other words, they believe that the literary translator is the one who is responsible for the failure or success of intercultural understanding through the way s/he deals with the cultural references embedded in the text. Except for the interviewees (1) and (2), who believe that promoting intercultural communication depends on the choice of the original text and the thoughts it tries to share. This brings to mind what E. Davies thinks about the relationship,

which was discussed in the theoretical framework. Nevertheless, [...] all remaining interviewees (including the intercultural specialists) realize that the promotion of intercultural understanding through literary translation necessitates conveying the source text's culture accurately and giving a chance to the target reader to discover it and therefore empathize with its audience.

In accordance with that, the investigation shows that not only the choice of source text and the intention of the original author, but also some of the translation procedures (mainly E. Davies's omission, localization, transformation, and globalization), along with Venuti's Domestication strategy, are perceived as factors that could lead literary translation to impede intercultural understanding in terms of depriving the target audience of access to the source text's culture. The literary translator who adopts these strategies, as the results show, is perceived to omit, change, and substitute some of the source text's cultural words or phrases to produce a smooth and beautiful text, whereas some of the interviewees believe that the market and publishers are the main factors behind their intentions. [...] They believe that applying those strategies can stand as an obstacle to the readers of the target text (TT) to grasp new notions and facts embodied in the original text, and therefore narrowing their cultural prospects and divesting them of realizing that people of other nations may have different thoughts, customs, symbols, and beliefs. In short, the analyzed data suggests that, from these experts' perspectives, achieving intercultural understanding necessitates a spirit of faithfulness and responsibility on the part of the translator to convey the source text properties and authors' intention.

Read against the theoretical framework outlined earlier, this finding corroborates Davies's (2012) observation that not all that crosses the bridge of translation facilitates intercultural understanding, while pointing to a further source of impediment that Davies's account does not fully capture.

According to E. Davies, the content of the source text and the intention of the author can “fan the flames of intercultural conflict and strengthen stereotypes.” In this way, literary translation can stand as a barrier to intercultural communication. A small part of the findings of this investigation, therefore, corroborates Davies's view, revealing that the authors encourage some stereotypes, promote hatred, and instill their ideologies in their literary texts. When those texts are translated, the translator, with intention or without, impedes intercultural communication. However, a large part of the findings goes further and implicates the strategies and issues embedded in the field of translation studies in the potential impediment of intercultural understanding.

Considering cultural knowledge as a basis for intercultural understanding, the findings demonstrate expert concerns that some issues in translation studies, as well as some strategies adopted by translators in their process, can deprive the target text audience of getting access to the culture of the source text community. As mentioned in the theoretical framework, the issues of equivalence and cultural untranslatability, as well as the dilemma of translating culture-specific items (CSIs), are what make the translation a very challenging task, that demands experience and skills on the translators' part.

Moreover, through the examination of Davies's seven procedures of dealing with CSIs (i.e., preservation, addition, omission, globalization, localization, transformation, and creation), the findings reveal perceptions that adopting omission, globalization, localization, and transformation strategies has the potential to hamper intercultural communication in terms of stripping the target language (TL) community of their right to discover the culture of the source language (SL) community. Similarly, the domestication strategy, which can function as an umbrella term for the mentioned procedures, is also viewed as a factor that can drive literary translation to stand as a barrier to intercultural communication.

Omission strategy, according to Davies (2003, pp. 69-70), is used by translators for three reasons: when the translator finds no equivalent way for conveying the original meaning; when an added effort is needed for providing the meaning through paraphrasing; or when equivalent terms are unacceptable on behalf of either the translator or the target audience (Davies, 2003, p. 80). The findings show concerns that using it potentially eradicates the cultural aspects as if they are nonexistent. Although E. Davies has acknowledged this strategy's negative effect on the process of translation, saying that "there is certainly some loss of meaning arising from the omission of the signals of copiousness and luxury" (p. 81), it is still included as a way to deal with CSIs. This way, as the results revealed, the target reader could lack information and knowledge on the way the SL community behaves and lives.

Globalization strategy, on the other hand, is also viewed as another way that contributes to the impediment of intercultural understanding through literary translation. E. Davies (2003) defines it as "the process of replacing culture-specific references with ones that are more neutral or general" (p. 83). This replacement, however, was revealed in the findings to be perceived as a mechanism that reduces and hides the cultural idiosyncrasies of the source text (ST). The same is the case with the strategy of transformation (or substitution), which refers to "cases where the modification of CSIs seems to go beyond globalization or localization, and could be seen as an alteration or distortion of the original" (p. 84).

Correspondingly, as the conveyance of cultural heavy load from the ST to the TT is very crucial in the linkage between literary translation and intercultural communication, the localization (or adaptation) strategy is also demonstrated as it affects this relationship. This strategy is used to make the translated text as if it originated in the culture of the target language, replacing SL cultural references with TL cultural references. The findings, hence, show participant concerns that intercultural communication might fail because cultural items of the source culture are lost, so the source culture cannot be represented accurately. With the loss of initial meanings, the source culture won't find carriers of its meaning; then intercultural communication could be perceived as doomed to failure.

On the same line, Venuti's Domestication can function as an umbrella term for the aforementioned procedures, for it refers to the replacement of the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text with others that are intelligible to the TL. Venuti considers it as "an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values"

(Venuti, 1995, p. 20). The findings reveal perceptions that this kind of translation keeps the target reader away from the cultural specificities of the source language, thus depriving the TL community of knowing and discovering the culture of the SL community. Venuti supports foreignization over domestication because he believes that the very purpose of translation is essentially “to bring back a cultural other as the same, the recognizable, even the familiar” (p. 18). Foreignization is “highly desirable” for him because it restrains “the ethnocentric violence of translation.” The findings, therefore, show participant perceptions that these ethnocentric attitudes, through adopting this strategy, potentially lead literary translation to stand as a barrier to intercultural communication rather than a bridge.

In short, in addition to the choice of the source text and its author's intentions, the findings reveal that some translation strategies can lead literary translation to stand against the promotion of intercultural communication. Venuti's Domestication, along with Davies's Omission, Localization, Transformation, and Globalization strategies of dealing with culture-specific items, are found in this study as participant-identified factors that may impede intercultural understanding, because they potentially prevent the TL community from discovering and knowing about the culture of the SL community.

6. Conclusion

The findings discussed above, taken together, bring the study back to the three questions that motivated it from the start. This study aimed at investigating the relationship between literary translation and intercultural communication, and in particular sought to answer three main research questions: does literary translation always function as a bridge and facilitator for intercultural understanding; in what ways and to what extent could literary translators impede intercultural communication; and how should literary translators manage cultural differences to ensure intercultural understanding. [...]

Addressing the first question, a preliminary finding from this study was that cultural knowledge and curiosity to know the cultural other is essential in intercultural communication, as it could be the basis of intercultural understanding. Through this, it was found that sometimes the target reader of the translated literary texts can be deprived of getting access to the culture of the source text, and therefore s/he could not be able to know the SL community's culture. Hence, it was deduced that, from the experts' perspectives, literary translation sometimes can widen the gap and stand as an obstacle to achieving successful intercultural communication between the SL community and TL community. Stating the obvious, the perceived reality is that literary translation does not always stand as a bridge and facilitator for intercultural understanding.

Regarding the second question, it was deduced that the domestication strategy and some procedures of translating CSIs falling within it, such as Davies' omission, localization, transformation, and globalization, are perceived to contribute to the potential impediment of intercultural understanding through literary translation. Adopting these strategies, at least from an intercultural perspective, could strip the TL community of their rights to discover and learn about the culture of the SL community that is normally embedded in the

original text. The findings from a translation specialist's perspective also supported the view that intercultural communication can be hampered through literary translation due to the choice of the source text and its author, who might be biased and thus encourages stereotypes, promotes hatred, and strengthens prejudices in his/her text. By and large, the issues of equivalence and untranslatability, as well as the strategies of dealing with CSIs that fall within the Domestication umbrella, are not innocent regarding the impediment of intercultural communication through literary translation. Even so, the findings do not leave the impediment unanswered; the same interviewees who identified it also pointed toward ways of managing it.

Finally, addressing the third question by putting cultural knowledge as a common ground in the linkage between intercultural communication and literary translation, the findings delimit the management of cultural differences in the process of translating literary texts into the frame of preservation of the foreign cultural identity of the source text as a way to ensure intercultural understanding, that is, adopting strategies that fall within the Foreignization umbrella which tend to maintain the foreignness of the text. This also brought to mind Nida's "gloss translation," which is "designed to permit the target text reader to identify himself as fully as possible with a person in the source language context, and to understand as much as he can of the customs, manner of thought, and means of single terms or expressions" (Nida, 1964, p. 159).

The findings also show that the translator, as an intercultural mediator, needs to fill the distance between the SL and TL communities by making use of paratexts, such as footnotes, as a way to explain cultural nuances inherent in the text. Yet it was deduced that before moving to adequate strategies, the translator needs to be interculturally competent and not biased, meaning there should be an integration of intercultural courses and training for translators as a way to develop intercultural competencies. Additionally, the findings proposed that all translation should be done by a pair of co-translators, one from the SL community and the other from the TL community, as a way to identify the similarities and differences that could exist between ST culture and TT culture, allowing the target audience to grasp unseen cultural elements of the source text. The other proposed way has to do with the fidelity and faithfulness of the translator toward the management of cultural differences, proposing that translation should be institutionalized and controlled by setting norms and guidelines to abide by as a way to guarantee faithfulness. These proposed remedies do not undo the central finding, however; they only confirm how much work is required to prevent it. Furthermore, it must be noted that recommendations such as mandatory co-translation and institutional control over translation norms represent the specific proposals of the participants rather than established, universal prescriptions for the field.

It is also important to acknowledge the limitations of this exploratory study. The findings are based on a small, purposive sample of experts ($n = 8$) with heterogeneous profiles, and the data were collected using mixed interview modes (face-to-face and e-mail), which yielded unequal depths of response. Furthermore, the study documents expert

perceptions rather than direct empirical observations; it does not test whether target readers actually lose cultural knowledge through textual or corpus evidence. Consequently, the transferability of these findings is limited. Future research should address these gaps by conducting comparative reader-response studies, larger-scale empirical translation analyses, and corpus-based investigations to directly measure the effects of specific translation strategies on target-reader comprehension.

In short, this study demonstrates that the assumption about the fact that literary translation always bridges the gaps between cultures and facilitates intercultural communication should be revisited. The potential impediment to intercultural understanding through literary translation is not only related to the content of the source texts and the intentions of their authors, but also to the issues and strategies that are found in translation studies.

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Ethical approval

This study involved qualitative interviews with eight specialists in translation studies and intercultural communication. Given the low-risk nature of the research, an institutional ethics exemption was applied, as indicated in the study's methodology. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection, and permission was secured for recording the face-to-face interviews. Participants' identities were protected through anonymization, with individual responses identified by numerical codes rather than personal names. All collected information was handled confidentially and securely stored in accordance with established ethical principles for qualitative research.

Author contributions

Mohammed EL HADDOUCHI: Conceptualization, research design, methodology, investigation, data collection, qualitative analysis, and writing of the original manuscript.

Taoufiq MHAMDI: Development of the theoretical framework, literature review, thematic analysis, interpretation of findings, and critical revision of the manuscript.

Jaouad MOUMNI: Research supervision, methodological guidance, validation of the analytical framework, interpretation of results, and critical review and editing of the manuscript.

All authors contributed to the intellectual development of the study, reviewed the manuscript, and approved its final version for publication.

Disclosure statement

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Data Availability Statement

The qualitative data supporting the findings of this study were collected through semi-structured face-to-face interviews and structured e-mail interviews with eight specialists in translation studies and intercultural communication. Relevant anonymized excerpts from the interviews are presented and discussed within the article. The complete interview transcripts and original responses are not publicly available in order to protect participants' confidentiality and preserve the ethical commitments established during data collection.

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