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## How Translators Overcome Cultural Divides in International Communication through Translation as Cultural Mediation

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كيف يتغلب المترجمون على الانقسامات الثقافية في التواصل الدولي من خلال الترجمة كوسيط ثقافي

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المستخلص

الترجمة ظاهرة ثقافية عابرة للثقافات، إذ تُعدّ وسيلةً للحوار بين اللغتين، والأهم من ذلك، أنها فعل ثقافي يُسهّل فهم معاني وقيم ووجهات نظر المجتمعين. في ظل العولمة الحالية والتواصل عبر الإنترنت، لم يعد المترجمون مجرد مترجمين، بل أصبحوا يُفسّرون العالم ويخلقون شعورًا بالتفاهم المتبادل بغض النظر عن الحدود الإقليمية. تستكشف هذه الورقة البحثية الترجمة كوسيط ثقافي، وتناقش كيف يُمارس المترجمون دور الوسيط الثقافي في وسائل الإعلام العالمية والأدب والدبلوماسية من خلال التفاوض الثقافي. استنادًا إلى نظريات دراسات الترجمة والتواصل بين الثقافات، تبحث الدراسة في كيفية إدارة المترجمين للفجوات الثقافية، والقضايا الأخلاقية ذات الصلة، وكيف تلعب الترجمة دورًا مُتغيّرًا في التواصل عبر الوطني. وقد تبين أن الوساطة الثقافية في الترجمة لا تتجح إلا بالكفاءة الثقافية، والحساسية الثقافية، والموازنة بين الأمانة والتكيف من قبل المترجم. يُضيف البحث إلى المعرفة بدور الترجمة في الحفاظ على الحوار بين الثقافات وتعزيز الشمولية في الخطاب العالمي. الكلمات المفتاحية: الترجمة، الوساطة الثقافية، التواصل بين الثقافات، العولمة، أخلاقيات المترجم.

### Abstract

Translation is a cross-cultural phenomenon in the sense that it is a means of a dialogue between the language and yet more significantly, it is a cultural act that facilitates the meaning, values and or views of the two societies. With the current globalization and online communication, translators are not merely translators, but they interpret the world and create a sense of mutual understanding regardless of territorial boundaries. This paper explores translation as a cultural mediation, and discusses how translators mediate cultural mediation in the global media, literature, and diplomacy through cultural negotiation. Based on the theories in translation studies and intercultural communication,

the study examines how translators manage the cultural gaps, ethical issues involved, and how translation is now playing a changing role in the transnational communication. It has been found out that cultural mediation in translation is only successful with cultural competence, cultural sensitivity, and balancing between fidelity and adaptation by the translator. The research adds to the knowledge of the role of translation in maintaining the intercultural dialogue and enhancing inclusiveness in the worldwide discourse. Keywords: Translation, Cultural Mediation, Intercultural Communication, Globalization, Translator Ethics.

## **1. Introduction**

Through a world that is becoming more interdependent due to technology, migration as well as global media, translation is not merely a matter of linguistic need but a cultural activity which allows the societies to construct meaningful communication. The process of translation does not just consist in the transfer of words between the two language, but also in the process of interpretation and mediation between various cultural structures, systems of values and ways of expression. With the increased cross-cultural alliances that are brought by the process of globalization, the role of translators as cultural intermediaries with respect to creating understanding, cooperation and co-existence between different language communities becomes critical (Bielsa & Bassnett, 2009).

The cultural mediation concept of translation goes against the historical understanding of translators being an invisible or neutral mediator. In its place, translators are perceived as driving forces in the way ideas and identities are expressed in more than one language. Venuti (1995) stressed that each decision made during translations includes cultural and ideological directives as translators have to make a compromise between the faithfulness to the original message and the one which fits the new audience. This translating a meeting of intercultural acts into translation is a negotiative act inevitably between systems of meaning that can in many respect be different in terms of worldview, humor, politeness, social conventions.

Additionally, with the emergence of the global media and electronic communication, the responsibility of the translator has increased. With audiovisual translation and online materials, translators, in addition to language facilitation, have to deal with how different events and stories in the world will be framed culturally (Cronin, 2013). As an example, the translation of a political speech or a movie subtitle or a post on a social network can dramatically affect its perception by people in a new culture. In this way, the activity of a translator influences intercultural relations and discourse on the planet directly.

Global communication is becoming more and more complicated, which is one of the reasons why cultural competence in translation is so critical. Not only should a translator be fluent in the language, he/she should be thoroughly familiar with both the culture of origin and culture of destination in terms of values, traditions, metaphors, humor and sensibilities. According to Katan (2014), to be an effective translator, the translator needs

to perceive culture as a dynamic system of meaning and this requires the translator to adjust messages to suit the specific circumstances of the target, without undermining the original message.

The importance of researching translation as a practice of cultural mediation is that it implies consequences in intercultural communication, international collaboration, and international representation. Translators play an important role in the global communication process by bridging the cultural differences between different cultures, thereby contributing to the social responsibility and creativity agency of translators. This research seeks to emphasise the creative agency and social responsibility of translators in global communication. It will discuss translation practices, which facilitate cultural dialogue and evaluate ethical issues of translators in their aim to achieve cultural faithfulness and adjustment.

Finally, this paper suggests that translation is one of the key processes of cultural diplomacy and international communication. It does not only convey information but also transforms perceptions, creates empathy and connections between linguistic and cultural barriers. The translation as cultural mediation can thus offer more importance on the interaction of language and culture in defining world stories and interpreting each other.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Translation Beyond Linguistic Transfer**

The classical perspectives of translation centered mostly on linguistic equivalence, which is a correct interpretation of words and meanings in a certain language into another. The early translation theorists like Nida (1964) had stressed on dynamic equivalence, which implies that the translator must seek to achieve similar effect as the original text had on its readers on the target audience. Although this method expanded the scope of translation to non-literal transfer, it nevertheless placed the emphasis on the linguistic functionality of translation, but not on cultural interpretation. Subsequently other researchers contended later that translation should be conceptualized as a form of cultural negotiation because linguistic equivalence cannot explain the intricacies of meaning within cultural settings (Snell-Hornby, 2006).

The theorists started perceiving translation as a cross-cultural communicative process as the studies of translation became an interdisciplinary domain in the late 20th century. A model was put forward by Hatim and Mason (1990) by combining linguistic, textual, and pragmatic aspects of translation and stating that all translations represent a balance between linguistic fidelity and sociocultural adaptation. This change of attitude was to become the basis of what is now called translation: as cultural mediation, an interpretive act involving cultural consciousness and cultural judgment, but not mechanical replacement.

### **2.2 The Translator as Cultural Mediator**

The idea of the translator as cultural Mediator developed in the 1990s, under the influence of the sociocultural and poststructuralist perspectives. Venuti (1995) maintained that

translation can not be said to be free and can never be idealised outside ideological, cultural and political contexts. The cultural turn of translation studies was facilitated by Bassnett and Lefevere (1998), who focused on the contact between translation and sociocultural systems in general. Translators are bridges or mediators who bargain on cultural meanings and values and therefore translation is an important location of intercultural exchange. Cronin (2006) also pointed out the political aspect of mediation as the translators are involved in the creation of the global narrative.

Recent scholarship has applied this perspective to migration, humanitarian communication and international organizations. According to Poehhacker (2016), translators are agents of intercultural communication who help to resolve conflicts, have diplomacy, and understand different cultures.

### **2.3 Translation and Globalization**

Globalization has identified translation as an instrument of cultural diplomacy and global communication. Bielsa and Bassnett (2009) demonstrated how translators affect the world opinion by making linguistic and cultural decisions.

Cronin (2013) stated that digital technologies enhance the visibility of translation and accelerate it, whereas, at the same time, cultural sensitivity becomes more essential. Subtitizers and other translators in literary and audiovisual translation use the content to ensure that the message is not lost, but they can be translated to become readable in a different country (Diaz-Cintas and Remael, 2021).

### **2.4 Cultural Equivalence and Contextual Adaptation**

In order to reach cultural equivalence, a meaning transfer should be done in a manner that will be resonant within the target culture without damaging the source integrity. House (2015) pays attention to functional equivalence, whereas Katan (2014) sees culture as dynamic and context-dependent in translation. According to Schaeffner and Adab (2000), when translating, the fidelity and accessibility must be balanced, which is why ethical choices are made during cultural adaptation.

### **2.5 Theoretical Framework**

The research incorporates intercultural communication theories. The assessment of translation strategies and cultural sensitivity is informed by Hofstede (2001) cultural dimensions and Byram (2012) intercultural communicative competence as it emphasizes the role of the translator as an intercultural communicator.

## **3. Methodology**

### **3.1 Research Design**

The research design is qualitative and investigates the concept of the translators as cultural mediators. It analyses the process of meaning negotiation, adaptation, and restructuring in the course of translation according to the interpretivist paradigm (Creswell and Poth, 2018). The methodology is a mix of descriptive studies of translation and intercultural communication theory.

### **3.2 Data Sources**

Examples were drawn from:

- Media translation: News stories and audio-visual materials of international interest (BBC Arabic, Al Jazeera English, Deutsche Welle).

Literary translation: English versions of Naguib Mahfouz Cairo Trilogy.

Institutional translation: UN and EU multilingual messages (Tesseur, 2014).

### 3.3 Analytical Framework

The study applies:

Domestication/foreignization of cultural negotiation by Venuti (1995).

Quality assessment functional equivalence translation House (2015).

Blackberry: Byram (2012) intercultural communicative competence to assess cultural awareness.

### 3.4 Limitations

Qualitative content analysis was used to study the idioms, metaphors, tone, and culturally specific mentions.

This is a qualitative and context-based study that aims at illustrative examples, not generalization by the use of statistics.

## 4. Analysis and Discussion

### 4.1 Translators as Intercultural Negotiators

Translators juggle between fidelity and accessibility by domestication and foreignization. Literary examples, like the novels of Mahfouz keep some of the cultural expressions and, at the same time, modify others to make them understandable (El-Amine, 2018). Another similarity is that audiovisual translation also needs editorial choices that mediate culture (Díaz-Cintas and Remael, 2021).

### 4.2 Translation in Global Media

The social responsibility of the translator is reflected in news translators using words and cultures to construct their narratives. Global health communication, e.g., multilingual COVID-19 messages, is an example of such translation (Tesseur, 2021).

### 4.3 Ethical and Ideological Dimensions

The decision-making of any translator is ethical and more so when it comes to humanitarian and diplomatic issues, where the translator has to balance authenticity, accessibility, and institutional limitations (Footitt and Kelly, 2012; Baker, 2018).

### 4.4 Translation in the Digital Era

Machine translation is not culturally sensitive, so an intervention by humans is essential (O'Hagan, 2020). An example of grassroots cultural mediation is digital and user-generated translation (Jenkins, 2018).

### 4.5 Intercultural Competence

The translator has to navigate the world of metaphors, humor, politeness norms, and socio-cultural symbolism, and high intercultural competence allows this (Byram, 2012). Lack of alignment may lead to the failure in communication (Zhang and Ma, 2019).

### 4.6 Synthesis

Translators are cultural architects, who operate on the ethical, contextual, and intercultural mediation of meaning to make the world cognizant.

## **5. Findings**

### **5.1 Overview**

Translators play the role of cultural mediators with literary as well as media, institutional, and digital.

### **5.2 Cultural Bridge**

Negotiating the meaning is done by translators to facilitate accessibility without losing the cultural objectivity (El-Amine, 2018; Bielsa and Bassnett, 2009).

### **5.3 Intercultural Competence**

It is necessary to be aware of source and target cultures, societal cues, and values (Byram, 2012).

### **5.4 Ethical Mediation**

Translators are moral agents, and they have fidelity, neutrality, and empathy (Chesterman, 2001; Footitt and Kelly, 2012).

### **5.5 Globalization and Technology**

Machine translation would never displace human judgment. Digital translation denotes grassroots translation (O'Hagan, 2020; Jenkins, 2018).

### **5.6 Themes**

Theme Insight Implication

Cultural Negotiation Balance stay true and open the door Use hybrids.

Intercultural Competence Recognize the two cultures Insist on cultural literacy.

Representation Ethics supportive in education Ethical Mediation Moral decisions.

Digital Mediation Human judgment necessary Incorporate human-AI partnership.

## **6. Applied Component: Practical Examples of Cultural Mediation**

Practical Case: Cultural Mediation in Practice.

### **6.1 literary textss**

Example 1:

- Original: “كان البيت يغمره شعور بالدفء، وتملاً أصوات العائلة الأرجاء.”

Translation: The warmth would fill the house and the voices of the family could be heard everywhere.

- Strategy: Domestication

Mark: Tone: Luckily, the emotional tone was maintained so that it is readable.

Example 2:

- Original: “الصبر مفتاح الفرج، ولكن الحياة لا تنتظر أحداً.”

Translation: “Patience is the order of the day, but life never waits on anybody.

Strategy Domestication, idiomatic adaptation

### **6.2 Media Texts**

Example 1:

- Original: “طالب المتظاهرون الحكومة بالإصلاحات الفورية.”

The original text: The demonstrators insisted that the government should reform now.

- Strategy: Foreignization
- Observation: Political situation maintained.

Example 2:

• Original: “ارتفاع أسعار الوقود أدى إلى احتجاجات واسعة في المدن الكبرى.”

Translation: “Increase in fuel prices has led to massive protests in large cities.

### **6.3 Official / Policy Texts**

Example 1:

Original:: Vaccination campaigns should be held to avoid outbreak and ensuring the public health.

Translation: “تعد حملات التطعيم ضرورية لمنع تفشي الأمراض وحماية الصحة العامة.”

A strategy involving domesticating and functional equivalence.

Example 2:

Original: “It is true that nations should adopt renewable energy guidelines in order to accomplish climate goals.

• Translation: “يجب على الدول تنفيذ سياسات الطاقة المستدامة لتحقيق أهداف المناخ.”

### **6.4 Social Media**

Example:

• Original Tweet: “هذا الميم يشرح الوضع تمامًا” 😊

• Translation: “Such a meme is an ideal representation of the situation 😊”

• Strategy: Domestication, adaptation to digital culture.

### **6.5 Compared to Machine Translation Human vs. Machine Translation.**

Text Type Human translation machine translation Cultural notes

Literary 1 “The house was warm with feeling... Man remains tone; machine is literal.

Literary 2 “Patience is the annulment of relief...” “Patience is the annulment of opening but life is patient no more... And human natural; machine clumsy.

Media 1 The protesters wanted the government to change things immediately... The protesters wanted the government to change things immediately... Manufacturing narrow; machine clumsy.

Media 2 “The fuel prices have increased and this has resulted in massive demonstrations across mega cities... There is human preservation of readability and context.

Official 1 “Vaccination campaigns are mandatory... Human plush; machine dead.

Official 2 countries should have policies in place that will ensure sustainable energy is implemented... Minor difference; the more formal of humans.

Social Media This meme perfectly explains the situation 😊” This meme describes the situation literally; machine.

### **6.6 Observations**

1. Figurative translation is very important in literature.
2. Media translation is enhanced through contextual explanation.

3. Digital content must be concerned with humor, emojis, and style.
4. Formal writing does not permit informality.
5. The use of machine translators cannot possibly bring out the cultural nuances and this has proved the necessity of a human translator.

## 7. Conclusion

Translation is not an intercultural and ethical transfer, but a transfer of linguistics. Translators apply the culture, create awareness, and define the world stories. Key findings highlight:

1. Translators: the cultural mediators.
2. Intercultural competence
3. Ethical responsibility
4. Effects of digital and globalization.

## Implications:

Emphasis on intercultural training in education.

Institutional guidelines of ethical translation: Build institutional guidelines to direct translation ethically.

- Combine human translation with machine translation.

Further studies are needed on cross-cultural comparisons, digital mediation and ethical frameworks.

Finally, it is important to note that translation is cultural mediation, which supports its purposes in the global understanding, empathy, and collaboration.

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