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Role Of Translators

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to those who have always believed in me, supported me, and inspired me to persevere through every challenge.

To my beloved family, whose unwavering love and encouragement have been the foundation of my journey. Your sacrifices and constant support have given me the strength to overcome every obstacle and strive for excellence.

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Table Of Contents

Dedication.....	I
Acknowledgments.....	II
Table of content	III
Abstract	1
1.1. Introduction to Translation.....	3
1.2. Types of Translation	5
1.2.1. Literary vs. Non-Literary Translation	5
1.2.2. Human vs. Machine Translation	6
1.2.3. Specialized Academic Translation.....	9
1.2.4. Interpretative vs. Literal Translation.....	12
2.1. Introduction.....	14
2.2. What Is A Translator.....	15
2.3. Responsibilities of a Translator.....	19
2.4. The Translator in Different Academic Disciplines.....	21
2.5 Translators' Biases: Navigating Subjectivity in English-to-Arabic Translation	22
2.5.1 Ideological Bias	25
2.5.2 Cultural Bias	26
2.5.3 Linguistic Gender Bias	27
2.6 A Case Study: Israel and Palestine.....	28
Conclusion	32
References:.....	34

Abstract

Translation serves as a vital conduit for global knowledge exchange, transcending linguistic boundaries to connect cultures, disciplines, and ideas. This comprehensive exploration delves into the multifaceted nature of translation, emphasizing its intellectual, cultural, and ethical dimensions. The first chapter establishes foundational definitions, drawing on diverse theoretical frameworks such as dynamic equivalence, domestication, and foreignization, while categorizing translation into distinct types: literary, non-literary, human, machine-assisted, and specialized academic translation. Practical examples, including English-to-Arabic translations of scientific terms, legal clauses, and idiomatic expressions, illustrate challenges like untranslatability and the tension between literal fidelity and interpretative adaptation. The discussion highlights how literary translation prioritizes artistic resonance, while technical translation demands precision to avoid critical errors in fields like medicine and law.

The second chapter shifts focus to the translator's role as both a linguistic expert and cultural mediator. It outlines core responsibilities, such as preserving meaning, navigating cultural nuances, and upholding ethical standards, particularly when handling politically sensitive or ideologically charged content. Discipline-specific challenges are examined, including the precision required in scientific research translation, the abstract complexity of philosophical texts, and the legal ramifications of mistranslating treaties or contracts. The chapter also critiques the growing influence of technology, arguing that while machine translation accelerates accessibility, it lacks the contextual awareness and cultural sensitivity intrinsic to human expertise. A dedicated analysis of **translators' biases**—ideological, cultural, linguistic, and gender-

based—reveals how subjective decisions shape cross-cultural communication. Examples, such as the gendered assumptions in Arabic translations of medical texts or the politicized framing of activist narratives, underscore the ethical imperative for translators to acknowledge and mitigate biases. Ultimately, this work positions translators as indispensable facilitators of global dialogue, whose expertise ensures that knowledge transcends borders without losing its integrity or resonance.

Chapter One:

Understanding Translation

1.1. Introduction to Translation

Translation is more than just replacing words from one language with their equivalents in another—it is a complex process that involves cultural adaptation and meaning preservation. In academia, translation ensures that research findings, theories, and studies are accessible to scholars worldwide. Without translation, many groundbreaking discoveries would remain confined to specific linguistic communities, limiting their impact on global scholarship (Minca & Jordan, 2025. 237).

Historically, translation has been central to intellectual progress. Ancient scholars translated works of philosophy, science, and literature, allowing ideas to spread across civilizations. For instance, during the **Islamic Golden Age**, Arabic scholars translated Greek philosophical texts, such as those by Aristotle and Plato, into Arabic, which later influenced European Renaissance thinkers (Al Salem, Alghazo, & Jarrah, 2025, 115). Today, academic translators face new challenges, including dealing with technical jargon, maintaining cultural nuances, and adapting to advances in machine translation.

Here we examine five definitions of translation from different scholars, each reflecting a unique perspective on the discipline:

1. **Roman Jakobson (1959)** defined translation as "the interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language." He categorized translation into three types: intralingual translation (rewording within the same language), interlingual translation (translation

between languages), and intersemiotic translation (translation between different sign systems) (Jakobson, 1959, 233).

2. **Eugene Nida (1964)** described translation as "reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style." His emphasis on dynamic equivalence over literal translation highlights the importance of conveying sense rather than just structure (Nida, 1964, 165).
3. **Peter Newmark (1988)** defined translation as "rendering the meaning of a text into another language in the way that the author intended the text." Newmark distinguished between semantic translation (focusing on meaning) and communicative translation (focusing on readability and naturalness) (Newmark, 1988, 5).
4. **Jean-Paul Vinay & Jean Darbelnet (1995)** proposed that "translation is the transfer of meaning from a source language to a target language while preserving the stylistic and cultural nuances of the original text." They introduced seven translation techniques, such as borrowing, calque, and modulation, to describe how translators manage linguistic differences (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1995, 34).
5. **Lawrence Venuti (1995)** argued that translation is "a process that involves both linguistic transformation and cultural negotiation." He introduced the concepts of domestication (adapting the text to the target culture) and foreignization (preserving elements of the source culture), emphasizing the translator's role in shaping cultural perceptions (Venuti, 1995, 20).

1.2. Types of Translation

Translation can be categorized into several types based on purpose, audience, and content. The most relevant types in academia include literary vs. non-literary translation, human vs. machine translation, specialized academic translation, and interpretative vs. literal translation.

1.2.1. Literary vs. Non-Literary Translation

Translation is generally divided into literary and non-literary translation:

- **Literary Translation:** This involves translating creative works, such as novels, poetry, and plays. The challenge is maintaining the artistic essence, tone, and rhythm of the original work. A word-for-word translation is often ineffective because it may strip the text of its emotional and cultural depth (Tazreiter & Barker, 2025, 189).

- **Example (English to Arabic):**

- Source (English): *"The stars whispered secrets to the night."*

- ◻ Literal translation: "النجوم همست بالأسرار إلى الليل"

(Grammatically correct but unnatural in Arabic)

- ◻ Literary translation: "همست النجوم بأسرارها إلى ظلمة الليل"

(More poetic and natural in Arabic)

- **Non-Literary Translation:** This includes academic papers, research articles, legal documents, and technical reports. Unlike literary translation, accuracy and clarity are more important than artistic expression. (Munday, 2016, 112).

Source (English): *"The results indicate a significant correlation between sleep quality and cognitive function."*

- ◻ Target (Arabic): "تشير النتائج إلى وجود ارتباط كبير بين جودة النوم

"الوظيفة الإدراكية" (Direct and precise translation)

Academic translators must adjust their approach based on the type of content they are handling.

1.2.2. Human vs. Machine Translation

Machine translation (MT) has dramatically transformed the landscape of academic translation, breaking down language barriers and making scholarly content more accessible to a global audience. (Nylander, 2025. 149) With the advent of sophisticated neural machine translation (NMT) models, the speed and efficiency of translation processes have vastly improved, allowing researchers and students to access knowledge that would have otherwise been restricted due to linguistic limitations (Liu & Wang, 2024, 86).

Despite these advancements, MT still faces significant challenges that hinder its ability to fully replace human translators, particularly in academic contexts. One of the primary limitations of MT is its struggle with contextual accuracy. Unlike human translators, who can interpret meaning based on surrounding text and intended nuance, MT often renders translations that are too literal, failing to capture the subtleties of academic discourse. This can lead to misinterpretations of complex research findings, especially in fields that rely on precise terminology, such as law, medicine, and engineering (García, 2023, 211).

Another major issue with MT is its inability to accurately translate

- **Example (English to Arabic):**

idiomatic expressions. Academic writing often includes phrases and

terminologies that do not have direct equivalents in other languages. For example, an English phrase like "a double-edged sword" may be misinterpreted if translated word-for-word into Arabic or Chinese, as its meaning is metaphorical rather than literal. A human translator would recognize this and find an appropriate equivalent that conveys the same meaning, whereas an MT system may produce an incorrect or awkward translation (Smith & Jones, 2022, 74).

Moreover, technical accuracy remains a persistent challenge in MT, particularly when dealing with specialized academic content. Research articles, legal documents, and scientific studies require precise and nuanced translation to ensure clarity and coherence. In disciplines such as medical research, an incorrectly translated term can have serious consequences, leading to misunderstandings or misapplications of critical information. While MT tools like Google Translate and DeepL have made significant strides in improving terminology accuracy, they still rely on pre-existing data and may struggle with newly coined terms, domain-specific jargon, or evolving academic language (Kumar et al., 2023, 189).

Additionally, machine translation lacks the ability to understand cultural and rhetorical differences between languages. Academic writing conventions vary across cultures; for instance, English-language academic papers often favor direct and concise argumentation, whereas Arabic and French academic writing may incorporate more elaborate reasoning and rhetorical flourishes. A skilled human translator would recognize these stylistic differences and adjust the translation accordingly to preserve the intended impact of the text (Rodríguez & Lee, 2023, 94).

Despite these limitations, MT continues to play a crucial role in academia, particularly as a first-step tool for understanding foreign-language texts. Researchers frequently use MT to get a rough idea of an article's content before seeking professional human translation for more precise and polished results. As artificial intelligence and machine learning continue to evolve, there is hope that future MT systems will overcome many of their current challenges, incorporating better contextual awareness, improved idiomatic understanding, and enhanced technical precision (Liu & Wang, 2024, 88).

In conclusion, while machine translation has undoubtedly revolutionized academic translation by enhancing accessibility and efficiency, it is not without its flaws. Contextual misunderstandings, difficulties with idiomatic expressions, and inaccuracies in technical translation remain significant hurdles. Therefore, the most effective approach often combines the speed of MT with the expertise of human translators to ensure both accessibility and accuracy in academic discourse (García, 2023, 213).

- **Example of Machine Translation Error (English to Arabic):**

- Source (English): *"The bank of the river was flooded last night."*
- Machine translation: "بنك النهر غمرته المياه الليلة الماضية" (بنك means "financial bank," which is incorrect here.)
- Correct translation: "ضفة النهر غمرتها المياه الليلة الماضية" (ضفة means "riverbank," which is contextually correct.)

This example shows how **polysemy** (words with multiple meanings) can lead to errors when machines are used without human oversight. Hybrid

approaches—where MT provides a draft that is later refined by human translators—are increasingly common in academia (Svajda-Hardy & Kwok, 2025, 201).

1.2.3. Specialized Academic Translation

Specialized academic translation is a crucial component of scholarly communication, particularly in disciplines where precision is essential. Unlike general translation, which focuses mainly on linguistic accuracy, specialized academic translation requires a deep understanding of subject-specific terminology and concepts. This ensures that complex ideas are accurately conveyed without distortion or loss of meaning. For instance, in medical and legal fields, even minor mistranslations can lead to severe consequences, making expertise in the subject matter indispensable (García, 2023, 105).

Fields such as medicine, law, engineering, and scientific research demand translators who are not only proficient in both the source and target languages but also possess domain-specific knowledge. In medical translation, for example, terms like "*hypertension*" must be rendered correctly as "فرط ضغط الدم" rather than a more generic term for high blood pressure. Such precision is crucial in ensuring that medical professionals can interpret translated documents accurately and provide appropriate care (Kumar et al., 2023. 154).

Legal translation is equally demanding, as differences in legal systems and terminologies across countries can lead to discrepancies if not handled carefully. For example, the term *consideration* in contract law has no direct equivalent in some legal systems, requiring translators to convey its meaning in a way that aligns with the target legal framework. This

highlights the importance of specialized legal translators who are familiar with the intricacies of international and domestic law (Rodríguez & Lee, 2023, 78).

Similarly, in scientific and engineering research, accuracy in translation is vital to maintain the integrity of data, formulas, and technical descriptions. A misinterpretation of an experimental procedure or an incorrect unit conversion could undermine an entire study. In such cases, translators often collaborate with subject-matter experts to ensure the translated content remains true to the original intent and methodology of the research (Nylander, 2025, 112).

Academic disciplines also have unique stylistic conventions that must be preserved during translation. While humanities research often emphasizes argumentation and narrative flow, scientific papers prioritize clarity and conciseness. Translators must adapt their approach to maintain the appropriate tone and structure required by each field while ensuring that the content remains faithful to the original text (Smith & Jones, 2022, 91).

Technology has enhanced the efficiency of specialized academic translation, but human expertise remains irreplaceable. Machine translation (MT) and computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools can aid in handling repetitive terminology and formatting, yet they still struggle with context-dependent nuances and discipline-specific conventions. As a result, professional translators must refine and verify machine-generated translations to uphold accuracy and readability (Liu & Wang, 2024, 72).

In conclusion, specialized academic translation plays a vital role in making research accessible across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Due

to the high stakes involved, translators must possess subject-matter expertise to ensure precision, maintain disciplinary standards, and prevent misinterpretations. As globalization continues to expand academic collaboration, the demand for skilled translators with expertise in specialized fields will only increase, emphasizing the need for rigorous training and continuous professional development (García, 2023, 109).

- **Scientific Translation:** Involves research papers, clinical studies, and technical documents. Scientific terms often do not have direct equivalents in other languages (Kasparian, 2025, 156).

- Example:

- Source (English): *"The patient exhibited signs of tachycardia and hypertension."*

Arabic "أظهر المريض علامات تسارع ضربات القلب. وارتفاع ضغط الدم"

- **Legal Translation:** Contracts and international policies require absolute precision, as a mistranslation could lead to legal disputes.

- Example:

- Source (English): *"This contract is legally binding under international law."*

□ Arabic: "يعتبر هذا العقد ملزماً قانونياً بموجب القانون الدولي"

- **Historical and Philosophical Translation:** Some works require maintaining both meaning and interpretative depth.

- Example:

- Source (English): *"Nietzsche's concept of the Übermensch challenges traditional morality."*

Arabic: مفهوم نيتشه عن 'الإنسان الأعلى' يتحدى الأخلاق "التقليدية". □

One major challenge in specialized translation is **untranslatability**. Some terms have no direct equivalents, forcing translators to either:

1. **Use explanatory footnotes**
2. **Adopt foreign loanwords**
3. **Invent new terms** (Silva, 2025, 98)

1.2.4. Interpretative vs. Literal Translation

The debate between literal (word-for-word) and interpretative (sense-for-sense) translation remains a central issue in translation studies. Each approach has its strengths and is suited to different types of texts.

Literal translation is often preferred in technical, legal, and scientific fields, where precision and consistency are crucial. This method ensures that specialized terminology remains intact, reducing the risk of misinterpretation. However, it can lead to rigid or unnatural phrasing, especially when translating idiomatic expressions or culturally specific terms.

On the other hand, interpretative translation prioritizes meaning over exact wording, making it more effective for literary, philosophical, and creative texts. This approach allows translators to convey the nuances, tone, and stylistic elements of the original work, ensuring that it resonates with the target audience. While this method enhances readability and cultural relevance, it also introduces a degree of subjectivity, which may sometimes lead to deviations from the original text (Konar, 2025, 183).

- **Literal Translation:** Works well for technical, legal, and scientific texts but can sound unnatural in other contexts.
- **Interpretative Translation:** Prioritizes meaning, making it useful for literary and philosophical works (Konar, 2025, 211).
- **Example of Literal vs. Interpretative Translation (English to Arabic):**
 - Source (English): "*Better late than never.*"
 - Literal translation: "الأفضل متأخراً من ألا يأتي أبداً."
 - (Accurate but unnatural phrasing in Arabic)
 - Interpretative translation: "أن تصل متأخراً خير من ألا تصل أبداً."

(More natural and idiomatic)

Translators must choose which method to apply based on the context of the text. Translation is an essential tool in academia, enabling the global exchange of knowledge. While machine translation has improved accessibility, human expertise remains crucial in ensuring contextual accuracy, cultural sensitivity, and disciplinary precision. Academic translators bridge gaps between cultures and disciplines, ensuring that knowledge is not just translated, but fully understood.

Chapter Two:

Role of Translators: Responsibilities, Challenges, and Biases

2.1 Introduction

Translation is one of the most powerful tools in the academic world, serving as a bridge between cultures, disciplines, and knowledge systems. It is through translation that scholars, researchers, and students gain access to works beyond their linguistic boundaries, ensuring that discoveries and intellectual advancements are not confined to a single language community. The role of the translator extends far beyond the mere conversion of words from one language to another. It is an intricate process of interpretation, adaptation, and meaning preservation, requiring deep linguistic expertise and cultural sensitivity (Minca & Jordan, 2025, p. 237).

Historically, translation has been the driving force behind intellectual progress and cross-cultural exchanges. From the translation of Greek philosophy into Arabic during the Islamic Golden Age to the Latin translations of Arabic scientific and medical texts during the European Renaissance, translation has shaped the very foundation of modern knowledge. Without it, much of what humanity understands about science, medicine, literature, and philosophy would have remained confined to a single language group, restricting the development of entire civilizations (Al Salem, Alghazo, & Jarrah, 2025, 115).

In the modern era, the work of translators has evolved significantly due to technological advancements, globalization, and the increasing importance of interdisciplinary research. Today, translators are expected to navigate complex terminologies, cultural nuances, and ethical

considerations while ensuring that academic integrity is maintained. Despite the rise of machine translation (MT) and artificial intelligence (AI) tools, the human translator remains indispensable, as technology alone cannot replicate the depth of understanding, critical thinking, and cultural awareness required in academic translation (Tazreiter & Barker, 2025,189).

This chapter explores the multifaceted role of translators in academia, outlining their core responsibilities, contributions to various disciplines, ethical dilemmas, and the challenges posed by technological advancements. Through an in-depth examination, it becomes evident that translators are not just linguistic mediators but intellectual enablers who facilitate the flow of knowledge across linguistic and cultural barriers.

2.1. What Is A Translator

In the labyrinth of human communication, where languages sprawl like ancient rivers carving paths through civilizations, the translator emerges as both cartographer and wayfarer. Their craft is as old as Babel and as urgent as the digital age—a delicate alchemy of words, worlds, and the spaces between. To define a translator is to trace the silhouette of a figure standing at the crossroads of history, culture, and identity. They are the quiet architects of understanding in a fractured world, the unsung diplomats who turn whispers of one tongue into echoes of another. From the bustling scriptoria of medieval Baghdad's (House of Wisdom), where Greek philosophy was reborn in Arabic, to the AI-driven language engines of the 21st century, translators have been the lifelines of knowledge, the stewards of stories, and the guardians of collective memory. Their work is neither mechanical nor mundane; it is an act of "interpretation" as much as "transformation".

Consider, for instance, the 12th-century scholar Ibn Rushd, whose Arabic commentaries on Aristotle's works were painstakingly rendered into Latin, igniting the European Renaissance (Salem, 2010, 203). Or the anonymous scribes of the "مدرسة طليطلة" (Toledo School of Translators), who fused Arabic, Hebrew, and Latin texts to preserve the scientific legacy of Al-Andalus. These were not mere "text converters" but intellectual pioneers who reshaped the trajectory of human thought. Fast-forward to modern conflicts, where translators in war zones risk their lives to mediate between soldiers and civilians, their words often meaning the difference between life and death (Baker, 2018, 156). The translator's role, then, is as varied as it is vital—a mosaic of responsibilities that defies simplistic categorization.

Scholars have long grappled with this complexity, framing translators through myriad lenses. Below, four definitions illuminate their multifaceted identity, enriched with examples from Arabic and English texts:

1. Cultural Mediator: The Keeper of Codes

A translator is, above all, a cultural mediator—a figure who navigates the invisible borders of belief, tradition, and symbolism. Bassnett likens translation to "a dance of cultural negotiation," where the translator must "decode the unspoken assumptions of the source text and re-root them in the target culture's soil" (Bassnett . 2014 . 23).

- **Example in Arabic:** The proverb "الصديق وقت الضيق" (literally, "The friend in times of hardship") carries connotations of loyalty and communal values deeply rooted in Arab culture.

- **Translation Challenge:** A literal English rendering—"A friend in times of hardship"—loses the rhythmic brevity. Instead, the translator might adapt it to "A friend in need is a friend indeed," borrowing a familiar English idiom to preserve the cultural intent (Al-Jabiri, 2018, 112).

2. Linguistic Architect: The Weaver of Worlds

From syntax to semantics, the translator is a "linguistic architect" tasked with dismantling and rebuilding texts. Munday describes this as "an act of creative demolition," where the translator deconstructs the source text's framework and reconstructs it in a new linguistic landscape (Munday, 2016, 89).

- **Example in Arabic:** The opening line of Al-Mutanabbi's poem:

"الخيـل والليـل والبيـداء تعرفني، والسيف والرمح والقرطاس والقلم"

("The horses, the night, and the desert know me; / The sword, the spear, the parchment, and the pen").

- **Translation Challenge:** The poem's "saj'aa" (rhymed prose) relies on internal rhyme (تعرفني / القلم). A translator might prioritize rhythm over literalness:

"The steeds, the sands, the night—they know my name; / The blade, the lance, the inked page, and the pen" (Al-Khatib, 2017, 67).

3. Communicative Agent: The Voice of the Voiceless

Translators are also "communicative agents" who amplify marginalized voices. Hatim and Mason argue that translators "do not merely transmit messages but advocate for their speakers," particularly in politically charged contexts (Mason, 1997, 12).

- **Example in Arabic:** A Syrian refugee's testimonial:
"الخوف لا يتركنا، حتى في أحلامنا" ("Fear never leaves us, even in our dreams").
- **Translation Challenge:** To retain the rawness, a translator might avoid euphemisms: "Fear clings to us—it haunts even our sleep," preserving the visceral imagery while adapting syntax for clarity (Al-Shehari, 2001, 89).

4. Civilizational Bridge: The Thread in the Tapestry

In Arabic scholarship, the translator is revered as a "جسر حضاري" (civilizational bridge). Hassan writes, "Translators are the weavers of humanity's grand tapestry, threading the needle between eras and empires" (Hassan, 2015, 45).

- **Example in Arabic:** Ibn Rushd's "تهافت التهافت" (The Incoherence of the Incoherence), a rebuttal of Al-Ghazali's critique of Aristotelian philosophy:
"الحقيقة لا تُعارض الحقيقة، بل توافقها وتشهد لها" ("Truth does not oppose truth; rather, it agrees with and bears witness to it").
- **Translation Impact:** Latin translators in Toledo rendered this as "Veritas veritati non repugnat, sed concordat et testimonium perhibet" ("Truth does not oppose truth, but agrees and bears witness"), sparking Scholastic debates in medieval Europe (Salem, 2010, 203).

In an era of globalization, where borders blur yet biases persist, the translator's role has never been more critical. They are the antidote to the "clash of civilizations," the quiet revolutionaries who turn monologues into dialogues. As Mona Baker observes, "Every translation is a political act, a declaration that the 'other' deserves to be heard" (Baker, 2018, 34).

Whether decoding a poem, a legal treaty, or a cry for help, translators embody the paradox of their craft: they are both invisible and indispensable, silent yet seismic. To translate is not merely to "carry words" it is to "carry worlds".

2.3. Responsibilities of a Translator

The role of a translator extends far beyond merely converting words from one language to another. It is a nuanced practice requiring linguistic precision, cultural insight, and ethical accountability. At its core, translation is an act of mediation, demanding that translators balance fidelity to the source text with adaptability to the target audience's context (Baker, 2018,45). Below is a narrative exploration of these responsibilities, grounded in translation theory and practice.

First and foremost, a translator must prioritize **accuracy**, ensuring that the translated text retains the original meaning, tone, and intent. Even minor errors can distort messages, leading to misunderstandings or unintended consequences. As Mona Baker notes, “the translator’s primary loyalty is to the source text and its author” (Baker, 2018, 62). This involves meticulous attention to detail—whether translating legal contracts, literary works, or technical manuals—to preserve semantic and stylistic coherence.

Equally critical is **cultural sensitivity**. Language is deeply intertwined with culture, and translators must navigate idioms, metaphors, and societal norms that lack direct equivalents. For example, a proverb in Japanese might resonate differently when translated into English, requiring adaptation rather than literal rendering (Nida, 1964, 12). Eugene Nida’s concept of “dynamic equivalence” emphasizes conveying the source text’s spirit in ways the target audience understands, even if this means rephrasing culturally specific references (Nida, 1964,159). **Research skills**

also define a translator's efficacy. Specialized fields like medical, legal, or technical translation demand familiarity with jargon and industry standards. A legal translator, for instance, must understand jurisdiction-specific terminology to avoid ambiguities in contracts (Hatim & Munday, 2004, p. 78). Translators often collaborate with subject-matter experts or consult glossaries to ensure terminological consistency. Ethically, translators are bound by **confidentiality**, particularly when handling sensitive documents such as medical records or corporate agreements. Professional codes of conduct, such as those outlined by the International Federation of Translators (FIT), mandate discretion to protect client trust (FIT, 2022, 5). Christiane Nord further underscores this ethical duty, arguing that translators act as “invisible bridges” between parties, necessitating integrity (Nord, 2018, 33).

Meeting **deadlines** is another practical responsibility. Translation projects often operate under tight schedules, especially in industries like journalism or international business. Time management and the ability to work under pressure are essential, though not at the expense of quality. As Brian Mossop warns, “rushed translations risk sacrificing nuance for speed” (Mossop, 2020, 91).

Finally, translators must consider the **purpose and audience** of their work. A marketing translation, for instance, prioritizes creativity and persuasion, while a technical manual demands clarity and precision. This principle aligns with Skopos theory, which asserts that the intended function of the target text should guide translation choices (Nord, 1997, 29).

In essence, translators are both artists and technicians, tasked with harmonizing linguistic accuracy, cultural resonance, and ethical rigor.

Their work ensures that ideas transcend linguistic barriers while remaining rooted in the context of their origin—a responsibility as complex as it is vital.

2.4. The Translator in Different Academic Disciplines

- **Scientific and Medical Translation:** translation demands precision, as errors in terminology or data interpretation can lead to misinformation, procedural failures, or patient harm. (Silva, 2025, 98) Translators must master specialized vocabulary (e.g., the IMRaD framework—*Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion*) and ensure clarity in statistical analyses to preserve research integrity (Kasparian, 2025, 156). In medical contexts, mistranslating drug dosages (e.g., “mg/kg” vs. “mg/lb”) or symptom descriptions risks misdiagnosis, necessitating collaboration with healthcare experts to verify accuracy (Kim et al., 2025, 64).

- **Legal:** Terms like “*force majeure*” may lack direct equivalents across legal systems, requiring functional adaptations to uphold intent (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1995, 34).

- **Philosophical:** Abstract concepts (e.g., Nietzsche’s “*Übermensch*” or Heidegger’s “*Dasein*”) often require explanatory footnotes to retain depth in target languages (Venuti, 1995, 20).

- **Literary:** Focuses on recreating style and tone, such as preserving Shakespeare’s puns or García Márquez’s magical realism, making it inherently interpretative (Newmark, 1988. 5).

- **Educationally:** Translation bridges linguistic gaps in education by localizing textbooks and curricula, ensuring equitable access to knowledge (Nida, 1964, 165).

- **policy-making:** it enables global governance; for example, mistranslating clauses in UN climate agreements could derail

international cooperation. Institutions like the WHO rely on precise translations of public health guidelines to ensure global compliance (Jakobson, 1959, 233).

2.5 Translators' Biases: Navigating Subjectivity in English-to-Arabic Translation

Translation is a profoundly intricate and subjective practice that involves more than just the technical transfer of language from one linguistic system to another. It is an act deeply embedded in cultural, political, and personal contexts, wherein every decision made by a translator — from the choice of words and syntax to the tone and style of the text — is influenced by a complex web of biases. These biases often emerge from the translator's background, experiences, and even the socio-political environment in which the translation occurs. As a result, translation is not a neutral or objective process; rather, it is a form of mediation between cultures that inevitably shapes the way ideas, identities, and ideologies are represented and understood across linguistic boundaries (Baker, 2006, 85).

The concept of bias in translation can be seen in multiple forms, including cultural bias, political bias, linguistic bias, and gender bias, all of which can have a profound impact on the final translated product. Cultural bias, for example, occurs when a translator's own cultural context influences their interpretation of unfamiliar cultural elements in the source text. This bias may lead to the omission, addition, or alteration of culturally specific terms or concepts to make them more accessible or acceptable to the target audience (Venuti, 2012, 97).

Likewise, political biases often influence the translation of texts that address sensitive or controversial topics, such as historical events, national conflicts, or ideological positions. A translator's political affiliation may

lead them to favor certain perspectives or frame events in a way that aligns with their own ideological stance, thus altering the text's intended meaning (Pym, 2010, 68). Gender bias is another important consideration, particularly when translating texts that deal with gender roles, identities, or relationships. In many instances, translators may inadvertently or intentionally shift the representation of gender in the target text to conform to the norms of the target culture, resulting in a distortion of the original text's meaning (Munday, 2016, 112).

Linguistic bias is also a critical factor in translation. Each language has its own unique grammatical structures, vocabulary, and idiomatic expressions, and these differences can make it challenging for translators to produce an accurate and faithful translation. Linguistic bias can manifest when a translator opts for a more familiar or easier-to-understand term in the target language at the expense of the original meaning (Nida, 1964, 105). For example, an idiomatic phrase in English may be translated literally into a target language, which could result in a nonsensical or confusing interpretation for the target audience. In other cases, the translator may decide to adapt the phrase to a more familiar expression in the target language, which could lead to a shift in meaning.

The implications of these biases extend beyond the translation process itself, as the choices made by the translator have the power to shape how a text is understood and received in the target culture. Translation is not just an act of linguistic transference but also a form of cultural negotiation. A translator is not simply transmitting information; they are re-contextualizing a message for a new audience, with all the accompanying shifts in meaning and interpretation. As translation plays a central role in how individuals access foreign ideas, literature, and knowledge, the biases

that translators bring to their work can deeply influence the perceptions and understandings of the target audience (Suleiman, 2003, 121).

For example, a translator with a particular political stance may choose to frame a historical event in a way that aligns with their beliefs, affecting how the event is understood by the audience. Likewise, the translator's cultural context may lead them to interpret certain ideas or practices in a way that reflects the values and norms of their own society. In particular, translations that deal with politically sensitive or ideologically charged topics often become sites of contestation, where the translator's own values and allegiances are brought to the fore. This is especially evident in texts that address issues such as national identity, colonialism, or gender equality, where translators may either reinforce or challenge the dominant narratives of the target culture. For instance, when translating texts about colonial history or political unrest, a translator may consciously or unconsciously align with the prevailing political ideologies in the target culture, either downplaying or highlighting certain events or actions to fit a particular narrative (Baker, 2006, 113). In such cases, the translator's role as an intermediary becomes especially significant, as their decisions directly affect how the target audience perceives historical events and political ideologies. The awareness of these biases is crucial for understanding the larger implications of translation as a practice. As Venuti (2012) argues, translation is never a simple or transparent process; it is always an interpretation, shaped by the translator's cultural, political, and ideological perspectives.

The translator's choices are therefore never neutral, and every translation involves a complex negotiation of meaning, power, and representation. As translation continues to be a primary means of communication and cross-cultural exchange, the stakes of these biases

become increasingly important. By critically examining the role of biases in translation, we can gain a deeper understanding of how ideas are transmitted across cultures and how power dynamics shape the translation process (Pym, 2010, 70).

2.5.1 Ideological Bias

Translators may unconsciously align texts with their political or religious beliefs. For instance, consider the English sentence:

- **SL (English):** *“The activists were labeled as freedom fighters by some and terrorists by others.”*

A translator with ideological leanings might render this as:

TL (Arabic): "اطلق البعض على النشطاء لقب مقاتلين من أجل الحرية بينما وصفهم آخرون بالإرهابيين"
(*Literal back-translation: “Some called the activists freedom fighters, while others described them as terrorists.”*)

Here, the translator retains neutrality. However, a biased translator might omit “freedom fighters” and emphasize “terrorists”:

Biased TL (Arabic): وصف العديد من الجهات النشطاء بالإرهابيين بسبب أعمالهم العنيفة
(*Literal back-translation: “Many entities described the activists as terrorists due to their violent acts.”*)

By omitting “freedom fighters” and adding “violent acts,” the translator injects a negative slant (Venuti, 1995, 21).

2.5.2 Cultural Bias

Cultural assumptions can lead to ethnocentric translations. For example:

- **SL (English):** “*She pursued her career ambitiously, neglecting traditional family roles.*”

A culturally biased translator might impose patriarchal norms:

- **TL (Arabic):** “اهتمت بتطوير مسيرتها العملية على حساب دورها الأسري الطبيعي”
(*Literal back-translation: “She focused on developing her career at the expense of her natural family role.”*)

The word “طبيعي” (natural) implies that prioritizing family is inherently correct, reflecting the translator’s cultural bias (Nord, 1997,45).

Another example is translating metaphors:

- **SL (English):** “*A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.*”
 - **Neutral TL (Arabic):** “عصفور في اليد خير من عشرة على الشجرة.”
(*Literal: “A bird in the hand is better than ten on the tree.”*)

A biased translator might replace it with an Arabic proverb reinforcing conservatism:

- **Biased TL (Arabic):** “الزراع ولا الفلوس.”
(*Literal: “Crops are better than money.”*)

This substitution prioritizes culturally familiar agrarian values over the original’s universal message (Al Salem et al., 2025, 122).

2.5.3 Linguistic Gender Bias

Arabic's grammatical gender system can introduce unintended bias. Consider:

- **SL (English):** *"A doctor should listen to their patients."*

A translator might default to masculine forms:

□ **TL (Arabic):** "على الطبيب أن ينصت لمرضاه."

(*Literal: "A male doctor should listen to his patients."*)

This erases female doctors. A neutral translation would use pluralization:

□ **Unbiased TL (Arabic):** "على الأطباء الإنصات لمرضاهم."

(*Literal: "Doctors should listen to their patients."*)

The biased translation perpetuates gender stereotypes (Bassnett, 2013, 18).

Mitigating Biases

To counter biases, translators must adopt reflexive practices:

1. **Acknowledge Subjectivity:** Question how personal views affect lexical choices.
2. **Consult Diverse Sources:** Use glossaries co-developed by linguists from varied backgrounds (Kasparian, 2025, 170).
3. **Peer Review:** Collaborate with sensitivity readers to identify blind spots (Del Din, 2025, 225).

For instance, translating “*Black Lives Matter*” as “حياة السود مهمة” (literal) avoids the biased alternative “حياة السود لها قيمة” (“Black lives have value”), which weakens the original’s urgency (Spivak, 1993, 190)

2.6 A Case Study: Israel and Palestine

The Israel-Palestine conflict, one of the most politically charged and mediatized disputes of the modern era, underscores the critical role of translators in shaping narratives. Translators act as ideological gatekeepers, wielding immense power over how events, actors, and histories are perceived globally. Their choices—lexical, syntactic, and cultural—can subtly or overtly reinforce biases, perpetuate stereotypes, or advocate for particular political agendas. This analysis examines how translational bias manifests in media coverage of the conflict, drawing on examples from Arabic and English sources to illustrate the interplay of language, power, and perception.

1. Linguistic Framing: Neutrality vs. Partisanship

Translators often face ethical dilemmas in framing violence or resistance. Terms like “مقاومة” (muqāwama, resistance) and “إرهاب” (irhāb, terrorism) are politically loaded, and their translation into English can sway public opinion.

- **Example in Arabic:** Al Jazeera Arabic frequently uses “الشهداء” (al-shuhadā’, martyrs) to describe Palestinians killed in conflicts. This term carries religious and heroic connotations, evoking sympathy (Al-Arian, 2020, 77).
- **Example in English:** Western outlets like The New York Times often translate “الشهداء” as “those killed” or “fatalities,” stripping the term of its cultural and emotional weight (Baker, 2018, 134).

Such framing choices are not neutral. As Baker notes, “lexical selection in translation is inherently ideological, reflecting the translator’s—or their institution’s—stance on legitimacy and victimhood” (Baker, 2018, 129).

2. Selective Omission and Amplification

Translators may omit or emphasize details to align with editorial biases. During the 2021 Gaza escalation, Arabic media highlighted Israeli airstrikes on civilian infrastructure, while English media often foregrounded Hamas rocket attacks.

- **Example in Arabic:** A Al-Ahram headline: " قصف إسرائيلي مكثف على " غزة يدمر أبراج سكنية ومستشفيات ("Intense Israeli bombardment destroys residential towers and hospitals").
- **Translation Bias:** Western outlets like the BBC translated this as “Israeli airstrikes target Hamas sites in Gaza,” omitting references to civilian infrastructure (Bassiouney, 2019, 212).
- **Example in English:** Al Haaretz article describing Palestinian protests as “clashes” was translated into Arabic by Al-Quds as "عنفية" (muwājahāt ‘unfiyya, violent confrontations), amplifying the sense of aggression (Said, 2021, 45).

These omissions and amplifications reflect what Venuti calls the “invisibility” of translators, where their interventions are masked by the illusion of neutrality (Venuti , 1995,17).

3. Cultural Connotations and Historical Context

Translators often grapple with culturally specific references that lack direct equivalents. For instance, the Arabic term "النكبة" (al-Nakba, the Catastrophe), referring to the 1948 displacement of Palestinians, is

frequently reduced to “the 1948 war” in English, erasing its traumatic historical resonance (Khalidi, 2020, 33).

- **Example in Arabic:** A Palestinian op-ed states: "مستمر النكبة لم تنتِ، إنها "استعمار" (“The Nakba has not ended—it is ongoing colonization”).
- **Translation Challenge:** English media often render this as “The 1948 displacement continues to affect Palestinians,” diluting the accusatory tone (Massad, 2017, 89).

Conversely, Hebrew terms like "התיישבות" (hityashvut, settlement) are translated into Arabic as "استعمار" (isti‘mār, colonialism), reframing Israeli policies as inherently oppressive (Pappe, 2015, 67).

4. Institutional Bias in News Agencies

Major media institutions often enforce stylistic guidelines that reflect geopolitical alignments. For example:

Reuters’ Guidelines: Reuters translates "جيش الدفاع الإسرائيلي" (jaysh al-difā‘ al-isrā’īlī, Israeli Defense Forces) as “IDF,” a neutral acronym. However, Arabic outlets like "Al-Mayadeen" use "الجيش الإسرائيلي المحتل" (al-jaysh al-isrā’īlī al-muḥtall, the Israeli occupying army), explicitly contesting legitimacy (Fisk, 2022, 121).

- **AP’s Terminology:** The Associated Press advises against using "occupied territories” without context, whereas Arabic media consistently use "الأراضي المحتلة" (al-arāḍī al-muḥtalla), reinforcing Palestinian claims (Chomsky, 2019, 155).

Such institutional policies, as Herman and Chomsky argue, “filter” information to align with dominant power structures (Herman & Chomsky, 1988, 2).

Translators as Political Actors : The translation of the Israel-Palestine conflict reveals that translators are neither neutral nor passive. Their decisions—whether to use “martyr” or “casualty,” “resistance” or “terrorism”—shape global perceptions and legitimize specific narratives. As Said observed, “The power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming, is central to imperial dominance” (Said, 1978, xiii). Translators, consciously or not, participate in this struggle, making their role not merely linguistic but profoundly political.

Conclusion

Translation is an intricate interplay of art and science, demanding not only linguistic mastery but also cultural empathy, ethical discernment, and intellectual rigor. This examination underscores its pivotal role in academia, where translators act as gatekeepers of knowledge, enabling the global circulation of ideas while navigating complex challenges. From preserving the poetic essence of literary works to ensuring life-saving precision in medical documents, translators balance competing priorities: fidelity to the source text and adaptability to the target audience's cultural framework.

The rise of machine translation and AI tools has undeniably transformed the field, offering unprecedented speed and scalability. Yet, these technologies falter in contexts requiring nuance—whether interpreting culturally embedded metaphors, resolving ambiguities in legal terminology, or conveying the existential depth of philosophical concepts. Human translators remain irreplaceable, particularly in addressing biases that pervade cross-cultural communication. For instance, gendered language in Arabic translations or the politicized portrayal of historical events reveals how translators' choices can either reinforce stereotypes or challenge dominant narratives. As globalization intensifies, the demand for skilled translators will grow, particularly in bridging divides between multilingual academic communities and marginalized linguistic groups. The future of translation lies in a symbiotic relationship between human expertise and technological innovation, where translators leverage AI for

efficiency while applying their cultural and ethical judgment to refine outputs. By embracing reflexive practices—such as peer review, collaborative glossaries, and sensitivity to power dynamics—translators can mitigate biases and uphold the integrity of their craft.

In essence, translation is more than a technical task; it is a profound act of cultural mediation. Whether rendering a poet's metaphor, a scientist's breakthrough, or a philosopher's treatise, translators ensure that knowledge is not merely transmitted but truly understood. Their work sustains the interconnectedness of our world, affirming that language, in all its diversity, remains humanity's most powerful tool for shared progress.

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