

Bias and Neutrality in Political Translation "A Case of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict"

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Abstract:

The current research paper aims at investigating the impact of translation bias on the translation process of sensitive news headlines. To conduct the study three participants were selected. The participants were 3rd Translation-Division students at Dept. Of English, Faculty of Languages & Translation, University of Zawia. To collect the qualitative data required for the study, a translation test was utilized. The translation test consisted of six selected news headlines from two Israeli newspapers, *The Times of Israel*, and *ArutzSheva*, three news agencies *Agence France Press (AFP)*, *Reuters* and *BBC*, and *Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor*, an independent organization for the protection of human rights. These six selected news headlines addressed some incidents related to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. Participants were asked to translate the news headlines into Arabic. The results of the study show that the Palestinian and Syrian participants resorted to dynamic renderings of the source text due to the high political sensitivity of the context that marks the news headlines. Faithfulness became irrelevant and the reality and truth of the source text were questioned and often subverted in the translation. The reported results further revealed that these translations contain terms and ideas that have changed the original intended meaning. The study further demonstrates that the translators' association with the text could affect the translation and the ideology of the target text especially in contexts of political conflicts. The researcher then ended up with some recommendations for translation students, teachers and translators.

Key Words: Bias, Neutrality, Political Translation, News Headlines, Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.

التحيز والحيادية في الترجمة السياسية: دراسة حالة النزاع الإسرائيلي الفلسطيني

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المستخلص:

تهدف الورقة البحثية الحالية إلى دراسة تأثير تحيز الترجمة على عملية ترجمة عناوين الأخبار الحساسة. لإجراء الدراسة، تم اختيار ثلاثة مشاركين. كانت المشاركات ثلاث طالبات في السنة الثالثة في شعبة الترجمة بكلية اللغات والترجمة، جامعة الزاوية. لجمع البيانات المطلوبة للدراسة، تم استخدام اختبار ترجمة. اختبار الترجمة يتكون من ستة عناوين أخبار مختارة من صحيفتين إسرائيليتين وهما (تايمز أوف إسرائيل) و(أرتس شيفا)، وثلاث وكالات أنباء هي (وكالة فرانس برس)، (رويترز) و(بي بي سي)، ومراقب حقوق الإنسان الأورو- متوسطي، وهي منظمة مستقلة لحماية حقوق الإنسان. تناولت هذه العناوين الستة المختارة بعض الحوادث المتعلقة بالصراع الإسرائيلي الفلسطيني. طُلب من المشاركات ترجمة العناوين الإخبارية إلى العربية. تظهر نتائج الدراسة أن المشاركات الفلسطينيات والسوريات لجأت إلى أساليب ديناميكية في ترجمة النص المصدر بسبب الحساسية السياسية العالية للسياق الذي يميز العناوين الإخبارية. أصبحت الحيادية غير ذات صلة، وشُكك في واقع وحقيقة النص المصدر وغالباً ما تم تقويضها في الترجمة. كما كشفت النتائج أن هذه الترجمات تحتوي على مصطلحات وأفكار غيرت المعنى الأصلي المقصود. توضح الدراسة أيضاً أن ارتباط المترجمين بالنص يمكن أن يؤثر على الترجمة وأيديولوجية النص الهدف، خاصة في سياقات النزاعات السياسية. ثم انتهى الباحث ببعض التوصيات لطلاب الترجمة والمعلمين والمترجمين.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التحيز، الحيادية، الترجمة السياسية، عناوين الأخبار، النزاع الإسرائيلي الفلسطيني .

Introduction:

1. Background of the Study :

Translation is recognized as an essential tool for bridging linguistic and cultural gaps, facilitating communication, and fostering understanding across diverse languages and societies. However, translation is not merely a linguistic task; it is also considered a process involving significant cultural and ethical responsibility. Decisions made during translation can have a profound impact on how a text is understood and perceived by the target audience. In this context, two key concepts are often discussed: **Bias** and **Neutrality**.

Bias in translation is understood as the unintended or intentional influence exerted by the translator's beliefs, perspectives or cultural background on the translated text. Bias often appears in various forms, such as through word choice, tone, emphasis, or even the omission of certain details. When bias is introduced into a translated text, the intended message may be altered, potentially affecting the audience's understanding and leading to misunderstandings or the enforcement of stereotypes. For instance, biased translation can unintentionally describe certain groups negatively, distort historical narratives, or misrepresent social and political contexts (Van Dijk, 2006).

On the other hand, neutrality in translation is considered the ideal standard that translators are expected to achieve. Neutrality involves ensuring that the original message is conveyed as accurately and faithfully as possible, without the imposition of the translator's personal beliefs, emotions, or cultural assumptions. This practice is recognized as requiring a deep understanding of both the source and target languages and cultures, which enables the translator to convey meaning objectively and with respect for the original content. True neutrality is difficult to attain, as translation is inherently interpretive, but it is essential for ensuring that the translated text is credible and trustworthy (Bassnett, 2002).

2. Review of Related Literature :

2.1 What is Bias?

Bias is an inherent part of human nature, and it can manifest in written texts in various ways. Understanding bias is essential when analyzing written content. Bias can be defined as the presence of unfair or prejudiced opinions in written texts. It can be hidden or obvious, but its impact is significant, as it can influence how readers perceive information. Understanding bias in written texts is crucial for critical thinking and effective communication.

Recognizing bias enables readers to question the information presented and form a well-rounded perspective. (<https://bmhtraining.co.uk/understanding-written-texts-part-2-bias/>).

2.2. Common Types of Bias :

According to Wallett (2023), bias falls into the following categories:

- **Confirmation Bias:** This occurs when an author selectively presents information that supports their existing beliefs. An instance of this type is *"The study only highlighted the positive effects of the new drug while ignoring potential side effects."*
- **Stereotyping:** Authors may rely on stereotypes when describing people or groups, perpetuating prejudices. *"The lazy teenager spent the entire day on the couch."* is an example of age-based bias.
- **Political Bias:** This bias can be seen in political commentary that favours one party or ideology over others, potentially distorting the facts to fit the narrative.
- **Cultural Bias:** Cultural bias can manifest through cultural stereotypes or misunderstandings. *"People from that country are all the same."* is an example of this bias.
- **Language Bias:** This bias occurs when a certain language is used to favour or disfavour a particular group. For example, referring to one group as *"migrants"* and another as *"immigrants"* can carry different connotations.

2.3. Bias in Translation :

Within the domain of translation, **Bias** refers to the translator's act of violating the principle of truth or sincerity and hence presenting the translated material in a new form that is either beatified/positive or distorted/negative (Simo & Ahmed, 2023).

According to Baker (2006), translation is not a neutral process; it is inherently influenced by power relations, and the translator's choices often reflect their own cultural, social, or political positioning. Baker (2006: 193) notes that "translators may select words, structures, or styles that reflect their own values or the values of the institutions they are working for". This means that the translation process is rarely a straightforward, objective reproduction of the source text; instead, it is mediated by subjective choices that can introduce bias.

Similarly, Lefevere (1992) and Venuti (1995) argue that translation is often marked by a "domesticating" process, where the translator's language and cultural context are privileged over the source language. This can lead to a distortion of the original meaning to fit the expectations or ideologies of the target audience.

Hatim and Mason (1990: 38) emphasize that “translators are often forced to make decisions that reflect not only the linguistic or syntactic constraints of the target language but also the socio-political context in which the translation is produced”. They suggest that bias in translation can manifest in different ways, including lexical choices, omissions and the manipulation of tone or style.

2.4. Types of Translation Bias :

Bias in translation can take many forms, reflecting both the translator’s personal perspective and the broader cultural, social, or ideological influences at play. Here are some common types of bias found in translation (Venuti, 2012; Baker, 2018; Pennycook, 2012; House, 2015; Snell-Hornby, 2006):

1. **Cultural Bias:** This occurs when the translator interprets a text in a way that reflects their own cultural norms or assumptions. Certain phrases, ideas, or concepts may be altered or omitted to align with the translator’s understanding of the target culture, sometimes distorting the original meaning.
2. **Ideological Bias:** When a translator’s personal beliefs, political views, or affiliations influence how they translate a text. For instance, a translator with a particular political stance may unintentionally skew the translation to favor or oppose certain ideas, parties, or ideologies.
3. **Gender Bias:** This involves making translation choices that reflect traditional or stereotypical views about gender roles. For example, translating gender-neutral terms with an assumed gender or privileging masculine over feminine forms in languages with grammatical gender.
4. **Linguistic Bias:** Bias can arise from the structure or nuances of the languages involved. Translators may favor certain linguistic structures or vocabulary that align more with their personal or professional style, even if it deviates from the source material.
5. **Ethnocentric Bias:** When a translator assumes that the source culture is inherently superior to the target culture, they may inadvertently introduce changes that reflect an ethnocentric view, such as simplifying or modifying elements of the source culture to make it more.

2.5. How Bias Occurs in Translation :

Translation is a product performed by translators who are people, who due to belonging to varied groups, come under the influence of the policies, beliefs, traditions, orientation, ideologies etc. of such groups. Accordingly,

translators do not take an in-between stand but rather become biased in performing their job of translation; especially that of political and/or journalistic discourse (Simo & Ahmed, 2023).

Baker (2018) mentions some ways of how bias might be introduced during translation:

- **Lexical Choices:** This includes selecting words or phrases with loaded connotations that align with a specific viewpoint. An example could be translating "*freedom fighters*" as "*terrorists*" (or vice versa) depending on the audience's ideological stance.

- **Omissions or Additions:** These are done by deliberately leaving out or including content that changes the original meaning.

- **Contextual Interpretation:** The translator applies cultural or ideological assumptions that alter the intended message.

- **Pressure from External Forces:** Translators adapt translations to suit political, organizational, or editorial agendas. Translation is often subject to external pressures, including political, organizational, or editorial influences, which can shape how the original message is conveyed to fit specific agendas.

2.6. Strategies to Minimize Bias :

While absolute neutrality in translation is often an ideal rather than a reality, acknowledging and addressing bias is critical to maintaining integrity and accuracy in translation. Understanding the types and sources of bias can effectively help in implementing strategies to mitigate its effects (Ingram, 2023). Thus, translators can create balanced and effective translations that respect both the source and target cultures. Here are some suggested strategies to minimize bias in translation:

- ❖ **Adherence to Source Text:** Newmark (1981) stresses prioritizing faithfulness to the source text by preserving its original meaning and style as much as possible.

- ❖ **Dynamic Equivalence:** Nida (1964) recommends using this approach when adapting the text to the target audience's cultural and linguistic context without altering its fundamental message.

- ❖ **Critical Self-Awareness:** According to Venuti (1995), translators should continually assess their biases and strive to minimize their influence.

- ❖ **Peer Review and Collaboration:** Pym (1998) thinks that having translations reviewed by peers or cultural consultants can help identify and address biases.

❖ **Transparency:** House (1997) claims that translators should clearly communicate the translation's purpose and any challenges or decisions that may have influenced its neutrality.

❖ **Education and Training:** Gambier & Van Doorslaer (2010) emphasize the importance of equipping translators with the necessary skills to recognize and manage biases through workshops and training programs.

3. Previous Studies on Bias in Political Translation:

In political translation, translating news headlines is particularly full of challenges, as headlines often carry significant ideological and emotional weight. In his study, Ahmed (2019) investigates how translators mediate news headlines about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, demonstrating the extent to which political ideologies influence translation decisions. For example, the phrase "*suicide bombers endanger Israeli lives*" is translated into Arabic using terms like "شهداء العمليات الاستشهادية" which convey a more positive connotation in the Palestinian context. This translation not only alters the tone of the original text but also aligns with the target audience's ideological perspective. Ahmad (2019) adds another example:

➤ *Suicide Bombers Endanger Israeli Lives*

- فدائيون يُثيرون رعب الصهاينة.
- استشهاديين يُدبّون الرعب في قلوب الصهاينة.
- مُنقّذو العمليات الاستشهادية يُثيرون رعب الصهاينة.
- مقاومون يبثون الرعب في نفوس الصهاينة.

In the source text, the Israeli reporter used such expressive lexical choices as '*suicide bomber*' to serve his attitudes and those of his Israeli or pro-Israeli readership. This lexis is highly charged since it contains negative ideological associations that justify the Israelis acts of violence against the Palestinians. S/He used the verb '*endanger*' to show that the Israelis are victims and to picture the Palestinians as agents who perform aggressive acts against them. In the translation, the participating translators transferred the headline with highly emotive overtones. The term "فدائيون" does not match '*suicide bombers*' in the source text. It is highly expressive as it refers to people who have devoted themselves and lives to their cause. By transforming the term '*suicide bombers*' into

فدائيون، "مقاومون"، "استشهاديين"، "منقذو العمليات الاستشهادية"

the rendering show maximal mediation by the use of lexical items that are more in circulation in the target context. In doing so, the translators subvert

the ideological connotations of the original. By rendering the verb 'endanger' which holds a negative connotation into

يُبْثُونُ / يُثِيرُونَ / يَدْبُونُ الرعب في قلوب الصهاينة،

the translators succeeded in changing the status of Israelis from being victims to being so weak and coward.

Similarly, Fairclough's (1995) reported results reveal that manipulations of media discourse are not merely linguistic but also reflect broader socio-political dynamics. Translators of politically sensitive texts often act as cultural mediators, balancing fidelity to the source text with the expectations and values of the target audience. Here are some of Fairclough's (1995) reported biased translations:

➤ *Rioter Shot Dead by IDF may have been Armed, says army*

- الاحتلال الإسرائيلي: استشهاد متظاهر فلسطيني على يد قوات الاحتلال كان بحوزته سلاح على حد زعمهم
- فلسطيني استشهد على يد قوات الاحتلال الإسرائيلي كان يحمل سلاحاً حسب ما يزعم جيش الاحتلال
- متظاهر استشهد على يد قوات الاحتلال الصهيوني كان حالاً للسلاح حسب ما يرويهِ جيش الاحتلال

The word 'rioter' in the source text is highly evaluative as it conveys semantic associations which picture Palestinians as initiators of violence and aggression. The euphemistic linguistic term 'IDF' is also used to portray the Israelis as self-defenders, so whatever actions they take are warranted. The reporter used the neutral verb 'said' with entities that refer to the Israelis.

As for the translators, they turned to neutral reconstruction which empties the message of the ideological connotations embodied in the propositions of the source text when rendering 'rioter' into "فلسطيني، متظاهر، متظاهر فلسطيني". They made some modifications for ideologically loaded lexes. For instance, the term 'IDF' was translated into

"قوات الاحتلال الإسرائيلي/ الصهيوني"

and the verb 'shot dead' into "استشهد". The addition of

حسبما يرويهِ؛ حسب زعمهم؛ على حدّ/حسب ما يزعم
injects all participants' doubt and suspicion in the source text.

➤ *Israel Probes Killing of Gaza Amputee after New Footage Surface*

- الاحتلال يزعم فتح تحقيق بظروف استشهاد المُقْعَد ابوتريا
- الاحتلال يَدْعِي فتح تحقيق باستشهاد المُقْعَد ابوتريا
- الاحتلال يفتح تحقيقاً في استشهاد ابوتريا
- الاحتلال يحقق في ظروف استشهاد ابوتريا

The reporter in the original text reflects a positive image of Israel in that it cares about human rights and how shameful to commit such a horrible act it

is! And that it is serious about finding the one who killed the disabled Palestinian. On the other hand, translators re-contextualized the ideology of the news headline by first changing "Israel" into "الاحتلال" which holds a negative connotation. Then they added words like/يُدَّعي يزعم/ to discredit the faithfulness of the source text. However, two translators only rendered 'probe' into its direct equivalent in Arabic "يُحَقِّقُ/ يفتح تحقيق", distancing themselves from any modifications or interventions in the source text.

➤ *Israel is Building New Settlements in The West Bank*

▪ إسرائيل تبني مستوطنات جديدة في الضفة الغربية

In media report, "الاحتلال الإسرائيلي في قطاع غزة" can be translated as "*Israeli presence in the west bank*" to reduce the impact of the term and mitigate the severity of the situation.

This type of framing reduces the lives of Palestinians in Gaza to a singular narrative focused on violence, ignoring the ongoing blockade and its humanitarian consequences.

Still within the domain of bias in political translation, Yair & Sulitzeanu - Kenan (2018) set to empirically address the question of violations of political neutrality in the context of media coverage. They think that bias in political translation reflect a widespread social reality in which actions and messages that are perceived as politically biased, are considered inappropriate and even morally reprehensible. They go further to claim that the term "*political bias*" tends to be understood as "lack of neutrality" and as unfair favoritism towards one political group, candidate or ideology. In this study, respondents read a 350-word article, presented as a news article which elaborated about the actions and statements of Israel's Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, following a series of violent attacks by Palestinians against Israelis, which had occurred several days earlier. After translating the article, respondents answered a question regarding bias in the article.

The reported results show that 40% of answers consider political bias a very serious problem. The majority of the respondents considered political bias as "the Israeli media's biggest problem" (ibid: 7). They insist that political have harmful consequences, including reduced trust in the media and in political institutions.

Hamdan's et. al. (2021) study presents a critical analysis of a sample of Arabic-English media translations sponsored by MEMRI (Middle Eastern Media Research Institution) and related to the Palestinian-Israeli 'conflict' in special texts taken from Arabic newspapers and magazines. The results of the study show that translation has been employed as a tool to propagate the views and ideologies of the translators in a good number of cases. Such

translations contain terms and ideas that have changed the original intended meaning. The study further demonstrates that the translators' association with the text could affect the translation and the ideology of the target text especially in contexts of political conflicts.

Careful examinations of the translations reveal that MEMRI's translators have utilized three strategies to hide their ideologically motivated mismatches in the target text. These strategies are *substitution*, *addition* and *omission*.

The following is an example of the use of *substitution* as a strategy to serve an ideologically driven purpose. The example presents the case of substitution of a word with another.

a. Source Text

ورغم أن أحداث الهولوكوست وقعت في الماضي، إلا أن محنة الفلسطيني مازالت مستمرة في الحاضر. ومن ثمَّ يصعبُ جداً أن نطلب من الضحايا الذين يعانون من احتلالٍ لوطنهم ومصادرةٍ لأراضيهم وممتلكاتهم، ومعاناة أحبائهم في المعتقلات وحرمانهم من حقوقهم الإنسانية أن يتعرفوا على معاناة الآخر.

Target Text:

"While the events of the Holocaust happened in the past, the Palestinian suffering still continues, and therefore it is very difficult to ask these victims – who suffer the occupation of their homeland, the continuous usurpation of their land and property, the suffering of their loved ones in prisons, and a denial of their humanitarian rights – to study about the suffering of others."

While the Arabic text uses the word "معتقلات", "*detention centers/camps*" to refer to the places where the Palestinian prisoners are kept by Israel, the translated text uses the word "prisons". The word "*prison*" is used to describe the place where someone is imprisoned and is put there as a result of committing a crime that breaks a criminal law. However, "معتقلات" refers to the place where the person is arrested, detained and his/her rights are violated without referring to any law or legislation. A fair and faithful translation of the word "معتقلات" is probably "*concentration camps*" or "*detention centers*". A "*concentration camp*" refers to a camp in which people are detained or confined, usually under harsh conditions and without regard to legal norms of arrest and imprisonment that are acceptable in a "constitutional democracy". As is clear, the translator's word choice in this example has reduced the intensity and brutality associated with the source-text term.

The other strategy detected by Hamdan's et. al. (2021) study is *omission*. Omission, if done intentionally to serve an ideological purpose, it can change the meaning and intentions of the source text. It can reduce the quality of the

translated text, promote a different understanding which deludes the reader from the original meaning and thus creates false ideas and concepts. They cite the following example:

a. Source Text

استخدم المستوطنون جسد الفتى المقدسي محمد حسين أبو خضير (١٧ عاماً)، من قرية شغاف شمال القدس المحتلة، لانتقامهم المقدس من خلال تعذيبه وحرقه حتى الموت....

b. Target Text

The settlers used the body of 17-year-old Muhammad Hussein Abu Khdeir, from Shuafat in **northern Jerusalem**, to carry out their sacred [act of] vengeance by torturing him and burning him to death

The Arabic text gives details regarding Abu Khdeir's village. It is called Shuafat and is located in the north of occupied Jerusalem المحتلة شمال القدس. The text refers to Jerusalem as an occupied entity. However, the translator in the English text refers to it as 'Jerusalem' only and omits the word occupied المحتلة. This omission removes the meaning indicated by the word 'occupied' and its implications including, but not limited to, the existence of a dominant illegitimate power, violations, stolen land and borders, etc. The translator has manipulated the translated text through omission which resulted in highlighting and probably promoting the Israeli narrative regarding the **status of Jerusalem as the united capital of Israel**.

The last violation detected by Hamdan's et. al. (2021) study is **addition**. Addition in translation is the process of adding a word, a phrase, a sentence or more to the target text which do not exist in the source text. This addition to the text brings certain non-existing concepts which produce a different meaning. The problem of bias becomes worse when addition is undertaken by a news agency or a translator with a view to promoting an ideological perspective while interacting with a social, cultural and political text. The new elements added to the translation can either introduce a certain concept or meaning which is not originally there in the source text or reduce the quality and the purpose intended by the original text. They cite the following example:

a. Source Text

قامت البلديات العربية والإسرائيلية المتعاقبة بإضافتها (المنطقة غير الدينية) للمدينة وتقسيمها إلى قدس إسرائيلية وقدس عربية تفصلهما حواجز نفسية وسياسية.

b. Target Text

Consecutive Arab and Israeli municipalities annexed [the nonreligious area] to the [holy] city, and it was divided into Israeli Jerusalem and Arab Jerusalem, which are separated by **psychological and political barriers but not by any [physical] wall or barrier**.

The Arabic text 'حواجز نفسية وسياسية' 'psychological and political barriers' describes the barriers that divide Jerusalem into Arab East Jerusalem and Israeli West Jerusalem as being both psychological and political. However, the translated text contains an addition introducing a new meaning that was not included in the original text. The addition of 'but not by any [physical] wall or barrier' to the translated text indicates the non-existence of any real or noticeable barrier that divides the two parts of the city. The translator manipulated the original text through twisting facts and changing realities.

4. Conclusion :

From the previous review of related literature, it becomes clear that the instances of ideologically driven violations in target texts in the studies listed above were not the result of cross-cultural misunderstandings, nor were they the outcome of language deficiencies in the translators. Put differently, they were not translation errors in the real sense of the term 'error'. Instead, they were the product of intentional biases adopted by translators for ideological and political purposes.

5. An Analytical Study of Bias and Neutrality in Political Translation :

5.1. Statement of Problem :

The translator's bias usually interferes in the messages conveyed within the text intended for the target audience. This bias may be explicit, clearly noticed reactions and opinions, or implicit manipulation with the linguistic choices. In either case, the translator becomes more visible. The social, political, and cultural environment that surrounds the translator can be manifested through his linguistic choices and acts of addition, omission, substitution can be applied by the translator.

5.2. Purpose of the Study :

The current paper aims at presenting the concept of bias in translation in terms of its definition, nature and characteristics, types, reasons behind bias and the measures/steps to minimize bias in translation. Some example texts, where personal, cultural or ideological biases influence the translation process, are analyzed with the purpose of evaluating instances of bias and neutrality.

5.3. Research Question and Hypothesis :

The problem of the study can be stated in the following main question:

To what extent does the translator's bias interfere in the translation process?

The researcher hypothesizes that bias in translation is the translator's act of violating the principle of truth or sincerity and hence presenting the

translated material in a new form that is either beautified/positive or distorted/negative. She further assumes the fact that such a behaviour on the part of the translator has increased scholars' interest to explore the reasons behind it and specify the reasons and/or factors, namely personal, ideological, social, political, etc. (Simo & Ahmed, 2023).

5.4. Methodology :

5.4.1. Research Design :

The study follows a structured methodology that includes:

a. Participant Selection: Third-year students from the specified backgrounds.

b. Translation Tasks: Participants are asked to translate selected journalistic and political texts.

c. Procedure: The translation test was administered in a classroom at Faculty of Languages & Translation/University of Zawia. Each student is given approximately 30 minutes to complete the translation test. Participants are not informed of the presence of other students, ensuring that each sample remains independent and unaffected by external influences. Each student believes they are the sole participant in the study.

d. Analysis Criteria: The translations are examined based on linguistic choices, cultural influences, and potential bias.

e. Comparative Evaluation: Translations from different backgrounds are compared to highlight differences and trends. The study adopts comparative analyses, collecting data from different news sources where English texts are to be translated into Arabic. Source texts and their equivalents are analyzed for evidence of bias in political translation.

f. Findings and Discussion: The study will summarize the extent of bias in translations and its impact on translation studies.

5.4.2. Participants :

This study focuses on analyzing translations from three different linguistic and cultural backgrounds: Palestine, Syria, and Libya. The participants are three Third-Year students from Translation Division at Faculty of Languages & Translation/University of Zawia. The researcher aims to assess bias in the translation of political texts. Because these students have received academic training in political translation—and have studied related subjects as part of their curriculum—their work offers valuable insights into how regional and cultural factors can influence translation choices.

Moreover, a *Purposive Sampling Technique* was adopted to select these participants to be tested. Patton (2002: 230) argued that “the logic and power of purposive sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in

depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry". Therefore, a Palestinian 23-year female student from Gaza Strip, the West Bank was purposefully selected. Three years ago, Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and forced civilian displacement have driven her and her family to flee their home country in search of safety in Libya.

On the other hand, both Syrian and Libyan participants were selected by using **Random Sampling Technique**. Random sampling technique ensures that each and every member of the population has an equal probability of being selected (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006). This decision was taken on the basis that these two randomly chosen participants were expected to produce unbiased translations of the translation test items.

5.4.3. Data Collection Instrument :

To collect the qualitative data required for the current study, a translation test was utilized. The translation test consisted of six selected news headlines from two Israeli newspapers, *The Times of Israel*, and *Arutz Sheva*, three news agencies *Agence France Press (AFP)*, *Reuters* and *BBC*, and *Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor*, an independent organization for the protection of human rights (Hamdan's et. al. ,2021; Ahmed, 2019; Jihad et.al., 2021). These six selected news headlines addressed some incidents related to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. Participants were asked to translate the news headlines into Arabic (See Appendix A).

Furthermore, the concept of the translation test in this study was adapted from the one used in an earlier study conducted by Ahmed (2019) then amended by the researcher to suit her study goals.

Before submitting the translation test to the participants, its validity (the degree to which a questionnaire measures what it was intended to measure) and reliability (the extent to which a measurement gives consistent results) were carefully checked through presenting it to an experienced teacher at the Translation Division, English Dept., Faculty of Languages & Translation/ University of Zawia. She presented several comments and suggestions. Some headlines were reconsidered and replaced by more suitable headlines according to the experienced teachers' suggestions. Having checked the suggested modifications, she reported that the test was valid and appropriate to achieve the purpose of the study.

5.5. Data Analysis :

Below are the examples with numbered labels. In each case, the translations include the corresponding nationality: NP (Palestinian), RS (Syrian), and AL (Libyan), respectively.

▪ **First Headline :**

• **Original Text**

"The Palestinian resistance targeted Israeli cities with long-range rockets in response to Israeli airstrikes on civilians in Gaza."

• **Translations :**

1. NP (Palestinian)

• "أطلقت المقاومة الفلسطينية عدة رشقات صاروخية بعيدة المدى باتجاه الأراضي الفلسطينية المحتلة رداً على الهجوم الإسرائيلي بحق المدنيين في غزة."

2. RS (Syrian):

• "استهدفت قوات المقاومة الفلسطينية مدن إسرائيلية بصواريخ بعيدة المدى رداً على غارات جوية إسرائيلية على غزة."

3. AL (Libyan):

• "استهدفت المقاومة الفلسطينية بعض المدن المحتلة بصواريخ بعيدة المدى رداً على غارات جوية شنتها إسرائيل على المدنيين في غزة."

❖ **Bias Analysis:**

▪ **NP Translation :**

○ **Changed Words**

Israeli airstrikes → "الهجوم الإسرائيلي" (Israeli attack)

Israeli cities → "الأراضي الفلسطينية المحتلة" (occupied Palestinian territories)

❖ **Bias Level:** This translation reflects a strong political stance, reframing the narrative as the Palestinian resistance targeting occupied territories rather than Israel as a state. The phrases "*Israeli attack*" and (*occupied Palestinian territories*) imply aggressiveness in a way that aligns with a pro-Palestinian narrative.

▪ **RS Translation**

○ **Changed Words**

Addition of the word "قوات" → (Palestinian Resistance Forces)

❖ **Bias Level:** This version mildly alters the tone, presenting the Palestinian actions as defensive. By adding a critical detail like "القوات الفلسطينية المقاومة"، it suggests that Palestinians are simply responding to aggression, aligning with a narrative of self-defense.

▪ **AL Translation**

○ **Changed Words**

Israeli cities → "المدن المحتلة" (occupied Palestinian cities)

❖ **Bias Level:** While still exhibiting some bias through its word choices, this translation remains closer to the original meaning. This version mildly alters the tone, presenting the Palestinian actions as defensive. Producing the

equivalent "المُدُن المُخْتَلَّة", it suggests that Palestinians are simply responding to aggression, aligning with a narrative of self-defense.

Conclusion:

The translation shifts vary according to political and narrative framing. The NP translation is the most biased, strongly aligning with the Palestinian perspective. The RS translation reframes the events as defensive actions, while the AL translation, though still modified, is comparatively less biased.

▪ Second Headline

• Original Text

"Gaza flare-up terror attacks on Israelis tripled in May."

• Translations

1. NP (Palestinian)

- "تصاعدت وتيرة الرشقات الصاروخية المنطلقة من غزة باتجاه الأراضي الفلسطينية المُخْتَلَّة ثلاثة أضعاف قوتها في شهر مايو"

2. RS (Syrian)

- "قامت المقاومة الفلسطينية بالدفاع عن نفسها برّد الهجوم في شهر مايو"

3. AL (Libyan)

- "تضاعفت هجمات المقاومة على إسرائيل بمقدار ثلاثة أضعاف في شهر مايو"

❖ Bias Analysis

▪ NP Translation

The term "terror attacks" is replaced with الرشقات الصاروخية (rocket barrages), softening the original's aggressive tone. Replacing "Israelis" with "الأراضي الفلسطينية المُخْتَلَّة" (occupied Palestinian territories) reinforces a political stance that denies Israel's legitimacy.

○ Changed Words

terror attacks → "الرشقات الصاروخية"

Israelis → "الأراضي الفلسطينية المُخْتَلَّة"

❖ **Bias Level:** High – This translation is highly biased as it reframes the narrative to favor the Palestinian perspective.

▪ RS Translation

The translation reframes the event as "دفاع عن النفس" (self-defense) and "ردّ الهجوم" (attack response) by the Palestinian resistance, omitting mentions of "tripled attacks" or direct reference to "Israelis."

○ Changed Words

Gaza → "القوات الفلسطينية المقاومة" (Palestinian Resistance Forces)

flare-up → "ردّ الهجوم" (response attack)

terror attacks→“عن نفسها بالدفاع”

Omission of “tripled” and “Israelis”

❖ **Bias Level:** Very High – The narrative is completely rewritten to portray the event as legitimate self-defense.

▪ **AL Translation:**

This version retains reference to “إسرائيل” (Israel) while replacing (terror attacks) with “هجمات المقاومة” (resistance attacks), which softens the original’s negative tone slightly.

o **Changed Words**

terror attacks → “هجمات المقاومة”

❖ **Bias Level:** Medium – Although it is the closest to the original in structure, some bias remains through the softened terminology.

Conclusion

➤ NP (Palestinian) is the most biased, reframing the events entirely.

➤ RS (Syrian) also shows extreme bias by portraying the actions as self-defensive.

➤ AL (Libyan) offers a comparatively less biased version, though still with some modification of tone.

▪ **Third Headline**

• **Original Text**

Gazan Man Killed in clashes with troops

• **Translations**

1. NP (Palestinian)

• "استشهد عدد كبير من أبطالنا في غزة إثر قتال مع جنود الكيان الصهيوني"

2. RS (Syrian)

• "استشهد شاب غزوي في اشتباك مسلح مع قوات الاحتلال الإسرائيلي"

3. AL (Libyan)

• "استشهد رجل غزوي في اشتباكات مع جنود إسرائيليين"

❖ **Bias Analysis**

▪ **NP Translation**

The Palestinian participant’s translation uses the term “استشهد” (martyrdom), which conveys a sense of sacrifice and highlights the tragic nature of the event. Showing an addition strategy, the phrase “عدد كبير من أبطالنا” (a large number of our heroes) frames the victims as heroes, aiming to emphasize their significance and the emotional impact of the event. The use of the translation “الكيان الصهيوني” (Zionist entity) refers to Israel in a politically charged manner.

▪ RS Translation

Like the Palestinian participant, the Syrian participant uses the translation “استشهاد” (martyrdom), which conveys a sense of sacrifice and highlights the tragic nature of the event. The term “قوات الاحتلال الإسرائيلي” (Zionist occupying forces) is used to describe the Israeli military forces, emphasizing their role as an occupying force.

▪ AL Translation

The Libyan translation is neutral, focusing only on the event itself. It uses “استشهاد” (martyrdom), but avoids politically loaded terms like “الكيان” or “الصهيوني” or “الاحتلال الإسرائيلي”, offering a more detached and straightforward description of the incident.

Conclusion

- o The Palestinian participant (NP) uses “الكيان الصهيوني” to refer to Israel and describes the victims as “أبطالنا”, framing the situation emotionally.
- o The Syrian participant (RS) uses the word “استشهاد” to convey sacrifice, and “قوات الاحتلال الإسرائيلي” to emphasize the Israeli forces’ role as occupiers.
- o The Libyan participant (AL) provides a neutral account of the incident without expressing political bias, offering an objective description of the clash.

▪ Fourth Headline

• Original Text

“The Israeli Air Force carried out airstrikes on Hamas targets in Gaza”

• Translations

1. NP (Palestinian)

- “شن سلاح الجو الإسرائيلي عدة غارات جوية استهدف فيها أهداف تابعة لحركة المقاومة حماس في غزة”

2. RS (Syrian)

- “استهدف الكيان الصهيوني قوات حماس بغارات جوية على غزة”

3. AL (Libyan)

- “قوات إسرائيل الجوية تنفذ غارات على أهداف لـ حماس في غزة”

❖ Bias Analysis

▪ NP (Palestinian)

➤ Bias towards the Palestinian cause

The Palestinian participant’s translation shows a clear support for the Palestinian stance through the use of terms like “حركة المقاومة” (Resistance

Movement). This term frames Hamas as a resistance movement, giving it a legitimate and heroic connotation, whereas others might view it as a terrorist organization. Additionally, utilizing an addition strategy, the phrase “عِدَّة” (a large number of) aims to emphasize the significance and the emotional impact of the event.

➤ Political Influence

The Palestinian participant’s translation seems to reflect a pro-Palestinian political stance, promoting the idea of resistance against occupation, which aligns with the official Palestinian narrative.

▪ RS (Syrian)

➤ Bias against Israel

In the Syrian participant’s translation, there is a clear bias against Israel through the use of the term “الصهيونياليكيان” (Zionist entity). This term is not just a descriptor of the Israeli state but also a politically charged term that reflects rejection of Israeli occupation. It carries a strong connotation of the ongoing political and territorial dispute in the region.

➤ Political Influence

The Syrian participant’s translation appears to mirror Syria's long-standing stance against Israeli occupation, given the historical context of the conflict between Syria and Israel. Therefore, it's clear that this translation is influenced by political and ideological perspectives.

▪ AL (Libyan)

➤ Neutrality

The Libyan participant’s translation appears to be more neutral as it focuses solely on the military action, using terms like “غارات” (airstrikes) to describe the Israeli attacks without political implications. This translation provides a description of the event itself without attaching any political bias or supporting one side over the other.

➤ Political Influence

The Libyan participant’s translation seems the most neutral, as it does not use terms that reflect political leanings. It simply describes the military operation without expressing any judgment on the actions.

Conclusion:

- The Palestinian participant (NP) shows a clear bias towards the Palestinian cause by using terms that support the Palestinian stance, such as “المقاومة حركة” and “غارات” in general.

- The Syrian participant (RS) also demonstrates bias against Israel through the use of "الكيان الصهيوني" reflecting a political stance rejecting the occupation.
- The Libyan participant (AL) provides a more neutral translation, focusing on describing the military action without clear influence from political stances.

▪ Fifth Heading:

• Original Text

"Security Guard Seriously Wounded in Jerusalem Terror Attack"

• Translations

1. NP (Palestinian)

- "إصابة بالغة لجندي إسرائيلي نتيجة عملية فدائية في مدينة القدس المحتلة"

2. RS (Syrian)

- "جرح بعض قوات الاحتلال الصهيوني إثر دفاع المقاومة الفلسطينية عن القدس"

3. AL (Libyan)

- "أصيب حارس أمن إسرائيلي بإصابة بليغة إثر حركة انتفاضة الأقصى في القدس"

❖ Bias Analysis

▪ NP (Palestinian)

➤ Replacement of "Security Guard"

The term "حارس أمن" (Israeli soldier) is used instead of "جندي إسرائيلي" (security guard), shifting the identity from a civilian role to a military one.

➤ Framing of the Attack

Describing the event as "عملية فدائية" (a heroic operation) adds a positive connotation to the incident and supports a narrative of resistance.

➤ Political Emphasis

The addition of "مدينة القدس المحتلة" (the occupied city of Jerusalem) reinforces the occupation narrative and aligns the translation with the Palestinian political perspective.

➤ Bias Level

This translation is highly biased, as it transforms the target and casts the event in a heroic light.

▪ RS (Syrian)

➤ Replacement of "Security Guard"

Here, the target is shifted from an individual to "قوات الاحتلال الصهيوني" (the forces of the Zionist Occupation), broadening the scope to an entire military force.

➤ Reframing the Event

Describing the incident as "دفاع المقاومة الفلسطينية عن القدس" (the Palestinian resistance's defense of Jerusalem) recasts the attack as a justified act of self-defense rather than a terror attack.

➤ Political Influence

The use of politically charged terminology such as "قوات الاحتلال الصهيوني" reinforces a strong bias against Israel.

➤ Bias Level

This translation exhibits very high bias by completely transforming the narrative.

▪ AL (Libyan)

➤ Retention of the Original Identity

The translation retains "إسرائيلي من حارس" (Israeli security guard), keeping the target consistent with the original text.

➤ Softening of the Event

The term "حركة انتفاضة" (an intifada movement) is used instead of directly labeling the attack as terrorism, which softens the severity.

➤ Neutral Tone

While there is some political context implied by "حركة انتفاضة", the overall description is more balanced and less polarizing.

➤ Bias Level

This translation exhibits a medium level of bias compared to the NP and RS versions.

Conclusion :

These translations illustrate how differences in wording can alter the perception of an event and guide the reader toward a specific narrative. The Palestinian participant's translation presents the attack as a heroic act, the Syrian participant's translation frames it as legitimate defense, while the Libyan participant's translation is less biased but still softens the description. This highlights that language is not just a means of conveying information but a tool that shapes perception and political narratives.

▪ Sixth Heading:

• Original Text

"Gaza: Israel commits another massacre against civilians trying to access communications and Internet services [EN/AR]."

• Translations

1. NP (Palestinian)

- "غزة: ارتكبت قوات الاحتلال الصهيوني مجزرة مروعة بحق المدنيين الذين حاولوا الوصول إلى مناطق توفر الإنترنت"

2. RS (Syrian)

- "غزة: ارتكابت قوات الاحتلال مجزرة أخرى مستهدفة المدنيين محاولة الاستحواذ على خدمات التواصل و الإنترنت"

3. AL (Libyan)

- "غزة: ترتكب إسرائيل مجزرة أخرى بحق المدنيين الذين يحاولون الوصول إلى شبكات الاتصال"

❖ Bias analysis

● NP (Palestinian)

➤ (مجزرة): The term “*massacre*” is a powerful word that implies a large-scale killing, often associated with atrocities and systematic violence. This choice of wording creates an emotional impact and can lead the reader to view the event as a deliberate act of mass murder.

➤ (مُرَوَّع): The word “*horrific*” adds to the sense of shock and tragedy, reinforcing the perception of an inhumane and excessive act.

➤ (قوات الاحتلال الإسرائيلي): The phrase “Zionist occupation forces” is politically charged and reflects a particular perspective on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Some people use “Zionist” to criticize Israel’s policies, especially regarding its occupation of Palestinian territories. This term implies a specific ideological and political stance and could be seen as a form of bias in how the Israeli side is framed.

In these examples, words like (مجزرة), (مُرَوَّع) and (الإسرائيلي قوات الاحتلال) carry emotional weight and reflect a certain political viewpoint that could be perceived as biased, especially in a contentious issue like the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

● RS (Syrian)

➤ (مجزرة): The word “*massacre*” implies a large-scale, indiscriminate killing, often associated with atrocities. It is an emotionally charged term, suggesting that the event was not merely an attack but an extreme act of violence. This immediately shapes how the reader perceives the event — as brutal and unjust.

➤ (المدنيين) and (استهداف): The phrase “*targeting civilians*” implies that the victims were specifically chosen because of their non-combatant status, enhancing the perception of inhumanity in the act. This language evokes emotional responses, making the violence appear particularly severe.

➤ (قوات الاحتلال): Referring to the Israeli forces as “occupation forces” is a politically charged term. It suggests that Israel is illegally occupying land,

and using this term reflects a particular viewpoint critical of Israeli policies. It's not a neutral term and indicates bias against Israel's actions.

➤ The absence of terms like "Israeli military" or "Israeli forces" in favor of "occupation forces" reinforces a critical stance toward Israel.

• **AL (Libyan)**

➤ (مجزرة): The term "*massacre*" implies a large-scale, indiscriminate killing, often associated with atrocities and war crimes. This choice of wording is emotionally charged and creates an immediate negative perception of the event, framing it as a deliberate act of mass murder rather than a military or strategic operation.

➤ (أخرى): The word "another" suggests that this event is part of a series of similar incidents. This implies a repetitive pattern of violence by Israel, shaping the reader's perception that Israel has been regularly committing such acts, thus reinforcing the idea of an ongoing and continuous injustice.

➤ The phrase "يحق المدنيين الذين يحاولون الوصول إلى الاتصال" depicts the victims as innocent and defenseless. By focusing on civilians engaging in basic activities like accessing the internet, the title presents them as vulnerable individuals who were subjected to violence while trying to meet a basic need, making the attack seem especially unjust and inhumane.

➤ The emphasis on "يحاولون الوصول" (trying to access to Internet services) suggests that the civilians were merely attempting to communicate, further intensifying the narrative that they were non-violent and were harmed while trying to carry out an innocent task.

Conclusion:

Across these examples, it is evident that the translators' backgrounds and political perspectives significantly influence the translation outcomes:

- NP (Palestinian) translations tend to favor the Palestinian cause by employing politically charged and valorizing language.
- RS (Syrian) translations often transform the narrative to depict acts as defensive or to emphasize a rejection of Israeli policies, showing high levels of bias.
- AL (Libyan) translations generally maintain a more neutral tone, though some bias remains in the choice of terminology.

This comprehensive analysis highlights the critical role of cultural and political factors in translation, especially in contexts as sensitive as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

5.6. Findings and Discussion:

The following analysis of findings evaluates how bias is manifested in translation and to what extent linguistic and cultural factors influence translators' choices. The discussion aims to link the current results to previous research on bias and neutrality in political translation.

5.6.1. Translation Analysis: Criteria:

The translations were analyzed using three key criteria (Ahmed, 2019):

1. **Lexical Choices:** Examining how specific words were selected and whether they introduced ideological bias.
2. **Cultural Influence:** Assessing whether the translations reflected the translator's cultural and political perspectives.
3. **Bias Indicators:** Identifying any intentional or unintentional shifts in meaning that could indicate bias.

5.6.2. Translation Analysis: Biases

▪ Lexical and Structural Bias

The analysis found that lexical bias was evident in cases where students replaced neutral terms with emotionally charged language. For instance, one participant translated "*Israeli troops*" as "قوات الاحتلال الإسرائيلي" (Zionist Occupation Forces), which carries a strong political connotation. This supports Fairclough's (1995) argument that linguistic choices shape ideological narratives in media discourse.

Similarly, Venuti (1995) describes "domesticating" translation strategies, where translators adapt content to fit the ideological stance of their audience. This was evident in how one student omitted "*terror attack*" in a news headline and instead framed the event as an act of "self-defense".

▪ Cultural Influence on Translation Choices:

Participants' cultural background played a significant role in translation bias. Hamdan et al. (2021) found that translators often reflect their socio-political contexts in their translations, which aligns with this study's findings. The Palestinian participant, for example, softened negative portrayals of Palestinian actions, while the Syrian participant framed Israel negatively through word choices.

▪ Impact of Bias on Meaning Distortion

Bias in translation led to distorted meanings in several cases. For example, Ahmed (2019) found that translations of political texts tend to shift meanings based on ideological affiliations. This was observed in one student's translation, where "*Israeli airstrikes*" was rendered as "" (Israeli attack on civilians), altering the intended neutrality of the original text.

5.6.3. Discussion of Findings:

The findings confirm that bias in translation is inevitable, as translators are influenced by their ideological, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds. This study supports Baker's (2018) assertion that translators' choices are shaped by their socio-political positioning, whether consciously or unconsciously. Additionally, the study echoes Yair & Sulitzeanu - Kenan's (2018) findings, which suggest that perceived bias in political translation can affect trust in media and shape public opinion. The variations among participants demonstrate how the same source text can be interpreted in different ideological frameworks, reinforcing the argument that absolute neutrality in translation is difficult to achieve (Hatim & Mason, 1990).

5.7. Recommendations

While absolute neutrality is challenging, adopting specific methods can help translators recognize and mitigate ideological bias.

5.7.1. Strategies to Reduce Bias in Translation:

1. Promoting Awareness of Bias in Translation

Translators should be trained to identify implicit bias in their work. Baker (2006) emphasizes that self-awareness is a critical step in achieving more neutral translations. Training programs should include case studies highlighting how word choice influences ideological framing.

2. Encouraging Comparative Analysis

Comparing multiple translations of the same text can reveal bias patterns. Venuti (1995) suggests that parallel analysis helps translators recognize how cultural factors shape translation choices.

3. Using Neutral and Contextually Appropriate Terminology

Translators should prioritize neutral terminology to maintain objectivity. Ingram (2023) argues that deliberate selection of unbiased language reduces misinterpretations in politically sensitive translations.

4. Cultural Sensitivity Training

Understanding cultural implications of language choices can prevent unintended bias (Gambier & Van Doorslaer, 2010).

5. Implementing a Peer Review Process

A structured peer review system can help identify bias before translations are published. House (1997) suggests that collaborative translation reviews improve accuracy and detect ideological shifts.

❖ Conclusion:

This study confirms that bias is an inherent part of translation, particularly in political and journalistic contexts. However, by adopting critical awareness,

comparative evaluation, and structured review processes, translators can enhance objectivity in their work. As Hatim & Mason (1990) highlight, translation is not merely a linguistic act but a social and political practice, making it essential to implement strategies that promote fair and balanced representation of the source text.

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