

## نظرية استجابة القارئ وتحويل المعنى في ترجمة النصوص الأدبية العربية Reader-Response Theory and Meaning Transformation in the Translation of Arabic Literary Texts

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### ملخص الدراسة:

تتناول هذه الدراسة تحول المعنى في النصوص الأدبية العربية المترجمة من منظور نظرية استجابة القارئ. وتجادل بأن المعنى الأدبي ليس ثابتاً في النص نفسه، بل يُبنى ديناميكياً من خلال التفاعل بين القارئ والنص والمترجم. وبالاستناد إلى نظريات فولفغانغ إيزر، ولويس روزنبلات، وستانلي فيش، وهانز روبرت جاوس، تستكشف هذه الورقة البحثية كيف تُعيد الترجمة تشكيل التأويل الأدبي عبر نقل النصوص إلى سياقات لغوية وثقافية جديدة. وتتبنى الدراسة منهجاً نوعياً مقارناً لتحليل اقتباسات مختارة من أعمال نجيب محفوظ، وذكريا تامر، وحنان الشيخ، إلى جانب ترجماتها الإنجليزية. وتُظهر النتائج أن الترجمة ليست مجرد نقل لغوي، بل هي عملية تأويلية وإبداعية تُنتج إمكانيات جديدة للمعنى. وتؤثر المراجع الثقافية، والظلال الأسلوبية، والاختيارات المعجمية تأثيراً كبيراً على استجابات القراء في اللغة الهدف. تساهم هذه الدراسة في الحوار المتنامي بين دراسات الترجمة والنظرية الأدبية من خلال التأكيد على دور القراء والمترجمين في تشكيل التفسير الأدبي عبر الثقافات.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** نظرية استجابة القارئ، دراسات الترجمة، الأدب العربي، التأويل الأدبي، تحويل المعنى، استقبال القارئ.

## Abstract

This study examines the transformation of meaning in translated Arabic literary texts through the perspective of reader-response theory. It argues that literary meaning is not fixed within the text itself but is dynamically constructed through the interaction between the reader, the text, and the translator. Drawing upon the theories of Wolfgang Iser, Louise Rosenblatt, Stanley Fish, and Hans Robert Jauss, the paper explores how translation reshapes literary interpretation by relocating texts into new linguistic and cultural contexts. The study adopts a qualitative comparative approach to analyze selected quotes from the works of Naguib Mahfouz, Zakaria Tamer, and Hanan al-Shaykh alongside their English translations. The findings demonstrate that translation is not merely a linguistic transfer but an interpretive and creative process that produces new possibilities of meaning. Cultural references, stylistic shades, and lexical choices significantly influence readers' responses in the target language. The study contributes to the growing dialogue between translation studies and literary theory by emphasizing the role of readers and translators in shaping literary interpretation across cultures.

**Keywords:** Reader-Response Theory; Translation Studies; Arabic Literature; Literary Interpretation; Meaning Transformation; Reader Reception.

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## 1. Introduction

Reader-response theory emerged in the second half of the twentieth century as a reaction against formalist and text-centered approaches to literary criticism. Earlier critical schools, particularly New Criticism, viewed literary meaning as inherent within the text and accessible through objective textual analysis. In contrast, reader-response theorists argue that meaning is not fixed but is produced through the interaction between readers and literary texts. (Iser, 1978, pp. 20–21).

The theory emphasizes the active role of readers in constructing interpretation. Readers approach texts with different cultural backgrounds, experiences, emotions, and expectations, which inevitably shape the meanings they derive from literary works (Venuti, 1995, pp. 17–19). Consequently, a single text may generate multiple interpretations depending on the reader's social and historical context.

Major theorists of reader-response criticism include Wolfgang Iser, Louise Rosenblatt, Stanley Fish, and Hans Robert Jauss. Iser introduced the concept of the "implied reader" and argued that literary texts contain gaps that readers must actively complete through imagination and interpretation. Rosenblatt's transactional theory stresses the reciprocal relationship between reader and text, while Fish highlights the role of interpretive communities in shaping meaning. Jauss, through reception theory, emphasizes the historical nature of reading and interpretation.

The relevance of reader-response theory becomes more complex in the context of translation. Literary translation is not simply a linguistic substitution between languages; it is an interpretive act shaped by cultural, ideological, and stylistic choices. When Arabic literary texts are translated

into English, meanings may shift because cultural references, symbols, and emotional associations are understood differently by target-language readers.

This study investigates the relationship between reader-response theory and translation studies through an examination of selected Arabic literary texts and their English translations. It argues that translation expands interpretive possibilities rather than reproducing a single fixed meaning. By analyzing the works of Naguib Mahfouz, Zakaria Tamer, and Hanan al-Shaykh, the study demonstrates how translation transforms literary meaning and reshapes reader reception across cultures.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Reader-Response Theory**

Reader-response theory developed during the mid-twentieth century as a challenge to approaches that privileged either the author or the text as the sole source of literary meaning. The theory shifted critical attention toward the reader and the process of interpretation.

Wolfgang Iser argues that literary texts contain indeterminate elements or “gaps” that require readers to participate actively in the construction of meaning. According to Iser, meaning emerges through the interaction between textual structures and reader imagination. Reading therefore becomes a dynamic process of anticipation, interpretation, and revision. (Iser, 1978, pp. 34–38).

Louise Rosenblatt’s transactional theory similarly emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between reader and text. Rosenblatt distinguishes between efferent reading, which focuses on extracting information, and aesthetic reading, which involves emotional and imaginative engagement with the literary work. In both modes, meaning is produced through the reader’s interaction with the text. (Rosenblatt, 1978, pp. 24–27).

Stanley Fish further develops reader-response theory through the concept of interpretive communities. Fish argues that interpretation is shaped by socially shared assumptions and reading strategies. Readers belonging to different cultural or ideological communities may therefore produce different meanings from the same text. (Fish, 1980, pp. 13–16).

Hans Robert Jauss contributes to reception theory through the notion of the “horizon of expectations.” Readers approach literary works with cultural assumptions and historical expectations that influence interpretation. Since these expectations change over time, literary meanings also evolve historically. (Jauss, 1982, pp. 22–25).

Collectively, these theorists reject the idea of stable textual meaning and emphasize the fluid and contextual nature of interpretation.

## **2.2 Translation Studies**

Translation studies have evolved from traditional concerns with fidelity and equivalence toward broader cultural and interpretive approaches. Early translation theories focused primarily on preserving the meaning and form of the original text. However, later scholars questioned the possibility of complete equivalence between languages and cultures.

Eugene Nida introduced the distinction between formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence. Formal equivalence seeks to preserve the linguistic structure of the source text, whereas dynamic equivalence prioritizes the effect of the translation on target-language readers. Nida's emphasis on reader reception establishes an important connection between translation studies and reader-response theory. (Nida, 1964, pp. 159–171)

Lawrence Venuti criticizes the invisibility of translators within Anglo-American translation traditions. He argues that translation inevitably involves ideological and cultural choices that shape how readers perceive foreign texts. Venuti's concepts of domestication and foreignization demonstrate how translators influence literary interpretation through stylistic and cultural decisions. (Venuti, 1995, pp. 20–42).

Hans J. Vermeer's Skopos theory emphasizes the purpose of translation within the target culture. According to Vermeer, translation strategies should be determined by the intended function of the translated text rather than strict linguistic equivalence.

These developments reveal that translation is not a neutral transfer of meaning, but an interpretive process shaped by linguistic, cultural, and ideological considerations. (Vermeer, 1989, pp. 173–177).

## **2.3 Reader-Response Theory and Translation**

Although reader-response theory and translation studies have developed independently, both fields share an interest in the instability of meaning. Reader-response criticism emphasizes the reader's role in interpretation, while translation studies recognize the translator's role in reshaping literary texts across cultures.

Translation introduces literary works into new linguistic and cultural environments where readers possess different historical experiences, expectations, and interpretive frameworks. As a result,

translated texts may generate meanings that differ significantly from those available to readers of the source text.

Despite this theoretical overlap, relatively little research has examined the relationship between reader-response theory and the translation of Arabic literature. This study seeks to address this gap by exploring how translation transforms literary meaning and reader reception.

It is essential to highlight that literary translation aims to convey all literary forms, including poetry, novels, short stories, and plays, from one language to another. The challenge of literary translation stems from the translator's engagement with a creative material, which inherently possesses artistic elements, occasionally manifesting in symbolism. Metaphor and ambiguity, together with stylistic rhythm, influence the complexity of translating between languages, and this rhythm undoubtedly varies across different languages.

In literary translation, it is delineated over multiple levels and requires consistency, while being hindered by various difficulties and challenges, primarily include the cultural axis, the linguistic axis, and the structural level of the text to be translated. These levels are closely interconnected and cannot be dissociated. The translation procedure results in merely the translation of a broad text.

This specific arrangement must be accompanied by the translator's expertise and familiarity with the principal theories of translation, as well as the most significant remedies proposed by scholars to mitigate the challenges encountered by translators.

Consequently, the translator is a crucial element in the success or failure of the translation process. The literary translator conveys not merely information, but poetic and creative elements, necessitating creativity to maintain the aesthetic value in the target language. Furthermore, one cannot discuss a specific translation without referencing and comparing it to the original text.

Jackson (2003) asserts that the primary issue in literary translation lies in its capacity to deliver an accurate understanding of the intended meaning and its resultant impact. The literary translator consistently seeks solutions that align with the challenges of sound, tone, mood, object, or effect. Discussing the challenges of literary translation inherently involves addressing the issues related to the technical and aesthetic aspects of the original text. This is corroborated by Landers (2001), who asserts that the primary obstacle for the literary translator lies in their capacity to generate a new text that encapsulates the aesthetic elements, rendering it timeless, a pursuit that often remains elusive.

### 3. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative and interpretive methodology based on close textual analysis. It combines concepts from reader-response theory and translation studies to examine how meaning changes through translation.

There are three major schools of creative theorists understand the theory of equivalence, in addition there are the specialists in translation who advocate a linguistic approach to translation but ignore the fact that translation is more than linguistics. The second set of theorists considers translation equivalence as message transfer from the Source Culture SC to the Target Culture TC using a pragmatic, semantic or functional approach. Baker, argue that equivalence is used 'for the sake of convenience – because most translators are habituated to it rather than because it has any theoretical status' (Kenny 1998: 77). Equivalence-oriented translation 'reproduces the same situation as the original but in a completely different wording' (Vinay and Darbelnet 1995: 342). They also say that this technique in translation retains the stylistic influence of the (Source Language) SL text in the (Target Language) TL text. They argue that equivalency is the most successful way of translating proverbs, idioms, clichés, nominal or adjectival phrases and physical sound onomatopoeia. The study of equivalency by Roman Jakobson is a contribution to the translation theory through the concept of 'equivalence in difference'. In accordance with his semiotic approach to language, and the maxim 'there is no signatum without signum' (1959: 232) he recommends three kinds of translation: intralingual (rewording or paraphrasing), interlingual, and intersemiotic. Jakobson states that interlingual translators employ synonyms to convey the ST. So code units are not totally equivalent in interlingual translations. His view is that 'translation is two equivalent signals in two distinct codes' (1959: 233). In the case of insufficient terminology it might be qualified and supplemented by means of loanwords or loan-translations, neologisms or semantic shifts and finally with circumlocutions (1959: 234). Vinay and Darbelnet's idea of translation method and Jakobson's theory of translation seem to be similar. Both methods stress the translator's capacity to resort to loan translations, neologisms and other strategies when the linguistic approach is no longer valid. Both notions recognize the limits of theories of language but argue that a translation is never impossible, because the translator has many possibilities. Nida distinguishes between formal correspondence (formal equivalence) and dynamic equivalence. On the other hand, formal correspondence focuses on the message in both form and substance. Dynamic

equivalence relies on 'the concept of equivalent effect' (1964:159). A formal correspondence is a TL item, corresponding to an SL item (a word or a sentence). Nida and Taber show that linguistic pairings may not have formal equivalents. Formal equivalents may have important consequences in the TT if the target audience may not understand the translation. The translator adopts a dynamic equivalence to translate the meaning of the source so that the TL wording has the same effect on the TC audience as the ST phrase had on the ST audience. Nida and Taber (1982: 200) states that "Often the form of the original text is changed; but as long as the change is made in accordance with the rules of back transformation in the source language, of contextual consistency in the transfer, and of transformation in the receptor language, the message is retained and the translation is faithful". Only Nida and Taber say that 'dynamic equivalence in translation is substantially more than mere proper conveyance of information' (1982: 25). Nida adopts the linguistic approach to translation, although he is more interested in the semantic quality of the text. This way he guarantees that the target text conveys the desired message. The dynamic equivalence technique is problematic in demanding the reader's involvement to bridge the gap between the structure of the text and its content. This strategy suggests that the meaning or the message is tangible based on language codes. Reader-response theories claim that the meaning of the text is not fixed, therefore the reader must participate to understand the text. The writer and reader make assumptions that are not expressed expressly in the text. Second, the relation of dynamic equivalence to the 'dynamics of the original' is analogous in this respect. Dynamics are again interpretation when meaning is produced from linguistic codes. The only way a translator may increase the possibility of a comparable response is to explain the presumed meaning or metaphorical sense of the original. It does not consider the impact of reader knowledge on textual realization. Third, this method ignores the reader's work of comprehending the text when replying. This strategy implies that a reader's response to text is unchangeable and ignores intra-personal variances. Reader responses to text never are in stasis. Such change is brought about by changes in cognitive environment during text processing.

### 3. Reader Response and the Theory of Translational Equivalence

Theodore Savory's volume *Since the mind is comparable in many language expressions, it is possible to translate or overcome the hurdle* (Savory 1957). *The Art of Translation* defines translation as: It is a difficult word, but it does contain a crucial aspect that is commonly overlooked. Translation equivalency is difficult to obtain, and so, it ought to be a matter of our research on translation theories and quality assessments. As mentioned above, equivalence

is one of the most controversial issues in translation theory. The little description of the problem above indicates what importance it has for translation theory. The complications with equivalence make it impossible to define in general. After the inaugural speeches, modern theorists developed the idea of translation equivalence. The brief description of the issue above shows its importance in the theory of translation. Because of its issues, equivalence seems to be hard to establish in general. I think the reader's reaction is the best measure of current translation studies within a wider communicative and cognitive framework. The goal of any translation is to elicit the same reaction from the reader to the text as that of the Source Text (ST) by means of schematic understanding and linguistic manifestation. Thus the quality of translation is the degree to which the textual form facilitates the most dynamic interplay of schemata in the reader's mind. The translator's decisions and creativity in producing similar formulations should be compatible with the reader's context assumptions and meaning extraction capabilities.

The research analyzes selected passages from Arabic literary works and their English translations. The selected texts were chosen according to the following criteria:

- literary significance,
- availability of English translations,
- richness of cultural and linguistic features,
- and openness to multiple interpretations.

The primary texts include works by Naguib Mahfouz, Zakaria Tamer, and Hanan al-Shaykh.

The analysis is conducted through three interconnected dimensions:

### **1. Textual Indeterminacy**

Drawing on Iser's theory, the study examines ambiguities and gaps within the source texts and investigates how translation preserves, alters, or reduces interpretive openness.

With the development of translation as a new topic of investigation in the international academia, the study of translation from different perspectives has been an important part. But for a long time the assessment and analysis of translations, and their evaluation, have been limited, for the most part, to a linguistic method. The Source Text (SL) used to be an important reference for researchers, being considered the official one.

Translation was considered derivative and inferior. The emergence of faithfulness in translation in the 1970s and 1980s, influenced by historical, ideological and societal reasons, had an impact on

the development of translation studies as an emerging field of study. In this ambiance, the discussion turned to Andre Lefevere's concept of rewriting.

According to Lefevere's theory of rewriting in translation, one has to compare the source language text with the target language text, taking into account the cultural context and the ideologies of the text, author and translator. This conceptual approach to translation and its evaluation has inspired other researchers to evaluate translations in a wider social setting. Therefore, the development of translation studies as a new discipline in the academic world can be studied from many perspectives.

Lambert and Van Gorp (1980s) studied translations from the perspective of the relation between writers, texts and readers, and seem to be offering a new perspective. They also referred to their enquiries into the literary systems of source and target languages, the interaction of aims of authors and translators, and the study of other sociological questions, such as publication. Thus, it is obvious, that modern research of the world academic community connects translation studies with cultural studies, feminism and other views. According to Eugene Nida's concept of Dynamic Equivalence, the main aim of the translators is to create equivalence between the original and the translated texts.

Equivalence is achieved if the translated text produces in its readers the same associations and feelings as those of the readers of the original text. Then came Hans Vermeer, a German linguist, who developed Skopos Theory in the 1970s. He suggested a functional approach that focused on non-linguistic and textual factors such as the culture of the receiver and the purpose of the communication. In Translation Studies the research has been mainly focused on the assessment of the "faithfulness" of the translated text to the original text and general judgments on what is "correct" or "incorrect" from the linguistic point of view. Since the 1990s, research in Translation Studies has moved from the "textual" to the "cultural". Bassnett and Lefevere (1990:1) have called this change of paradigm the "cultural turn" in Translation Studies. The translation now has become a discipline open to historical and cultural contexts, including the cultural aspects of translation. Furthermore, the text argues that nothing exists in isolation and the meaning of anything is always conditioned by its context (Asad 1986: 148). Bassnett and Lefevere (1990:11) argue that "there is always a context in which the translation takes place, always a history from which a text comes and into which a text is transformed."

## 2. Reader-Text Transaction

With the development of translation as a new topic of investigation in the world academia, the study of translation from multiple perspectives has become a significant aspect. But for a long time assessment and analysis of translations and their evaluation have been confined, for the most part, to a linguistic approach. The Source Text (SL) has been historically important for scholars as it was treated as the official reference.

But translation was viewed as derivative and inferior. The development of translation studies as an emerging field of study was shaped by the emergence of fidelity in translation in the 1970s and 1980s, influenced by historical, ideological and societal factors. The discussion of Andre Lefevere's concept of rewriting dominated this context.

Lefevere's theory of rewriting in translation points out that one must compare the source language text with the target language text, taking into account the cultural context and the ideologies of the text, author and translator. This conceptual approach to translation and its evaluation has encouraged other researchers to analyze translations in a wider social framework. Thus, it can be said that the development of the translation studies as a new discipline in the academic world should be studied from different perspectives.

Lambert and Van Gorp, who in the 1980s studied translations from the viewpoint of the relationship between authors, texts and readers, appear to be presenting a new approach. They also mentioned their inquiries into the literary systems of source and target languages, the relationship between the aims of authors and translators, and the investigation of other sociological questions, such as publication. Thus, it is clear that new research in the world academic community is linking translation studies to cultural studies, feminism and other perspectives. According to Eugene Nida's concept of Dynamic Equivalence, the main goal of the translators is to attain equivalence between original and translated texts.

Equivalence is when the translated text evokes the same associations and feelings in its readers as the readers of the original text experience. Then, Skopos Theory was developed by German linguist Hans Vermeer at the 1970s. He suggested a functional approach that focused on nonlinguistic and textual variables such as the recipient's culture and the purpose of the text. The research in the Translation Studies has been mostly concentrated on the evaluation of the "faithfulness" of the translated text to the original text and general conclusions about what is "correct" or "incorrect" from the linguistic point of view. Since 1990s, the focus of research in

Translation Studies has moved from the "textual" to the "cultural". This paradigm shift has been called by Bassnett and Lefevere (1990:1) as the "cultural turn" in Translation Studies. The translation has become a field open to historical and cultural backgrounds, with the cultural aspects of translation.

Also, the text suggests that nothing exists in isolation and that the meaning of anything is always shaped by its context (Asad 1986: 148). According to Bassnett and Lefevere (1990:11) "there is always a context in which the translation occurs, always a history from which a text originates and into which a text is transformed."

Based on Rosenblatt's theory, the research explores how readers from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds respond differently to translated literary texts.

### **3. Translation as Interpretation**

The study considers the translator an active interpreter whose lexical, stylistic, and cultural decisions influence reader reception and meaning construction.

Through comparative textual analysis, the research investigates how literary meaning is transformed across languages and cultures.

We can think about what must be in place for a TL item to serve as the translational equivalent of an SL object.

Although they may not always have "the same meaning" in a linguistic sense, things in both SL and TL can serve the same purpose. When used interchangeably, texts or items in SL and TL are considered translation counterparts in total translation. Because sentences are the grammatical unit most closely associated with speech function in any given context, it is at the sentence-rank that translation equivalence may be proven in the vast majority of cases. There is some overlap in the meanings of SL and TL items in total translation; these items' contextual meanings have a tie to common situational factors.

I would assume that the 'better' the translation, the more situational aspects that are shared between the SL and TL text's contextual meanings. Instead of aiming for TL equivalents with "the same meaning" as the SL items, the goal of entire translation should be to find the ones that cover the widest range of situations. The unique challenges that emerge when the scenario includes details pertinent to the SL text but not present in the TL's cultural context will be discussed at a later time.

Our claim of the conditions of translation equivalence has to be more broadly applicable to both restricted and whole translation, therefore we need to take a closer look at these "situational features" or elements. The unique characteristics of the contextual meanings of grammatical or lexical items in particular languages cannot be described using terminology derived from a generic theory of situation-substance or general emetics.

#### **4. Analysis**

##### **4.1 Case Study One: Naguib Mahfouz**

###### **Arabic Text**

”كان يشعر بأن الحارة تضيق عليه رغم اتساعها“

###### **English Translation**

”He felt that the alley was closing in on him despite its width.“

###### **Analysis**

The Arabic expression “الحارة” possesses strong cultural and social connotations that extend beyond its literal meaning as a physical neighborhood. In many Arabic literary contexts, particularly in the novels of Naguib Mahfouz, the term symbolizes communal identity, social surveillance, and collective existence.

From Iser’s perspective, the phrase “تضيق عليه” creates interpretive openness by suggesting psychological, social, and existential pressure simultaneously. Arabic readers may associate the statement with social restriction or emotional confinement shaped by cultural experience.

Although the English translation preserves the general metaphor of spatial pressure, it cannot fully reproduce the cultural resonance of “الحارة.” Consequently, English readers may interpret the passage primarily as psychological isolation rather than social constraint.

This example demonstrates how translation modifies the interpretive possibilities available to readers in different linguistic and cultural contexts.

##### **4.2 Case Study Two: Zakaria Tamer**

###### **Arabic Text**

”ضحك الحاكم حتى اهتز كرشه“

###### **English Translation**

”The ruler laughed until his belly shook.“

###### **Analysis**

The Arabic word “كرشه” carries satirical implications commonly associated with excess, corruption, and authoritarian privilege. Arabic readers may therefore interpret the sentence as political criticism directed toward oppressive power structures.

According to Fish’s concept of interpretive communities, readers belonging to different cultural environments may derive different meanings from the same expression. Arabic readers familiar with political satire may recognize the implicit critique immediately.

In contrast, the English word “belly” conveys a more neutral meaning and lacks the same satirical force. As a result, the political dimension of the original expression becomes less explicit in translation.

The translator’s lexical choices thus influence the emotional and ideological impact of the text on target-language readers.

### 4.3 Case Study Three:

#### Hanan al-Shaykh Arabic Text

“كانت تخاف من الصمت أكثر من الضجيج.”

#### English Translation

“She feared silence more than noise.”

#### Analysis

Although the sentence appears simple, it possesses substantial interpretive openness. In Arabic literary and cultural contexts, silence often symbolizes repression, emotional suffering, or social limitation, particularly in narratives concerning women’s experiences.

Drawing on Jauss’s concept of the horizon of expectations, Arabic readers may interpret silence as a sign of cultural oppression or unspoken trauma. These associations emerge from broader social and literary traditions within Arabic culture.

The English translation preserves the literal meaning of the sentence but may encourage a more psychological interpretation centered on anxiety or emotional instability. The broader cultural implications of silence become less pronounced for readers unfamiliar with the original context. This example illustrates how translation reshapes the emotional and cultural dimensions of literary meaning.

### 4.4 Discussion

The analysis reveals several important patterns.

First, translation often reduces cultural density by replacing culturally specific expressions with more general equivalents. Terms such as “الحارة” carry layers of historical and social meaning that cannot be fully reproduced in English.

Second, translation can alter tone and implication. Lexical choices may weaken satire, symbolism, or emotional intensity, thereby affecting reader interpretation.

Third, reader responses vary according to linguistic and cultural background. Different readers approach translated texts with distinct expectations and interpretive frameworks.

Finally, the translator functions as a co-creator of meaning rather than a neutral transmitter.

Translation decisions shape the interpretive possibilities available to target-language readers.

These findings support the argument that translation transforms literary meaning by relocating texts into new cultural and interpretive environments.

## 5. Conclusion

This study has examined the transformation of meaning in translated Arabic literary texts through the perspectives of reader-response theory and translation studies. The analysis demonstrates that literary meaning is not fixed within the text itself but emerges through the interaction between readers, translators, and cultural contexts.

The selected examples from the works of Naguib Mahfouz, Zakaria Tamer, and Hanan al-Shaykh reveal how translation reshapes cultural symbolism, emotional nuance, and interpretive possibilities. Translation therefore functions as a creative and interpretive process rather than a simple act of linguistic reproduction.

The study further highlights the importance of reader-response theory in understanding translated literature. Readers from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds engage with texts in different ways, producing multiple interpretations across contexts and historical periods.

By connecting reader-response criticism with translation studies, this research contributes to broader discussions concerning literary interpretation, cultural transfer, and the plurality of meaning in translated literature.

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