



## The Position and Status of Translated Manga in Saudi Arabia

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### ABSTRACT

Manga translations offer a valuable opportunity for studying the complex interactions and dialogues between different cultures and modes of communication. This study takes a multimodal approach and a comparative qualitative analysis to explore the translation of manga in the Saudi market, which started recently in 2021. The emphasis is on illustrating how the link between the verbal and visual modes may be used in the translation process and how much input translators, and perhaps publishers, have in it. The research also seeks to explore the status of this new genre in Saudi literary systems, employing Evan Zohar's division between central and peripheral strata based on the degree of intervention made to the target text and the tactics employed. The article includes instances of the Japanese manga Attack on Titan as well as its Arabic translation by the Saudi publisher Manga Arabia. The findings indicate that translation intervention was kept to a minimum, most likely because the translated manga is in a central position and no previous patterns were used to introduce this genre to the Saudi market.

### KEYWORDS

comics, Japanese manga, multimodality, Saudi manga, translation, translator's intervention

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## 1. Introduction

The worldwide popularity of Japanese comic books, known as manga, has brought Japanese culture to a broader audience. However, because manga is originally in Japanese, most overseas consumers access it through translation. International consumers may access manga through translation by either a publisher (translated through the proper process with the original publisher in Japan) or fan translation or scanlations (bordering on illicit translation activities) (Dahlan, 2022). Scholars are increasingly intrigued by how the collective power of Japanese popular culture has spread around the world through manga and anime. The process of scanlation and translation of manga, which combines visual and linguistic arts, raises a range of issues that need discussion and examination by translation scholars. Consequently, manga translations provide rich grounds for research in multimodal, multicultural dialogue, and interaction. Nevertheless, manga translations have received less attention than comic translations (Jüngst, 2008). Additionally, there is a lack of studies on the translation of manga into Arabic. This study employs a qualitative content analysis approach to shed light on the issue and investigates the translation of manga in Saudi Arabia, which began recently in 2021 by The Saudi Research and Media Group, in terms of its multimodal context. The study uses Delabastita's (1989) multimodal model to analyse the various translation strategies and techniques. It also references Evan Zohar's polysystem theory, which helps explain the behaviour and evolution of literary systems, aiming to anticipate the status and position of this new genre.

## 2. Theoretical Framework: Intersemiotic, Multimodality and Translation

According to Jakobson (1959), translation is commonly associated with language and the written word, but it also extends beyond that to include what is known as 'intersemiotic translation'. This type of translation involves interpreting linguistic signs through non-verbal means. In other words, it goes beyond merely rewording a text; instead, it entails interpreting its meaning and conveying it in a different form. Jakobson (1959) distinguishes between three

ways to interpret verbal signs: First is intralingual translation, translating into other signs of the same language (*rewording*). Second is interlingual translation, translating into another language (*translation proper*), while the third is intersemiotic translation, which involves translating from language into another nonverbal system of symbols (*transmutation*). According to Jakobson, intersemiotic translation involves language. However, he does not discuss the translation of multi-semiotic texts or the translation from one non-verbal semiotic system to another, such as graphic novels (e.g. manga and comics). While Jakobson's exemplification of intersemiotic translation may not highlight comics, it defines them as a non-verbal multimedia language (Zanettin, 2014). Further, when a comic is reprinted or republished, whether in the same or a different country/region, various semiotic systems outside verbal language are 'translated'. Not only could 'reprints' of the same stories be (partially) rewritten and redrawn but a comic could also be reproduced with a different page size and layout, different panel arrangement and reading direction, in colour rather than black and white, and vice versa; different types of 'translation' could coexist at different levels (Zanettin, 2014). Jakobson's (1959) definition of intersemiotic translation now includes non-linguistic semiotic resources (e.g. Kourdis, 2015; Toury, 1994). This development is inevitable in today's digital environment, with the proliferation of multimodal texts and their semiotic resources. In fact, 'nowadays a text can hardly be monosemiotic. As a result, the coexistence and synergy of semiotic systems is indispensable, and the production of meaning stemming from that process must be translated' (Kourdis, 2015: 314).

Many texts do not solely rely on language but can incorporate meanings derived from any semiotic system like images, music, diagrams, graphs and many more; they are often referred to as multimodal texts (Kress, 2011). Kress and Theo van Leeuwen define multimodality as 'the use of several semiotic modes in the design of a semiotic product or event' (2001: 20). According to multimodality, 'language' is only one among many tools for producing meaning. This indicates that the modal resources accessible in a culture must be viewed as a single cohesive, integrated field of albeit diverse resources for producing meaning (Kress, 2011). While writing was

traditionally addressed by linguistics and images by art history, and so on, in a multimodal approach, 'all modes are framed as one field, as one domain. Jointly they are treated as one connected cultural resource for (representation as) meaning-making by members of a social group at a particular moment' (Kress, 2011: 38). In this paradigm, 'Each mode plays its specific part: writing tells, image shows, colour frames and highlights; layout and font are used in part for reasons of compositional arrangements, and, as the other modes, too, always for reasons of "taste"' (Kress, 2011: 40). Verbal signs or 'language is thus an element within a larger semiotic framework, and it may have a primary or a subordinate role to play' (Borodo, 2015: 23).

It has long been overlooked in linguistic research that a single mode exists among a group of multimodal modes. Nowadays, however, the multimodal approach is applied to various spheres, such as advertisements, websites, museum exhibitions, textbooks, as well as comics.

O'Sullivan (2013) argues that Translation Studies has grappled with the idea of multimodality at times. One example is Katharina Reiss' initial classification of the 'audio-medial' function of language as supplementary to the informative, operative and expressive functions – a position she later modified (see Reiss 2000: 164–5), arguing that multi-medial texts must be considered a 'hyper-type' that can be informative, operative and/or expressive. This reconsideration of her methodology, according to O'Sullivan (2013), reflects the challenge of introducing multimodality into translation theories that had previously been primarily text-based.

Boria *et al.* (2020) also assert that, regrettably, other forms of multimodal environments have been neglected concerning translation. This neglect arises from the increasing prevalence of these types of communication and meaning-making, which has rendered certain translation theories outdated and insufficient. For example, the term 'translation' is now used to describe the transfer of meaning across different modes and within the same mode.

Mary (2009) proposed different labels for multimodal texts; among them is 'multi-semiotic text', which refers to texts using different graphic sign systems, such as verbal and nonverbal (e.g. comics or advertising brochures).

Kress (2010) suggests that we can use *transduction* to refer to the transfer of meaning from one mode to another, such as a painting based on a poem, whereas *transformation* can refer to the transfer of meaning within the same mode.

This debate still raises as many questions as it answers. The results of recent research to understand how the process of translating illustrated texts varies from that of translating a 'monomodal' text have been ambiguous at best, highlighting the urgent need for more study (Boria *et al.*, 2020).

### 3. Relevant Studies

Manga style has piqued the curiosity of young people all around the world. Manga uses seven distinct storytelling techniques, which include iconic characters, genre maturity, a sense of place, character designs, wordless panels, small real-world details, subjective motion and emotionally expressive effects (McCloud, 2006).

According to Schodt (1996: 26), 'manga are merely another "language", and the panels and pages are but another type of "words" adhering to a unique grammar'. In this regard, Zanettin (2008) notes that Japanese manga conventions differentiate them from Western comics. These include the use of more panels, changes to panel transitions, the expression of mood and sense of place through moment-to-moment panels, character faces with large eyes, small

noses, flat faces, bubble tails used to represent whispers, ellipses over the head to denote a speechless moment and movement represented with speed lines. Although manga and comics are technically distinct in several ways, scholars use the same methodologies, perspectives and theories when exploring their translations. Manga translations, however, have received less attention than comic book translations (Jüngst, 2008). As a result, this section refers to comic and picture book studies besides those studies on manga translation.

Different approaches and perspectives have been used in research on manga and comic translation. Some researchers who believe in the significance of manga's multimodal nature and interaction across modes have used a general multimodal approach or a social semiotic multimodal perspective in conjunction with a variety of theories. To name a few: Kaindl (1999); Borodo (2015); Armour and Takeyama (2015); and, more recently, Chow (2021).

Kaindl (1999) presents an all-inclusive paradigm for comics translation. He suggests that translation studies should encompass nonverbal aspects such as images, music and graphics in addition to words. He also presents a taxonomy of translation-relevant verbal, typographic and visual features. To acquire a comprehensive understanding of comics in translation, Kaindl (1999) suggests that future research should explore translations on both textual and intertextual levels.

Similarly, Borodo (2015) examines the translation of comic books through a social semiotic multimodal approach, focusing on how the interplay between the verbal and visual modes on a page affects the translation process. He addresses how translators may choose to faithfully replicate the original language or deviate from the text to capitalise on the verbal–visual connection. The study also investigates the significance of comic books' multimodal characteristics for translation and how the visual mode may assume the responsibility of conveying certain meanings from the verbal form.

Armour and Takeyama (2015) investigate how typefaces or fonts are employed in Japanese and non-Japanese manga. Their research focuses on speech rather than onomatopoeia and classifies fonts according to their weight, colour, size, slant, frame and formality. They also discuss the theoretical underpinnings of this enquiry and provide a representative example taken from the Japanese-language source. They conclude that typefaces can be used to provide readers with additional information, such as mood, and that the choice of typeface affects fluency and naturalness.

Recently, and focusing particularly on manga, Chow (2021) examines how manga translators employ various modes and semiotic resources to translate 'ateji', which are Japanese words written in 'kanji' characters for phonetic value rather than meaning. The research demonstrates that the phonetic guide, which combines writing and typographic modes, is successful in recreating the meaning and form of ateji into language using only one script.

Only two studies on translation for children and young people have been undertaken concerning the Saudi context. Despite focusing on children's picture books rather than manga or comics, these studies are worth mentioning since they used a multimodal approach to study translations in the Saudi setting.

Alsary (2016) discusses the selection criteria for source materials as well as the application of translation methodologies. She explores the significance of paratextual and visual aspects in translating children's literature, in addition to the translation regulations and practices. Textual analysis, interviews with publishers and observation of textual and paratextual behaviours are all facets of the research method. The content emphasises the significance of linguistic aspects, translation tactics and lexical choices in providing a thorough

review of translation policies in this sector. One of the study's strengths is its emphasis on cultural, ideological and religious issues that may hinder translation.

Alsaleh (2019) employed a multimodal method and forms of analysis to address topics linked to translation and children's literature, including cultural artifacts and references from another culture. The study discovered that the translation method used, the target culture's perception of translated children's literature, the visibility of the translators' and authors' names, selling price, binding type and publishing format are all factors that influence the position of translated children's literature in the Saudi market.

#### 4. Research Objectives

The paper tends to analyse manga translation in Saudi Arabia in the context of its multimodal qualities, aiming to reveal how the interplay between the verbal and the visual might be used in the translation process. The study intends to focus on the approach used by translators and how these tactics might signal, among other variables, the prominence of manga as a genre in Saudi Arabia. The current work addresses a gap in translation and linguistic research, notably in Saudi Arabia, where there have been no previous studies on the multimodal elements of manga.

#### 5. Data and Methodology

The data includes a popular Japanese manga series with adventure themes known as *Attack on Titan*, which has been translated into Arabic and is aimed at young people over the age of 15. It is a manga series written by Hajime Isayama and published in Japan in 2010, consisting of 96 chapters. The Arabic translation of this series for the Saudi market was initiated in 2021 and completed in 2023. It is produced and published by Manga Arabia, a subsidiary of the Saudi Research and Media Group, in both physical and digital formats. Manga Arabia produces two magazines: the Arabic Manga Magazine for Children and the Arabic Manga Magazine for Youth, focusing on creating creative content through the production and publication of Arabic and translated Japanese manga. The magazines are released on a monthly basis and are free to use.

The data was collected manually, with no technical aid, and a thorough reading of the target text was carried out. To address the issue of the original Japanese language, the researcher employed the assistance of a Saudi translator, who helped in comprehending the original manga. Additionally, the researcher used the English language as an intermediary language, meaning that the Arabic translations of the same strips were also investigated against the English translations of the same strips to detect any deviations together with the original Japanese text.

A comparative qualitative analysis of the content approach was adopted for the study, and content analysis was carried out using Kaindl's (1999) types of signs to identify those used in manga to create verbal and non-verbal elements of meaning. These signs are categorised into three groups: linguistic, typographic and pictorial. The titles, dialogue text, narrations, onomatopoeia and inscriptions in the pictures are examples of linguistic signs. These are explained by Kaindl (1999) as follows:

- Titles: Serve as both an invitation to start reading and a means of identification.
- Dialogue texts: Can be placed in speech or thought bubbles or written below the picture.
- Narrations: Captions play a crucial role. They are usually enclosed within a rectangular box at the top or bottom of a panel to indicate shifts in time and space. They also provide context for moods and situations that may be difficult to convey through images alone.
- Inscriptions: Include the linguistic elements found on objects within

pictures, such as labels, names on houses, posters, etc. These elements serve to indicate local, temporal or historical references, which would otherwise require a significant amount of language and pictorial material to convey.

- Onomatopoeia: Is a writing technique that represents the sound of events and emotions. There are three types of onomatopoeia: interjections, words derived from nouns or verbs and invented words created using vowels and consonants to convey their specific sound quality (Kaindl, 1999).

Other nonverbal signs include:

- Typography: The technique of creating characters is the point where language and pictures meet. Typography includes more than just letters and numbers; it also encompasses graphemes, such as pictograms found in comics, which visually convey various aspects of communication.
- Pictorial elements: Various means of providing information in comics, including panels, colour, speed lines, perspective and format. However, these do not necessarily facilitate functional analysis.

All these elements can be, according to Kaindl (1999: 275), 'taken over or changed in the process of translation'. This implies the need to establish a typology of translation strategies. However, most classification schemes of translation strategies tend to focus solely on the verbal elements of meaning creation. Meaning in manga is conveyed through both verbal and non-verbal elements (Kaindl, 1999). Thus, Delabastita's (1989) multimodal model for film translation is used to analyse the translation strategies and techniques used to render Japanese manga into Arabic. It is worth noting that this model, originally designed for films, has also been successfully employed by Zitawi (2008) and Alsaleh (2019) to analyse multimodal texts such as comics and children's picture books.

Delabastita's (1989) model uses six categories: *repetitio*, *adiectio*, *detractio*, *transmutatio*, *substitutio* and *deletio*. Terms used in this classification were originally in Latin, but Zitawi (2008) used their English version for ease, as follows: (*'repetitio'*) as repetition, (*'transmutatio'*) as reorder, (*'detractio'*) as visual manipulation, (*'substitutio'*) as substitution, (*'deletio'*) as omission and (*'adiectio'*) as addition:

- *Repetitio/repetition*: This occurs when source language, typography, or picture elements are replicated in their identical form. Among the linguistic components, onomatopoeic expressions and inscriptions are most commonly replicated in their original form.
- *Deletio/omission*: This refers to the act of removing text or pictures from the translation.
- *Detractio/visual manipulation*: In translation, some linguistic, pictorial, and typographic elements are often removed. This includes both spatial and action signs on the pictorial level, which are usually retouched or edited out of the pictures. These procedures often involve the removal of weapons, knives, or other items associated with violence.
- *Adiectio/addition*: This occurs when linguistic or pictorial material is added to the translation to replace or supplement the source material.

A special form of *adiectio* occurs when pictorial elements are replaced by linguistic ones and vice versa.

Another form of *adiectio* can be found in the colouring of pictures in Japanese comics to fit the European and American markets. While Japanese comics are in black-and-white, the translations are coloured.

- *Transmutatio/reorder*: This refers to the modification of the sequence of source language or pictorial components in the translation.
- *Substitutio/substitution*: This refers to procedures in which the original linguistic, typographic or pictorial material is replaced by more or less equivalent material in the translation.

For determining the position of translated manga, we will refer to Even-Zohar's (1990) polysystem theory, which explains the behaviour and evolution of literary systems. In summary, in polysystem theory, a literary work is not studied in isolation but as part of a literary system. In other words, literature is viewed within a social, cultural, literary and historical framework. Translated

literature imported into a country can influence native writings, with varying degrees of impact depending on the causes and effects. The position of translated literature within a literary polysystem can vary. It may be considered either primary or secondary. Primary texts are those that introduce new ideas, methods and perspectives to the literary world, while secondary texts uphold and maintain the current system. If translated literature is considered primary, it can actively contribute to shaping the center of the literary polysystem. Translated literature is usually considered to have a peripheral position in the host system. However, in some cases, it can be closer to the center. Even-Zohar (1990) identifies three situations related to this. First, young literature: Translated literature is crucial for young writers in training, as it acts as a source of innovation and a reference point for comparison. Second, peripheral national literature holds translated literature at the center, which stems from a more influential and powerful nation. Third, literature 'in crisis': Translated literature often becomes central in the literary field of the target language, filling the void left by national authors.

## 6. Line of Argument

Manga is the Japanese term for comic books and graphic novels. It is derived from two Japanese words: 'man', which means 'whimsical or impromptu', and 'ga', which means 'pictures'. Its use in comic books became increasingly common in the twentieth century (Schodt, 1996). Japan has become the first nation to give comic books the same social status as novels and films. Originally meant for young people, manga is now widely accepted as a form of entertainment for all ages (Schodt, 1996).

Manga incorporates humour, satire, wit and exaggeration through a variety of mediums, including caricatures, cartoons, editorial cartoons, syndicated panels, daily humour strips, story manga and animation (Ito, 2005).

In the 1930s, slim magazines called 'comic books' were created in the United States by compiling 'comic strips' from newspapers. Meanwhile, in prewar Japan, the first genuine 'comic books' for children were hardback books composed of 'comic strips' serialised in monthly magazines with illustrations for boys and girls. This pattern persists in Japan even today. Typically, individual manga stories are first serialised along with several other stories in omnibus-style manga magazines and then compiled into their own paperback and hardback books. Comics come in different styles worldwide, with American and Japanese being the most notable. Although both share a similar format, they have evolved into distinct art forms. The most notable difference is size; American comics are usually 30 to 50 pages, with one serialised story published monthly. In contrast, manga magazines are issued weekly, can have up to 1,000 pages and feature up to 40 stories. When compiled as paperbacks, a single story can take up to 50 or more volumes, each containing over 250 pages (Schodt, 1996).

Manga is not created in isolation. Rather, it is deeply embedded in the social context of Japan, which encompasses history, language, culture, politics, economy, family, religion, sex and gender, education, deviance, crime and demography. As a result, manga is a reflection of the reality of Japanese society, as well as the myths, beliefs, rituals, traditions, fantasies and way of life of the Japanese people (Ito, 2005).

As a medium of expression, Schodt (1996) states that 'manga [...] exist in a niche somewhere between films, records, novels, and television'. Moreover, 'manga are written and drawn by artists thinking in Japanese, not English, so it can take a non-Japanese a little more work and a little more patience to read them, even in translated form' (Schodt, 1996). In other words, manga continues to maintain its Japanese visual style, storytelling and language, which is why it

remains distinctly Japanese. As a result, when translating manga from Japanese to other languages, it is important to consider the specific grammatical, social and visual language components that are inherent in the original audience. This can be a challenging task, but it is crucial to accurately convey the intended meaning and cultural context of the original work.

The popularity of Japanese entertainment media in the Arab world is largely due to anime, rather than manga. This is because obtaining manga in the Middle East was difficult before the 2000s. However, with the rise of the Internet, manga has become widely available, and its popularity has increased. Saudi Arabia's standing as one of the most economically advanced nations in the Arab Gulf has led to its having the largest anime and manga audience in the region. In recent years, various efforts have been made to promote the love for Japanese art further, as well as to foster home-grown talent. In August 2021, a subsidiary of the Saudi Research and Media Group was launched, specialising in producing and publishing Arabic and Japanese manga. The company releases two magazines: the Arabic Manga Magazine for Children and the Arabic Manga Magazine for Youth. Recently, The Saudi Research and Media Group, which is the leading Arab media group, has entered into a content licensing agreement with a group of Japanese companies and publishing houses. The objective of this agreement is to establish official and legal channels for the translation of famous Japanese manga art into the Arabic language, through 'Arabic Manga'. This is aimed at ensuring that the content is used in a safe, reliable and purposeful manner. This effort, together with the popularity of manga among Saudi youth, allows for evaluating the position and status of translated manga in Saudi Arabia, which is the purpose of this study.

### 6.1. Attack on Titan:

The story revolves around humanity living inside walled cities to protect themselves from titans who appeared out of nowhere and devoured humans without reason. Eren Yeager, determined to free humanity, joins the Scout Regiment with his adoptive sister and best friend. The narrative unravels mysteries and unveils a complex storyline that combines action, suspense and drama.

### 6.2. Manga Translation and the Position of Translated Manga:

The following lines will focus on how the multimodal potential of manga books was used and transformed during the translation process.

The Arabic manga version will be analysed using Delabastita's (1989) multimodal model, detailed above, with reference to an English version and a literal Arabic translation. The English version was taken from Aotmanga. The literal Arabic version was carried out by a Saudi translator who operates a translation company for an Arabic-Japanese pair of languages and was tasked with rendering the examples using literal strategies to detect any transformations between the official translation and the literal translation of the same panels. The English version will be referred to as such, the literal unofficial Arabic will also be referred to as literal Arabic and the official Arabic translation done by The Saudi Research and Media Group will be referred to as the Arabic dialogue text.

The following excerpt illustrates Delabastita's strategy of '*adiectio*' addition:

Figure 1: Delabastita's 'adiectio' addition strategy



Figure Source: (諫山創, 2010: 7); (Aotmanga, n/a); (14:2021, المانجا اليابانية, 2021)

The first panel under investigation shows a man attacking a titan and shouting, as seen in the English version:

Let's teach this thing ... the power of the human race!!!

The literal Arabic says:

سوف أجعلك تدرك  
مدى قوة الجنس البشري!

The Arabic dialogue text reads as:

لنر هذا المخلوق  
قوة الجنس البشري!

The official translation improved the meaning by including the word 'المخلوق', which means creature. This addition can be categorised as *adiectio* according to Delabastita's (1989) terms, indicating the addition of linguistic or pictorial material to the translation to replace or supplement the source material. In this passage, the translator's aim is to clarify that the Titans in the story are not human but rather gigantic humanoid creatures. Although one of these creatures is already visible in the scene, they resemble humans in appearance. To avoid confusion, the translator uses the Arabic word 'المخلوق', which is often used to refer to something unknown. This is a smart addition. It adds to the dramatic effect of the scene and helps to ensure that the visual and verbal elements of the story are coherent.

The following excerpt illustrates Delabastita's strategy of 'substitutio' substitution:

Figure 2: Delabastita's 'substitutio' substitution strategy

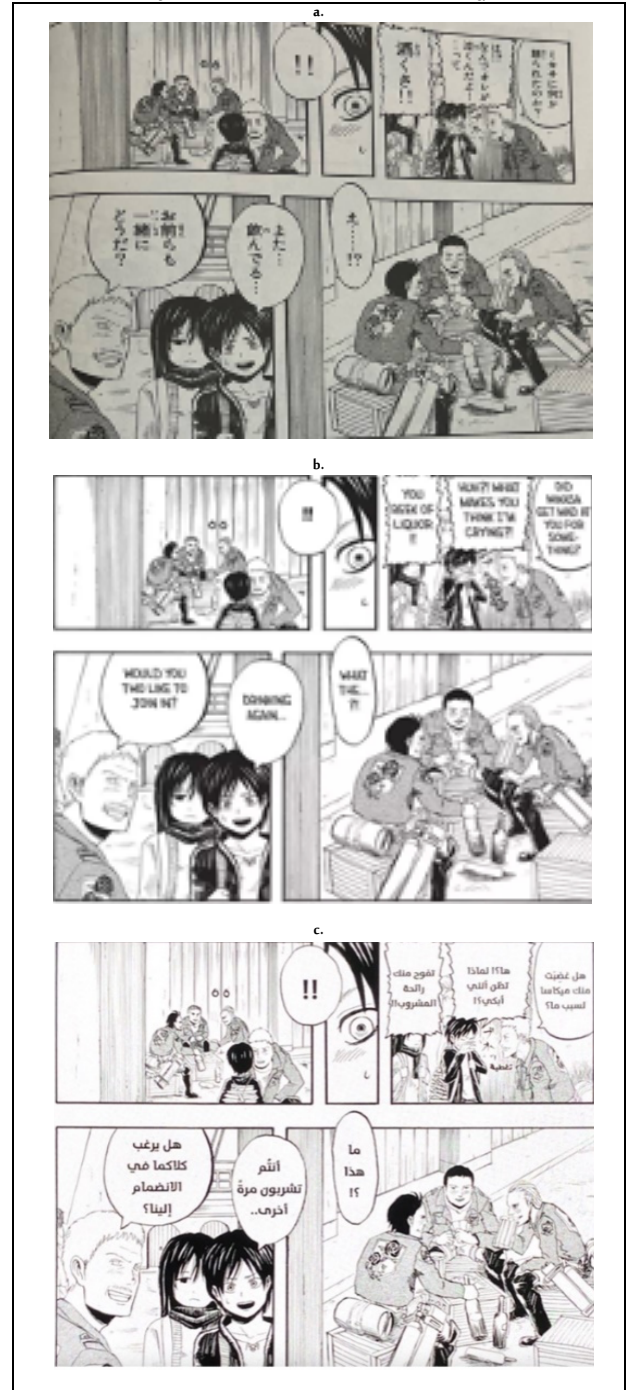


Figure Source: (諫山創, 2010: 20); (Aotmanga, n/a); (22:2021, المانجا اليابانية, 2021)

This dialogue text exemplifies the linguistic device of *substitutio*, as described by Delabastita (1989), which refers to procedures in which the original linguistic/typographic/pictorial material is replaced by more or less equivalent material. The panels depict soldiers drinking together. In the English version, we can see Eren saying to one of them:

You reek of liquor!!

The literal Arabic says:

تفوح منك رائحة الخمر!

The Arabic dialogue text reads as:

تفوح منك رائحة المشروب!!

In this particular case, the translator made a conscious decision to modify the original text in order to create a translation that is less linguistically accurate but more morally appropriate. This decision was primarily driven by the fact that Saudi Arabia is a Muslim country where alcohol is not permitted. However, it should be noted that the translator's intervention was not drastic. They managed to maintain verbal accuracy by using the word 'المشروب', which is a general term in Arabic that translates to 'drink'. By doing so, the translator was able to provide an accurate translation without explicitly mentioning alcohol.

The following excerpt illustrates Delabastita's strategy of 'transmutatio' reorder:

Figure 3: Delabastita's 'transmutatio' reorder strategy



Figure Source: (藤山 剛, 2010: 38); (Aotmanga, n/a); (40:2021. المانجا اليابانية.)

In this passage, the translator has made another alteration to the wording or *transmutatio*, which refers to the modification of the sequence of source language or pictorial components. The panel depicts a conversation between Mikasa and her father, with the mother also visible in the panel cleaning the table. Mikasa's speech bubble on the right shows her asking her father a question, as seen:

In the English version:

Huh? Dad, you're going out now?

On the left, the father answers:

Yeah I have to see a patient two towns up.

In the literal Arabic translation, this is read as:

هل ستغادر الآن يا أبي؟

نعم، سوف أقوم بفحص لمريض على بعد مدينتين

The Arabic dialogue text says:

عزيزي، هل ستغادر في هذا الوقت؟

نعم لدي مريض يقطن في مدينة تبعد عنا بمسافة مدينتين شمالاً.

During a crucial part of the conversation in the manga, the translator intervened due to inconsistencies between the visual mode and the sequence of the speech. The father's reply was placed beside Mikasa, while Mikasa's question was on the left next to the mother, creating the impression that Mikasa was not involved in the conversation. To address this issue, the translator changed the question to be asked by the mother instead of Mikasa. This was likely done because of dissatisfaction with the incongruence between the verbal and visual aspects of the speech balloons, which was affecting the communication of meaning. As such, this panel starts with 'عزيزي', which is said by the mother. This transformation not only aligns with the visual mode but also resolves confusion in the original text.

The following excerpt illustrates Delabastita's strategy of 'repetitio' repetition:

Figure 4: Delabastita's 'repetitio' repetition strategy

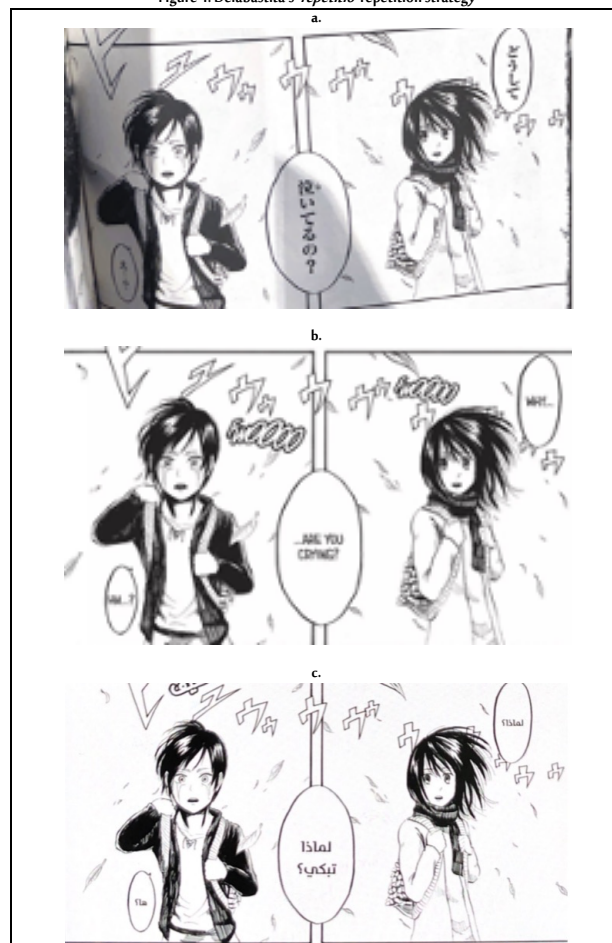


Figure Source: (藤山 剛, 2010: 14); (Aotmanga, n/a); (16:2021. المانجا اليابانية.)

In this panel, two characters, Eren and Mikasa, are depicted walking and talking. Mikasa asks a question:

Why...

...Are you crying?

The literal Arabic translation is similar to the English version:

لماذا..

تبكي؟

The Arabic translation of this panel exhibits some *repetitio*, where source language, typography or picture elements are replicated in their identical form, including the repetition of the question word here:

لماذا؟

### لماذا تبيكي؟

The repetition was likely included to maintain the coherence of the speech sequence. The translator may have believed that young Arab readers are unfamiliar with the direction and sequence of Japanese manga conversation boxes. Therefore, they opted to repeat the query word to ensure readability and consistency. Again, it is not a drastic transformation.

*Translators' and/or publishers' interventions*, The examples provided in the previous section reveal that only on several occasions have the translators of manga into Arabic decided to transform the original text, employing only four strategies from Delabastita's (1989) multimodal model: addition, repetition, reordering and substitution. This appears to be because this is a recent genre introduced into the Saudi context. There are no existing patterns to follow in the target text and system. The translators do not want to depart from the original to produce a translation that is as close to the source text as possible. The Japanese text undergoes infrequent and reluctant transformations, with alterations being minimal compared to the entirety of the work. These changes are primarily driven by either the translators' preferences or styles or the need to address incongruences between the verbal and visual elements. The translators demonstrate an awareness of the tension between the two modalities in establishing meaning in this genre. However, no examples were found to illustrate significant or drastic transformations, including visual manipulation or omission, even when such alterations may be warranted. Therefore, these changes are better described as 'retouching of the text' rather than substantial alterations.

*Visual manipulation*, as defined by Delabastita's (1989) multimodal model, occurs when certain linguistic, pictorial and typographic elements are often removed. This includes spatial and action signs on the pictorial level, which are typically retouched or edited out of the pictures. These procedures often involve the removal of weapons, knives or other items associated with violence. However, in the analysed manga translation, no alterations were made to the pictorial or typographic content of the original manga. For example, the Titans, which are enormous human-like creatures, were depicted without clothes. It has been reported that in Malaysia, the same manga series was translated to depict the Titans wearing clothes (see Figure 5 Attack on Titan – Malay version (online) (Anime, n/a)).

It is surprising to note that the pictures and drawings in the Arabic versions of manga translated for the Saudi market have remained unchanged; see Figure 6 (هجوم العمالقة)<sup>1</sup>.

Violence or disturbing pictures also remained the same; nothing was edited or omitted; see Figure 7 (هجوم العمالقة)<sup>2</sup>.

This once again demonstrates that the translators and publishers chose not to interfere, or they might have kept their interference to a minimum.

In many other instances, the translator/s chose not to modify the verbal or visual elements of the original text, even if it was unclear or difficult to read. For instance, in Figure 8 (هجوم العمالقة)<sup>3</sup>.

The panel remained unaltered in the Arabic version, both verbally and visually, without changing the direction of the speech, even though the speech balloon direction did not adhere to the correct sequence of the conversation in Arabic.

For this panel to be understood in Arabic, the man is supposed to speak first, followed by the girl. However, the translator/s keep the same sequence and prefer not to change the speech balloons, even though it does not make sense in Arabic to have a conversation structured in this way:

حسناً.. لا مشكلة في هذا.

عيشي طوال حياتك في هذه الغابة بقيمك وقيم عائلتك.

The correct order is:

عيشي طوال حياتك في هذه الغابة بقيمك وقيم عائلتك.

حسناً.. لا مشكله في هذا.

*Dialogue Box and Narration* in Japanese manga are typically vertically oblong to suit top-to-bottom writing. Surprisingly, this format has remained unchanged in the Arabic version, even though flat, horizontal oblong balloons would better fit Arabic writing, as seen in the following Figure 9 (هجوم العمالقة)<sup>4</sup>.

*Inscriptions and Onomatopoeia* are consistently kept in the Japanese language even after being translated into Arabic, as seen in Figure 10 (هجوم العمالقة)<sup>5</sup>.

The Arabic words (جدش، إعياء، ارتظام، انزلاق، بووم، رعب، طق طق) were written right beside their respective Japanese words. Onomatopoeia is often written in the Japanese alphabet, probably for cost-saving and aesthetic purposes (Jüngst, 2007). This could also be because manga publishers aim to maintain the Japanese essence, meeting genre readers' expectations.

Zanettin (2014) highlights how manga readers have shaped the translation of manga. They prefer manga to maintain its Japanese essence, including language and art style. As a result, translated manga is now released in the original right-to-left reading format, with Japanese words retained in the text for aesthetic purposes. Terms describing real-world objects are often explained rather than directly translated. Jüngst (cited in: Zanettin, 2008) notes that formal equivalence translations have become standard practice for manga. This approach can result in translated manga appearing even more Japanese than the original version.

According to Toury (1995), acceptability refers to 'The production of a text in a particular culture/language which is designed to occupy a certain position or fill a certain slot in the host culture'. Adequacy, on the other hand, is when a translation 'constitutes a representation in that language/culture of a text already existing in some other language, belonging to a different culture and occupying a definable position within it'.

If we apply Toury's (1995) notions of acceptability and adequacy to the translators' behaviours, we may infer that the translation of the manga is more adequate, though Toury emphasises that 'a translation will never be either [fully] adequate or acceptable'. However, translation can be judged differently depending on whether it is adequate or acceptable, and vice versa.

If we look back at Delabastita's (1989) proposed strategies, we can presume that they are either of an adequate or acceptable nature. Therefore, in the instance of the subject matter, we may deduce that the methods employed, namely addition, repetition, reordering and substitution, are of limited transformation, meaning that they are likely regarded as adequate strategies employed to make the target text suitable or adequate for the target reader. As such, they are

1 Available at: [https://i.ibb.co/NpsWzfp/Screenshot-1445-08-08-at-6-39-43-PM.png/img\[/url\]](https://i.ibb.co/NpsWzfp/Screenshot-1445-08-08-at-6-39-43-PM.png/img[/url]) (p.78) (accessed on 18/02/2024).

2 Available at: [https://i.ibb.co/f0x7Nqq/Screenshot-1445-08-09-at-6-18-53-PM.png/img\[/url\]](https://i.ibb.co/f0x7Nqq/Screenshot-1445-08-09-at-6-18-53-PM.png/img[/url]) (p.37,59) (accessed on 19/02/2024).

3 Available at: [https://i.ibb.co/DCY0mQH/Screenshot-1445-08-09-at-6-20-18-PM.png/img\[/url\]](https://i.ibb.co/DCY0mQH/Screenshot-1445-08-09-at-6-20-18-PM.png/img[/url]) (p.11) (accessed on 19/02/2024).

4 Available at: [https://i.ibb.co/1bYXyS9/Screenshot-1445-08-09-at-6-21-56-PM.png/img\[/url\]](https://i.ibb.co/1bYXyS9/Screenshot-1445-08-09-at-6-21-56-PM.png/img[/url]) (p.40) (accessed on 19/02/2024).

5 Available at: [https://i.ibb.co/zHgBjwH/Screenshot-1445-08-09-at-6-24-45-PM.png/img\[/url\]](https://i.ibb.co/zHgBjwH/Screenshot-1445-08-09-at-6-24-45-PM.png/img[/url]) (p.30) (accessed on 19/02/2024).

adequate according to Toury's (1995) notions.

On the other hand, visual manipulation and omission (which, as previously mentioned, were noted not to have been used even when necessary) are of an acceptable nature, which means they are radical tactics that can modify the target text from its original form to make it acceptable for the target readers.

Since no previous studies on manga in Saudi Arabia have been published, Alsiary's study (2016) on children's literature, while not recent, is noteworthy. It concludes that a book series, published in 2003, underwent a shift due to ideological factors. Four covers were changed, three featuring women and one featuring a dog, all replaced with images from inside the books. The original pictures of the women and the dog were replaced with images of a man and a swan.

Similar to Alsiary (2016), Alsaleh (2019) has also found that translated children's literature adopts a target-language-oriented approach. Translations underwent transformations on both textual and paratextual levels, including modifications to violence in both language and images. In this case, the receptor culture already has well-established literary traditions and may not welcome radical departures from the norm.

Conversely, the translation of manga for the Saudi market can be considered source-oriented since translators were hesitant to alter the original text for the target audience. Manga is a relatively new genre in the Saudi market, and there are no established patterns for translators to follow. This means that translated manga holds a unique and central position without any prior works in the same genre. Translators may feel uncertain about making significant changes due to a fear of going too far with the translation. According to Even-Zohar (1990), the position of translated literature within the polysystem affects the translation strategies used. When it assumes a central position in the process of creating new, primary models, the translator's main concern here is not just to look for ready-made models in his home repertoire into which the source texts would be transferable. Instead, he is prepared in such cases to violate the home conventions. Under such conditions, the chances that the translation will be close to the original in terms of adequacy (in other words, a reproduction of the dominant textual relations of the original) are greater than otherwise.

So, when translation is at the center, translators will attempt to translate the text in a way that makes it more adequate than acceptable, thus using methods which are limited in their transformation, as in the instance of the subject matter: addition, repetition, reordering, and substitution. The translator is more likely to deviate from the conventions of the source culture and create a new, unique literary mode. This is known as the foreignisation translation strategy. It is worth noting that in this context, 'when new literary models are emerging, translation is likely to become one of the means of elaborating the new repertoire' (Even-Zohar, 1990: 47). Moreover, 'Through the foreign works, features (both principles and elements) are introduced into the home literature which did not exist there before' (Even-Zohar, 1990: 47). This means that the literary genre is young (Manga in this case), and the translation is seen as having a central and innovative developmental role in the subsystem owing to the limited range of original scripted works in this literature (Even-Zohar, 1990).

In fact, Saudi manga emerged not long after the first Japanese manga made its way into the Saudi market. Although it may be premature to evaluate Saudi manga fully, we can still draw some initial conclusions based on observations. By taking a closer look at the details and

themes presented within the artwork, it is apparent that Saudi manga oscillates between the Japanese spirit and Saudi preferences, as shown in the following excerpts:

- The Saudi manga is created entirely by Saudi and Arab artists and sometimes features characters wearing traditional Saudi clothing, such as women with veils and men with thoub. See Figure 11 (أزمة ريع العمر)<sup>1</sup>.
- While the Saudi manga retains the spirit of Japanese manga and is published in black and white, only the first page is sometimes coloured. See Figure 12 (اختفوا جميعا)<sup>2</sup>.
- The Saudi manga differs in that it has fewer inscriptions and onomatopoeia with more realistic characters and themes. Only two were detected having a fictitious theme while this study is in process. See Figure 13 (طال عمر الموتى) and (كاييد، 2023: 116) (هانمون)<sup>3</sup> (كروسوع، (طال عمر الموتى) (2023: 184)).<sup>3</sup>
- The speech balloons are designed sometimes as oblong shapes that are horizontal in order to accommodate Arabic writing, as shown in Figure 14 (اختفوا جميعا)<sup>4</sup>, while in other cases, it is similar to the Japanese design.

## 7. Conclusion

The study discusses the strategies employed in translating Japanese manga into Arabic, using Delabastita's (1989) multimodal model for analysis. Additionally, it draws upon Even-Zohar's polysystem theory to predict the status and position of this emerging genre within the literary landscape. Through the analysis, it becomes evident that translators often opt for minimal intervention, resulting in a target text that largely preserves the essence of the original Japanese spirit. Furthermore, the translation methods predominantly lean towards being source-oriented or adequately focused, contributing to the establishment of manga as a central genre in the Saudi literary scene. The translated manga appears to hold a pivotal role within the Saudi context, serving to introduce novel concepts and ideas to the target audience while prioritising fidelity to the source text.

Despite being a latecomer to the manga scene, Saudi Arabia is expected to establish a robust manga canon in the coming years. This is due to the widespread popularity of manga and the support provided to its creators. It would be worthwhile to research this developing canon in the near future.

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1 Available at: <https://i.ibb.co/XbjCtBk/Screenshot-1445-08-09-at-6-25-59-PM.png> [img]/[url] (p.260) (accessed on 19/02/2024).

2 Available at: <https://i.ibb.co/x6p0YIT/Screenshot-1445-08-09-at-6-26-46-PM.png> [img]/[url] (p.49) (accessed on 19/02/2024).

3 Available at: <https://i.ibb.co/PCBrFvY/Screenshot-1445-08-09-at-6-28-38-PM.png> [img]/[url] (accessed on 19/02/2024).

4 Available at: <https://i.ibb.co/jZxgbrk/Screenshot-1445-08-09-at-6-31-54-PM.png> [img]/[url] (p.71) (accessed on 19/02/2024).



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