Revue de Traduction et Langues Volume 14 Numéro 02/2015, pp. 30-40
Journal of Translation and Languages **مجلة الترجمة واللغات**
ISSN (Print): 1112-3974 **EISSN (Online): 2600-6235**

Diasporic Voices: Cultural Dislocation and Search for Home in Diana Abu-Jabers's Arabian Jazz and Laila Halaby's West of the Jordan

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To cite this paper:
Fali, W. (2015). Diasporic Voices: Cultural Dislocation and Search for Home in Diana Abu-Jabers's Arabian Jazz and Laila Halaby's West of the Jordan. *Revue Traduction et Langues 14(2),* 30-40.

Abstract: *This paper is concerned with literary and postcolonial facets of resistance and identity negotiation as concepts through which to approach representations of postcolonial conflicts in contemporary Arab-American women's writings. These concepts operate at various levels of narratives and open new ways for remembering, narrating, and reading experiences via problematizing the discourses of Arab women's experiences in diaspora. This paper aims to posit negotiation as a concept of writing and reading which actively engages events, discourses which implies pluralistic conception of social, political, and cultural agency. More specifically, the study explores the ways in which novelists descending from Arab origins, Diana Abu-Jaber and Laila Halaby, deploy negotiation and resistance as tools for aesthetic and socio-political engagement in postcolonial narratives to escape hegemonization. It is a reflection on the notion of hybrid identities and varied cultural provenance of non-native writings. Through its negotiated and interdisciplinary approach to narratives of alienation along with multi-consciousness of identity, this paper does not only engage with multiple discourses derived from postcolonial studies. It also intervenes into the conceptions of nation, memory, and accountability.*
Keywords: *negotiation, resistance, diaspora, memory, representation, assimilation.*
Résumé : *Cet article porte sur les aspects littéraires et postcoloniaux de la négociation de la résistance et de l'identité à travers lequel à l'approche des représentations de conflits postcoloniaux dans les écrits des femmes arabo-américains contemporains. Ces concepts fonctionnent à différents niveaux de récits et ouvrent de nouvelles voies pour se souvenir, raconter, et les expériences de lecture via problématiser les discours de l'expérience des femmes arabes dans la diaspora. Ce document vise à poser la négociation comme un concept de l'écriture et de la lecture qui engage activement des événements, des discours qui implique conception pluraliste de l'agence sociale, politique et culturelle. Plus précisément, l'étude explore les façons dont les romanciers descendant d'origines arabes, Diana Abu-Jaber et Laila Halaby, déploient la négociation et de la résistance comme des outils pour l'engagement esthétique et socio-politique dans les récits postcoloniaux pour échapper hégémonisation. Il est une réflexion sur la notion d'identités hybrides et*

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la provenance culturelle variée des écrits non indigènes. Grâce à son approche négociée et interdisciplinaire de récits d'aliénation avec multi-conscience de l'identité, le présent article ne se livre pas seulement avec des discours multiples provenant d'études postcoloniales. Il intervient également dans les conceptions de la nation, la mémoire, et la responsabilité littéraire.
Mots clés : *la négociation, la résistance, la diaspora, la mémoire, la représentation, l'assimilation*.

1. Introduction

Arab-American literature has emerged as a new specific genre found in bookstores, libraries, and databases produced basically by Arab immigrants to affirm the existence of Arab community in the U.S. In the last decade of the twentieth century, with the wake of multiculturalism, a new generation of immigrants starts to be active literally and culturally by drawing upon the Arab traditions in order to defy disseminated clichés of Arab nations. Defying stereotypes serves in subverting the cultural hegemony of American mainstream resulting in diasporic voices that reflect hybrid identities. Unlike earlier generations, contemporary Arab-American writers seek to cast aside issues of racism in an effort to explore ethnic self-affirmation and diasporic sensibilities which touch upon issues of identity, history, and diaspora. Being members of diverse cultures, Arab-American writers get inspiration from revolutionary schools like feminism, Black theories, and postcolonial criticism in order to record decades of negative clichés and hostility and explore features of their ethnic native history.

Arab-American writers, especially women, attempt to transmit their voices by telling their own stories which revolve basically around immigrant experiences written in English marking in this respect a new literary episode in Arab-American literature. Many literary works produced by Arab-American women writers set the bridges to reach their origins, their mother land, via forging new discourses that oppose the Western gaze and the Orientalist presentations. In doing so, they put the spotlight on recounting immigrant experiences to describe Arab-Americans' issue of identity negotiation in diaspora. Instead of negating these stereotypes, Arab-American women attempt to engage in a dialogue with the Other to re-fashion diasporic identity positions. In the diaspora, they seek to stand in opposition to racial thinking and Oriental representations which usually portray women as silent and oppressed subjects. Instead, they endeavour to re-introduce their cultural heritage to resist Oriental clichés; accordingly, they assume the role of cultural mediators to their native communities which serves in the re-invention of their identity negotiation.

Identity negotiation is approached differently by Arab-American women writers as it represents conflicts of unspoken boundaries of hyphen or ethnic identity with cultural restraints of self-identification and issues revolving fundamentally around "the burden of representation". The persistent search for "home" is one facet of searching for identity. Some writers try to bring together the Arab as well as the American identities without preferring one or the other through the process of acculturation and assimilation. The struggle to assimilate often urges Arabs to break away from their traditions. While others try to go back to their origins and record the homeland stories, revive the collective culture, decode the women's silence and uncover their displacement in an effort to come in terms with their origins and cover the sense of alienation in the host country.

2. Arab-American Women's Writing: Defying Stereotypes

In recent years, the rise of a new but productive body of immigrant literature includes the emergence of Arab-American women writing in the U.S mainstream cultural studies that has attracted academic and critical interest. A huge consideration and scrutiny have been given to poetry, novels and non-fiction produced by Arab-American women authors as seen in appreciable collections of poems, anthologies, journal articles, book reviews, and academic researches. Reflecting on their fragmented often multiple identity politics and affiliations of belonging in the present polarised and historical period, a new generation of women are consciously building bridges to other revolutionary trends such as feminism, Black theories, and postcolonial criticism. Arab-American women writers attempt to record decades of racism, negative stereotypes and alienation in the U.S. and attempt to transmit their voices by telling their own stories which revolve around immigrant experiences. In this way, they create a new literary episode in Arab-American literature. They try to traverse the intersections of stereotypical racial and Orientalist discourses with which Arab-American women writers take writing as a tool for resistance. Besides, they attempt at creating a space for conciliating the complexities of their hyphenated often fragmented identities.

Arab-American women in the diaspora confront a further burden because of the traditionally gendered society they are living in besides the role they assume in maintaining the Arab traditions and culture for their communities and families. In "Diaspora Old and New", Gayatari Spivak suggests that women in Transnational world are participants in a type of 'diasporic subclass', she continues "women in diaspora have become the super dominated, the super exploited, but not the same way (SPIVAK. G, 1985: 249). Spivak wants to assert that subjugation is still persistent whether in the motherland or in the diaspora, yet the patterns of oppression differ. They also try to subvert patterns of oppression as well as stereotypes which foster the image of a helpless victimized Arab woman, Clifford suggests that diasporic experiences are always gendered. Women in the diaspora connect and disconnect, forget and remember in complex strategic ways community can be a site both of support and oppression (CLIFFORD. J, 1997: 45-46). In the process of re-introducing their cultural heritage as a way of resistance, writing stands as a space of negotiating the hyphen of their diasporic identities. Instead of negating the Orientalist stereotypes, Arab-American women writers sought to engage in a dialogue with them to re-appropriate and re-image diasporic identity positions. Majaj argues that:

> By situating the practices of Arab women within the complexities of modernity, globalization, diasporic postcolonial experiences, texts written by Arab women have helped to dispel the persistent Orientalist fascination with Arab women that reduced their lives to gender and sexual oppression under the purportedly unchanging, backward of Arab society (MAJAJ. L, 1996: 12).

It is clearly deciphered that Majaj maintains that Arab-American women writers assume the role of cultural mediators to find a common space of their identity positions. On the other hand, Brah asserts that women play a significant role in culture preservation and transmission in contemporary diaspora whether as work force or as cultural, socio-

political force that affects deep changes in the diasporic community (BRAH. A, 1996: 15). Arab-American women writers' ability to face challenges of hostility and mistreatment as Arab women in the host society empowers them not only to question stereotypes and give an alternative image but to touch upon issues regarded as taboos to smash the boundaries of cultural limitation.

In his "Cultural Identity and Diaspora", Hall contends that women are crucial agents in the process of passing on ethnic and nationalist ideologies. In the context of diaspora, the decision is in the hands of women how to perpetuate traditions and even whether or not they perpetuate them (HALL. S, 1994: 571). Cultural translation and social transformation receive much attention from critics and writers since such issues are concerned with the politics of representing one's identity to an outsider. Arab-American women writers attempt at translating Arab culture to the American public by adopting a nuanced vision of political and social understanding of the specificity and diversity of their hyphenated identities. The authors whose works are going to be discussed later in the next section: Diana Abu-Jaber, second generation Arab-American born to immigrant parents, a teacher of Creative Writing at Portland State University and 1999 winner of the Oregon Book Award for *Arabian Jazz*, along with Laila Halaby, a Jordaneo-Palestinian winner of PEN/Beyond Margin Award for her *Once in A Promised Land*, write back to the motherland, bring the story of Arab immigrants and highlight the importance of cultural translation and recreating the image of the homeland on the host soil.

History and political upheavals cannot be separated from literary reception, so Arab-American women writers are caught in tropes of the Palestinian tragedy of loss by carrying the burden of their history. In writing about agonies of separation from their homeland and loss of belonging, writers in diaspora often try to compensate loss by re-creating Palestine, with its culture, tradition, food, in the folds of literary works. Both Abu-Jaber and Halaby draw on diasporic experiences to present the problems facing the Palestinian immigrants. Arab-American women writers of Jordaneo-Palestinian origins evoke the plight of a whole generation in the diaspora after 1948. They try to bring out nostalgic recollections and juxtapose them to the images of exile of the dislocated Palestinian community. Both authors focus on the image of the Arab woman, the 'Oriental woman' who has often been presented in relation to the invaded lands, a contested territory strongly related to colonialism. Historical events have politicized a new generation of Arab-American women writers whose role is to better inform a hostile identity in the diaspora and to educate the coming generations of Arab, in this context, Palestinian culture and existence.

In the challenge over representation which these writers are confronting lays a history of violence, dehumanization and aspersion which attracts the dialogue of races, cultures, and identities. Eventually, Arab-American women authors plan to transfigure and subvert the fixed exoticised Orientalist presentations of the Arab culture and racialized thoughts which were further perplexed in the aftermath of 9/11. I argue that writers like Abu-Jaber and Halaby set a ground upon which they examine the identities and representations of Arab women in diaspora, in doing so, they make room for cultural translation.

3. Identity Negotiation in the Multi-layered Arab Culture

Through close reading of *Arabian Jazz* and *West of the Jordan*, it is deduced from the critical analyses that both Abu-Jaber and Halaby seek to examine Arab women's image in diaspora within the context of identity negotiation. They both agree upon the multi-layered facets of the Arab culture as the term "Arab" does not refer to one unique culture but it embodies multiple cross geographical and social boundaries of a diverse group of Arab communities having varied languages, religions, traditions, ethnicities, and national identification and conceptions. Both writers explore tensions covering the complexity of belonging to a nation by drawing upon collective cultural narratives. They probe the notions of how they are known through presentations and how they recognise themselves through resistance. It is through narrating the diasporic experiences and correlating them in the land of the 'Other' that those writers assert the existence of Palestinian community Edward Said stresses the importance of transcultural narratives in transmitting the culture of lost nations:

> A different human capacity that grounds out sharing: namely, the grasp of a narrative logic that allows us to construct the world to which our imagination responds---the basic human capacity to grasp stories, even strange stories, is also what links us, powerfully to others, even strange others (SAID. E, 1990: 278).

Here, Said maintains that a cultural translation may set bridges of understanding, communication, and accepting the other. In diaspora, women explore the complexities of negotiating their identities vis-a vis the obligations and limits of the mainstream culture, which is usually imposed through Orientalist paradigms of opposition.

Culture preservation and shaping a special self-image related to the Arab nation reflects grids of apprehension and cultural particularities that have been the result of an unstable history and patriarchal society. Instable historical events and patriarchal social context in the Arab world foster the current image of the Arab woman as constantly living in the margin of history and social changes and therefore illicit the concept of Oriental exoticism. Studies in Orientalism show that such exoticism is problematique because, Abdelrazek explains, the individual and cultures under scrutiny are treated as inherently 'Other' (ABDELRAZEK. A, 2005: 5). The critic also calls attention to the power of 'cultural quotation' and how the repetition of certain cultural signs serves to fix 'oriental' women's representations within a 'limiting nexus of various modes of representation (ABDELRAZEK. A, 2005 5-6). Abu-Jaber and Halaby are situated in the myriad of this intersection between the self and the other. Through counter-narratives, they write back to the mother land and challenge the dominant representational realities to create new realities. They weave their literary works with threads of ethnicity and gender resistance to quilt a new image of the Arab woman in diaspora.

Abu-Jaber and Halaby's aim to step beyond Orientalist stereotypes of Arab women overlaps with feminist emancipatory discourses which seek to impose Western cultural paradigms on the so-called third world woman. In the course of the reception of third world women texts, Arab-American women writers find themselves in the middle of a double challenge of American mainstream culture and western feminism. While Avtar

Brah focuses on the analysis of essentialising tendencies in upholding and unquestioned celebration of 'difference', Mohanty asserts that Oriental predilection traced in Western feminism considers all third world women as oppressed and marginalized and suggests that in case the third world women do not take their agency, they become subjects of consumption through which Western feminist gain superiority and authority. Mohanty calls for women's self-reference through creating a discourse of their own which goes in accordance with the political, cultural, and social patterns:

> An urgent site for the recolonization of peoples…Globalization colonizes women's as well as men's lives around the world, and we need an anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist, and contextualised feminist project to make visible the various overlapping forms of subjugation of third world women's lives (MOHANTY. C, 1991:52-53).

Trapped in the web of globalization, the current image of oppressed women in the Arab world is stemmed from a complex process of historical and political grids. Through their resisting writings, Abu-Jaber and Halaby try to subvert the fixation of such an image and forge, instead, a site of cultural communication, bridges of cultural understanding, to negotiate the limits of Arab-American women's diasporic identity as related to national, gender, racial, traditional adherences.

4. Re-writing Home: Difficulties of Cross-Cultural Existence

Unlike Arab-American women intellectuals who sometimes downplay the political, socio-economic and literary significance of their roles as mouthpieces for Arab culture and experience to the large Western audience, Abu-Jaber and Halaby believe their writings can positively contribute to the project of hybridized identities of Arab-Americans. Both *Arabian Jazz* and *West of the Jordan* present major female characters who embrace and resist both Arab and American cultures. The clash between the East with its fundamental regimes and the West with its urge to assimilate makes the female characters torn between two spaces. While embracing and resisting both spaces, Abu-Jaber and Halaby aim at finding a common ground, in Bhabha's term "Third Space", for their bicultural nurture.

Search for home is persistent; Abu-Jaber and Halaby search for home in a hostile space and negate the notion of one essentialized, fixed Arab identity related to geographical borders. The relationship between the native culture and diaspora is fluid. It is often seen in terms of land of origins which holds perpetual memories of a nation often fostered in the minds of Arab immigrants. Aziz argues that the position of Arabs in the U.S. today is as relatively colonized and "imbib[ing] so many of the biases and distortion around them results in rendering their heritage ambiguous to them."(AZIZ. B, 2004: 7) Therefore, she declares that the mission of Arab-American writers in the twenty-first century is to seek out the overlooked detail of their native heritage, often ignored by politics, in an effort to rebuild a fragmented often uncertain identity.

Abu-Jaber and Halaby seek to touch upon the psychological and cultural dimension of diasporic consciousness of the concept of "home". When reading, *Arabian Jazz* and *West of the Jordan,* it is deciphered that they focus on the Jordanian and Palestinian case of immigration to U.S by exploring issues of migration ordeals, hybridity and home. They

often portray how migrants build a certain paradigm concerning the sense of belonging in the light of hybridized identities. These novels' female characters undergo emblemic mutation in search of a safe space, called "home", in a hostile environment. What characterizes both Abu-Jaber and Halaby's contribution to studies of Arab diaspora in the U.S. is that "home" in the native land is dwelling just in their memories and in the stories their parents used to recount. Home is a place with which they have no physical contact; however, it stays a myth of origins which occupied a certain geographical location and stayed ambiguous, unreachable imaginative space.

Abu-Jaber's *Arabian Jazz* explores issues of racism, ethnicity, shattered identities and a constant cultural duality. It also delves into the lives of an Arab-American family, the Rammouds, who live in 1990s Euclid, New York. The novel traces contradictory conceptions of the notion of "home" in the diaspora. It sheds light on Matussem Rammoud, an immigrant Jordanian married to an Irish-Catholic American woman. After his wife's death, Matussem was left alone with a heavy responsibility of raising two girls, Jemora and Melvina. In fact, Abu-Jaber portrays Matussem as an aimless man, liberated by the sense of unbelonging, left with an unfixed definition of "home", an image quite oppositional to what is expected from an Arab immigrant in the diaspora. He sees that it is little use in belonging to any nation, and declares:" it is all the same wherever, that there is a false distinction between states in America or even countries around the world" (ABU-JABER. D, 1993: 39). Matussem's refusal of belonging to his country of origins gives allusion to the classic example of wandering rootless, unattached to any country, culture or community.

Moving to the second generation, Matussem's daughters are left without parental guidance, without memory or heritage, struggling against unfair deeds of a racist society. The novel follows the Rammouds' search for a better understanding of their place in the American society by probing their Jordanian ancestral lineage and their contemporary American experiences. Abu-Jaber describes the complicated racial and cultural predicaments of Arab identity:

> It's so confounding when you deal with race and cultural identity, and that's a big question mark for a cultural entity like the Arabs because there is so much fluidity and there are so many different strains of identity and cultures that make up Arab peoples. We tend to think of race as definitive marker of identity but you find out that you can look different ways. My dad says that the Arabs are neither black nor white, they are wheat-colored, so that was this idea that there is a way that you can be multi-identified and you can look many different ways. (ABU-JABER. D, 1993: 15-16)

Abu-Jabers's recognition of the ambiguous racial identity of Arabs reveals her discomfort with the use of race as a "definitive marker of identity" because of its inability to cover or encompass multiple Arab experiences and realities. She, therefore, insists on the 'fluidity' of Arab identity and explains that "Arabness" cannot be determined simply by looking at "a certain way" and adds that this ambiguity often makes people uncomfortable.

While Matussem shows a contradictory image of the conventional Arab immigrant experiences of cultural discrimination in the diaspora by being comfortable not to belong to any nation, Jemorah, Malvina, and his sister Fatima's view of home is actually torn between the original and the host country. The Rammoud sisters both born and raised in the U.S. appear dissatisfied with their circumscribed lifestyle because they find themselves 'othered' by their community and unable to come to terms with being Arab-American women. Though their father denies his belonging to Jordan, Jemorah and Melvina feel that they are different from the other communities and struggle to find a place within a predominately white society. George points out:" home is a way of establishing difference in terms of patterns of inclusion and exclusion" and joins Rushdie's argument of if roots are a conservative myth, then all the homesickness is a fiction, "should we then look for ways to move beyond 'home' to resist and unlearn seductive pleasures of belonging? And is such a move possible? (GEORGE. R, 1996: 99-100). Rammoud sisters recognize their Arab descent yet they seek to re-construct a new sense of "home, not in Jordan but in the diaspora.

At this point, it is relevant to draw upon Gloria Anzaldua's *Borderlands/La Frontiera- the New Mestiza* in which she reflects on issues of borders, exile, trauma of home, and basically psychological borders that do not stick to a certain geographical space. Anzaldua probes the psychological aspect of diasporic subjectivities as mediating between oppressed in the motherland and discriminated in the diaspora. She maintains that the ambivalence from the clash of voices results in emotional states of perplexity. The Mestiza's dual or multiple personality is plagued by psychic restlessness (ANZALDUA.G, 2007:100). The psychic restlessness is clearly manifested in Jemorah and Melvina's displacement, they are torn between Matussem's rejection of belonging and their aunt Fatima's "desire to have that land to call "home" (ABU-JABER. D, 1993: 39). Abu-Jaber's Arab-American characters stay of the limbo of cross-cultural identity, torn between a traumatic past in the native land and difficulties of integration in the host country. Arabian Jazz characters are identified as people of colour who stand in inter-ethnic solidarity with other marginalized communities.

Laila Halaby's *West of the Jordan* explores hybridized realities of Arab immigrants in the U.S. its confessional and intimate entries give the impression of reading a series of personal journals and diaries of four late teenager Palestinian cousins: Hala, Soraya, Mawal and Khadija. Each of the cousins tells her own multiple facets of diasporic experiences, their struggle to reach self-identification on the basis of gender and cultural identity. As hybrid subjects suffering from cross-cultural influences, the four cousins try to achieve a certain balance between Arab and American culture and find themselves as mediators between two distinct cultural environments. Each of the female characters positions herself differently against their diasporic background in spite of the fact that they belong to the same ethnic community and the same family.

The sense of loss and displacement related to the second-generation immigrants is vested in the character of Khadija. Born in California and never been to Palestine, Khadija shows no interest in her Arab origins and she is not attached to the U.S either since she does not feel comfortable with her family's strict mentality and imposition of Arab culture and lifestyle to which she is not familiar and shows dissatisfaction with many aspects of the American culture and lifestyle.

Khadija behaves as straddling two cultures with which she does not feel any strong identification. Right at the beginning of her entry, one can decipher Khadija's anxiety with her name, the first element of her identity. Khadija complains:" in America my name sounds like someone throwing up or falling off a bicycle. If they can get the first part of it right, the 'kha' part, it comes out like clearing your throat after eating ice cream. Usually they say Kadeeja though, which sounds clattering clumsy" (HALABY. L, 2003: 36). The first trouble Khadija faces with her identity is her very name, the most significant symbol of her cultural identity. in order to escape the American prejudices of her name, Khadija decided to choose a Western name, this indicates that Khadija's name makes her feel marginalized and the Western name like Diana would make her feel more integrated in the American society. Khadija said:" even though Diana is a pretty western name, I thought I would like to have it, so I told my friends at school that I am going to change my name to Diana and they should call me that from now on…" but you don't look like Diana," Roberta told me…" what do I look like then?" …" I don't know. Like a Khadija, I guess" (HALABY. L, 2003: 37-38)

Having felt that her name connects her to the Arab community, it is noticeable that Khadija's attempt to change her name is itself an attempt to cut relation with her ancestors' culture because she finds herself urged to stay connected to a place that she does not even know and does exist in her parents' memories and lifestyle. Braziel and Mannur focus on the necessity of analysing the descendent generations of immigrants as related to the land of origins since their experience is quite different from the previous generation who are, in this case, Arab born. The critics suggest that the ambivalent aspect of these people's collective memory which" contains those all-important traces from an older past, those deeper levels of values, attitudes, and behaviours, clues of belonging to a certain "home" land is what makes a gap between the two generations (BRAZIEL. J, MANNUR. A, 2005:15). This collective memory is what creates consistency and continuity in diasporic communities. Khadija has no individual memories of Palestine; she feels a burden of holding and affiliating to a culture to which she has no physical or emotional contact. Khadija is just coping with a set of attitudes, behaviours, and values imposed by her family and find it impossible to relate to them.

Diaspora is not a nostalgic space that urges to look back and return to the land of origins but to accept the premises of hybridity, heterogeneity, and multiplicity that surrounds the young generations' view upon their identity. Through Khadija's experiences, it is possible to decode the burden of hyphenated identity. She tries to override the prejudices that her name holds to prove that she is American as anyone else. What is problematic about her view on her identity is that she cannot accept that she can be both Arab and American, in an argument with her mother Khadija resist to identify herself as Palestinian by origins and declares: "you are Palestinian but I am American" (HALABY. L, 2003: 74). In fact, in the case of diasporic communities the absence of common ground creates a gap between the two generations, mother and daughter are both trapped in tropes of self-identification that is basically mutually exclusive; however, they are not aware that these two different views can be complementary and enriching to each other.

Different from what the first-generation assume as the native land, the establishment of a strong connection with the U.S because more important than nurturing the memories

of the motherland. In "Diaspora and Nation: Migration into Other Pasts", Andreas Husseyn points out:

> The traditional understanding of the diaspora as loss of homeland and desire to return itself becomes largely irrelevant for the second and third generations who are no longer conversant in language and culture of the country of their ancestors. Whether or not they were to describe themselves as diasporic subjects, the key problems lie in their relation to the national culture they live in rather than to the imaginary of roots in the culture of ancestors. It is primarily a problem of life in the present and the negotiation with the host culture (HUSSEYN. A, 2003:162).

Husseyn suggests that the ulterior generations of immigrants, as in the case of Khadija and Soraya, see the connections with the host country crucial in the sense that the host environment is what defines how they should live and how they are looked upon by people who belong to that community.

Throughout both novels, *Arabian Jazz* and *West of the Jordan*, Arab-American characters tell stories related to the Arab community in the U.S. to get in contact with the collective memory which serves in reshaping cultural identity. Through the stories they narrate, they set bridges of understanding that connect them to the Arab community as Pollack previously stated that memory is a component of the feeling of both individual and collective identity and is extremely important in the feeling of existence, continuity and coherence of a person or a group in its construction of itself (POLLACK. M, 2006: 204). By the end of both novels, what is noticed is that the integration in Arab community that the characters feel sometimes and their intention to go back to Palestine to get in contact with the land of dreams where their parents' memory and culture pertain does not mean that they have suddenly accepted and become comfortable with the Arab culture but rather to explore the other unknown side of their identity which stayed unexplored and often denied. The characters are considered diasporic subjects and that comes from their need to assimilate, to belong to the American society, passing through the conviction that it is something out of reach, and finally getting to a feeling of dislocation and start searching for "home" in the midst of Arab and American distinct realities.

5. Limitations

Results of the study cannot be representative of all EFL students in our universities. However, findings should be more reliable and valid on a larger extent by using the same instruments several times, so that one can know if students' translation problems can be reduced significantly through the vocabulary instruction and group work used in the experiment.

6. Conclusion

At the end of the experience, the results make it possible to determine whether or not students have progressed in learning translated words, as well as the degree of progress, by comparing the progression in each task. To this effect, the study helps to approach the

students' translation competence with regard to the two task conditions: a) isolated-word translation vocabulary. b) Phrase translation within a sentence context.

The findings of the study revealed that vocabulary instruction through group work enhanced by short text context, definitions and examples is significantly more positive than the same vocabulary instruction without examples. However, this result is performed only in learning translated words with respect to isolated-word translation vocabulary. At the end, we may conclude that much of the difference in the score tests can be attributed to vocabulary instruction. Thus, the results obtained may be useful in assessing the efficacy of both vocabulary instruction methodologies designed for both the experimental and the control group.

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