

# Translating military register from English into Arabic

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## Abstract

Languages are the key means of human communication in all over the world. So, it is important to study their registers, similarities and differences. This research examines the role of the written translators in translating military register from English into Arabic. The data of the study was extracted from the well-known American dictionary titled "Merriam-Webster. I chose ten different slang military terms extracted from the above-mentioned dictionary. I selected five graduate students graduated from university of Tikrit, department of translation, college of Arts, to translate the provided military terms in order to evaluate their translations. The researcher followed Venuti strategies (1995) as a model of translation analysis based on Foreignization and Domestication .It is hypothesized that the success rate of translators will be lower than the failure rate in relation to the translation of slang military terminologies .The findings showed that the success rate of translators will be lower than the failure rate.

**Keywords:** (Military terminology, military register, slang military, military translation)

تعد اللغات الوسيلة الأساسية للتواصل البشري على الأرض المعمورة، لذلك فإنه من المهم دراسة أنواع هذه اللغات ومعرفة أوجه التشابه والاختلاف فيما بينها. تعنى هذه الورقة البحثية بدور المترجمين التحريريين في ترجمة المفردات العسكرية. تم اخذ بيانات الدراسة من القاموس الأمريكي الشهير " ميريم وبستر .وبدوري كباحث اخترت عشرة مفردات عامية عسكرية مختلفة استخرجتها من هذا القاموس . و حددت خمسة خريجين تخرجوا من جامعة تكريت / كلية الآداب / قسم الترجمة ليكونوا مشاركين في ترجمة هذه المفردات العامية العسكرية. واعتمد الباحث نهج فانوتي ١٩٩٥ كآلية تحليل تستند على التغريب و التدجين. و يفترض البحث الحالي بأن نسبة نجاح المترجمين في ترجمة المفردات العامية العسكرية من الانكليزية الى العربية اقل من نسبة الفشل . وبينت نتائج البحث بأن نسبة نجاح المترجمين اقل من نسبة الفشل .

الكلمات المفتاحية: ( المفردات العسكرية واللغة العسكرية واللغة العسكرية العامية و الترجمة العسكرية ).

## 1. Introduction

Al Ali (2017) states that since the beginning of the 20th century, military translation has attracted the attention of many scholars around the globe due to the vast technological advancements, the emergence of new weapons, and the increase in international military transactions and transportation of weapons. Consequently, knowing how to utilize a particular weapon requires knowledge with its operating instructions. According to Ivir (1989, p. 139), an American-made weapon used by an Indian soldier requires the Indian soldier to read the instructions on how to operate it, necessitating the need for military translators with the necessary knowledge and skill to translate the correct terms pertaining to the operation of the weapon. Otherwise, disastrous effects could occur, including a significant number of casualties among the personnel operating the weapon. In addition, the growth of technology and the introduction of new weapons have demanded a specific form of translation pertaining to the operation of weapons acquired from other nations, i.e. the operating instructions are written in a foreign language. As military translation is primarily dependent on the use of specific terminology and idioms, the users of such translations must be supplied with a thorough understanding of the weaponry they are utilizing, as errors might have grave consequences. (ibid, p 150).

### 1.1 Technical translation

Consequently, knowing how to utilize a particular weapon requires knowledge with its operating instructions. According to Ivir (1989, p. 139), an American-made weapon used by an Indian soldier requires the Indian soldier to read the instructions on how to operate it, necessitating the need for military translators with the necessary knowledge and skill to translate the correct terms pertaining to the operation of the weapon. Otherwise, disastrous effects could occur, including a significant number of casualties among the personnel operating the weapon. In addition, the growth of technology and the introduction of new weapons have demanded a specific form of translation pertaining to the operation of weapons acquired from other nations, i.e. the operating instructions are written in a foreign language. As military translation relies mostly on the use of specific terminology and idioms, the users of such translation must have a thorough understanding of the weaponry they are utilizing. mistakes might Technical translation is a specialized form of translation that entails the translation of specialized writings with unique terminology and jargon. In this perspective, technical translation encompasses not only the translation of medical and engineering literature, but also works from other fields, such as law, computer engineering,

and psychology (Hassan, 2017, p 67). In addition, Ghazala (1995) defines technical translation as the translation of scientific and technical terms and concepts of all types, such as medical, physical, mathematical, technological, mechanical, biological, computer, and agricultural terms. Therefore, technical translation is one type of this branch of research that encompasses various scientific disciplines. In contrast, these definitions make no distinction between specialized translation and technical translation, despite the fact that both involve working with distinct materials. In this regard, Byrne (2009, p. 11) underlines that the translation of technical terms has been one of the most essential areas of research since the beginning of the 20th century, which was marked by considerable technological advances. not have dire results (ibid, p 150).

## 1.2 Register

Martin (1992, p 495) defines register as “the configuration of semantic resources that the member of culture associates with a situation type. It is the meaning potential that is accessible in a given social context”. According to Biber et al. (1998, p 135), registers are determined by their contexts of use (considering their function, topic, context, interactivity, and mode, etc.). Richards and Schmidt (2003) further assert that certain registers can be recognized from others by employing a set of words or phrases or grammatical constructions that are distinctive. These features are sometimes rather distinct from the group or any other domains. Yule (2007, pp 210-211) defined register as “a conventional way of using language that is appropriate in a specific context, which may be identified as situational (e.g. in church), occupational (e.g. among lawyers) or topical (e.g. Talking about language)”. Martin (1992, p 495) mentioned that Malinowsky claims that the situation's context is the register. Firth creates the situational context to refer to morphology, lexis, phonology, and phonetic analysis to determine the meaning of a text. Field, tenor, and mode are the three categories into which Halliday (1993) divides the situation's context. In other words, register alludes to the situation's context. The situation's context is then metafunctionally divided into the field, tenor, and mode.

### 1.2.1 Field

The term "field," which refers to the social action that is "really taking place," describes what is happening and the nature of the social action that is being carried out by the participants, in which language plays a crucial role (Martin, 1992, p 499). In other words, the field is a component of the situational context that discusses what is occurring and what the participant is doing. The topic of social action is covered (Martin, 1992, p 499).

### 1.2.2 Tenor

The term tenor refers to the role structure: 'who is taking part' to the nature of the participants, their status and roles: what types of role relationship that is obtained among the participants, such as permanent and temporary relationships that is held between of one type or another, both the kinds of speech roles that they are occurring in the dialogue and the whole cluster of socially important relationships in which they are engaged (ibid, p 499-500).

### 1.2.3 Mode

The term mode considers as a symbolic organization refers to 'what role language is playing' or to what part language is playing, what is it that the participants expect the language to perform tasks for them in the situation i.e., the symbolic organization of the texts, the status that it have, and their functions in the context, of situation and also the rhetorical mode, what is being performed by the text in terms of groups such as didactic, expository, persuasiv (ibid, p 500).

### 1.2.4 Genre

Genre is considered as a fulfillment of social process. It becomes a property of writing that distinguishes it from others. Martin characterizes genres as social processes; their purpose is viewed in social, not psychological, terms. The genre network consists of several forms of antagonism to the field, mode, and tenor. (ibid, p 507)

### 1.3 Military register

Regarding military register, Adril (2013, 233) states that military register can be described as profession registers because they are utilized by groups of individuals with the same occupation. He added that a military register classified as a one group of language users with a particular linguistic variety. The register of one military group differs from another community group. This register is exclusively used in social interactions between military personnel and in military schools. Intriguingly, each nation has its own military register that identifies the military from other groups and professions. (ibid)

In recent years, the military register has undergone remarkable growth. The military terminologies are continually evolving and expanding daily. Military register is both highly productive and highly adaptable, and it has influenced the English language by providing

new terms. According to Thomas E. Murray,(1986, p125) "The study of English in the twentieth century has demonstrated that members of the armed services are especially prone to linguistic invention," whether they are soldiers, pilots, sailors. Technical terms, internal jargon, acronyms, abbreviations, and specialized terminologies dominate military discourse. Silkett (1985, p 13) states that few specialized terminologies have been as acquired, copied, and modified as the military lexicon, according to Silkett. It includes technical manuals, airplane, warship, armored fighting vehicle, and radar catalogs. It also includes brochures, contracts, sensitive letters, PowerPoint presentations, and computerized database files, among other types of documents. It has grown considerably over the past decade for a variety of reasons, including the rapid evolution of military technology. " New terminologies are being produced rapidly, and different military factions are no longer adopting the same older language" (Murray ,1986, p127).

Dickson (2003, p 9) argues that words and phrases of military register came from the horrors of war such as conflicts, poor humor, bad food and death. He extremely confirms that these terms and phrases allowed us to view the war more closely from the soldier's point of view, allowing us to see the bad situations in which blood was spilled, as well as to the meaninglessness of conflicts or war (2003, 10).

### **1.3.1 Military slang and translation**

Leech & Svartvik (1981, p 26) say "Slang is language which is very familiar in style, and is usually restricted to the members of a particular social group, for example 'teenage slang', 'army slang', 'theatre slang'. Slang is not usually fully understood by people outside a particular social group, and so has a value of showing the intimacy and solidarity of its members" McFarnon (2013) emphasizes that making military slang assists soldiers in surviving the war i.e. they lowered the level of war's monstrosities to a tolerable by swearing or renaming the items. In other words the swearing phenomenon is basically appeared in Oliver Stone's film "Platoon". Pajzderski (2010, p 12) explains naming military equipment with words or phrases for example, the word "cover" can be named for all types of headwear, the word "torch" can be named for flashlight, and the word "deck" is indicated as a place of soldiers , whether in the desert, or on the floor etc.

Regarding military translation, Faleh (2016, 52) mentioned that the rendering English military slang terminologies is viewed as a significant task, as it is not simply a matter of translating words, but rather a cultural transformation. One of the problematic and challenging tasks for translators is the to the cultural and linguistic varieties between the

source language (SL) and target language (TL). The translator must make a determination based on cultural features of the target language and potential recipients but transferring the meaning or delivering the same message to a TL with a different culture would be difficult, especially if the translator insists on using slang terms with the same meaning or impact.

#### **1.4 Military terminology and translator**

The language and expressions used by the military can be characterized as specialized terms and expressions that civilians are not exposed to. Due to this and the requirement for appropriate, differentiated communication, service personnel are immersed in a language universe distinct from civilian life (Oxford Dictionary, 1984). According to Muegge (2007, p 17-19), terminology is a more formal field of study that systematically investigates the labeling or designation of concepts particular to one or more subject fields or disciplines. According to Al-Kaabi (2008) military terminology indicates to group of terms and languages of military organizations as well as personnel that are distinguished by their usage in military dogma. In this regard, military terminology can be described as a set of terms and language of military organizations and troops, or, more accurately, the terminology and jargon of army and warfare. The importance of this domain of translation stems from the rapid development of military language in tandem with the advancement of military and defense technology, particularly those pertaining to the advancement of military forces or the design of new weapons (Luqman,2018, p 40).

Al-Kaabi (2008) mentioned that The terminology discipline is founded on its own theoretical ideas and includes mostly of the following components:

- Analyzing the concepts and concept structures utilized in a field or area of endeavor.
- Determining the terms that correspond to the concepts.
- Establishing correspondences between terms in the various languages in the case of bilingual or multiannual terminology.
- Compiling, on paper or in a database, the terminology.
- Managing terminology databases.
- Creating new terms when necessary.

Regarding translation of military terminologies, the translator must have a thorough understanding of military terminologies as the majority of military texts are filled with military and technical and jargon that can have many meanings depending on the context in which they are utilized. Beside, military translators must have a great knowledge in military terminology due to certain situation that may treat with people of different cultures and different educational and military background. Moreover, since a military language is a sensitive language, any failure in translation may lead to fatal consequences particularly those who are using and handling some kinds of complicated weapon systems as well as ammunitions.(ibid,p 41)

### **1.5 Military translation**

According to Al Ali (2017), military translation is one of the most important forms of specialist translation fields. This sector of specialist translation might be the difference between life and death for many military officers, according to him. He stated that the growing need for military translation may be a positive and natural result of the tremendous technological advancements in the use of weapons, which suggests that those who employ these weapons (soldiers and military commanders) must be well-informed about how to handle each weapon (ibid). According to Sakarneh (2015, p. 43), military translation is the process of conveying different military terminologies from the source language to the target language. In this regard, it relates mostly to communicating the precise TL military equivalent of an SL military phrase. In reality, the essence of this form of translation is that military-trained translators must be proficient in military jargon and possess the necessary military knowledge to generate a high-quality military translation.

According to Al- Kaabi (2008), the beginnings of military translation may be traced back to the beginning of the 20th century, when the emergence of new types of weaponry demanded technical knowledge for their operation. Recruiting translators with a military background has become required in order to communicate exact equivalent documents in the SL language on how to handle every specific weapon. This is due to the proliferation of new inventions and technological developments in the military sector, as well as the increase in military transactions between states. During the era of colonization, when developed countries colonized various regions of the developing world, the inhabitants of these regions were required to understand how to use a weapon in their native tongues. Moreover, the emergence of military coalitions (e.g. NATO) necessitated an increase in military translation because if one NATO member creates a weapon for coalition use,

soldiers from allied nations must understand how to operate it properly, necessitating an increase in military translation.

According to Al Kaabi, military translation encompasses all sorts of translation which have to do military expressions and terms. For him, it is a unique kind of communication among military personnel, as the majority of military texts are designed by a military professional for another military professional (ibid).

Due to the fact that the majority of Arab countries were formerly colonized by superpowers like as the United Kingdom, France, and Italy, the focus on military translation in the Arab World can be dated back to the early 20th century. It is essential to suppose that the colonializing country is the primary supplier of weapons for Arab soldiers, necessitating the training of soldiers and officers to maintain these weapons and the development of interpretation skills among Arabic troops to serve as correlation between colonializing country troops and local people (Al- Shehab, 2009).

## **1.6 Qualifications of military translator**

A military translator must have a comprehensive knowledge and thorough understanding of military terminology which are filled with technical and military expressions and terms that can have many different meanings depending on the context in which they are employed. Beside, military translator must familiar with terminology of military domain .The military translator should have a general understanding and a great knowledge of military equipment and facilities, as well as a general understanding of military rank and procedures. Furthermore, military translators must have a great knowledge of military terminologies due to certain situations in which the military translator might be forced to deal with people of different cultures having as well as different educational and military backgrounds. In addition ,the sensitivity of rendering private military terms and expressions because many translations of such terms or expressions might cause a fatal consequences particularly those who using and handling some kinds of complicated weapon systems and ammunitions (Lugman, 2008, p 41).

## **1.7 The importance of military translation in the Arab world**

As far as the military translation is concerned, this domain has gained a great interest among Arab world .However, the Arab military Academies have published booklets and produced dictionaries of military terms, i.e., these military terms are studied and

standardized by military professionals in the field of military (Alshehab 2013, 62). He also mentioned that military terminologies were dealt as similar to other technical terminologies when they were found .These terms are planned in some way (standardized , modernized reformed ,purified, reformed , revived,) to reinforce the communication among nations. (ibid, p 72)

Alshehab (2009) states that that it is significant to establish new terminology because current Arab armies have been adapted after modern Western and Eastern armies in their structure, branches, armament, new weapons, and ranking. However, they require new terms, translations, and the retrieval of old terms to meet the needs of modern army in order to be adapted as Western army design. Arab Language Academies were responsible for these endeavors.

## 1.8 Previous studies

Previous research on military translation was undertaken by Alshehab (2013), who published a paper targeted at identifying the impact of Arabization planning, Language planning, and terminology planning on military terms and translation. In 2009, he did a study on the difficulty of translating English military phrases into Arabic and vice versa. He utilized two English military texts and one Arabic text. In 1999, he authored a report comparing the translations of military phrases from English to Arabic. AL-Kaabi (2008) did a study on the Arabic translation of English military slang terms. Lugman (2018) wrote a paper titled "Componential Analysis in the Translation of English Military Terms into Arabic in Ernest Hemingway's "A Farewell to Arms" Faleh (2016) prepared a paper investigating the translation of English military slang phrases into Formal Arabic. Al-Harashseh (2019) wrote a dissertation titled "The Challenges of Translating English to Arabic Military Terms." 1.9 Methodology

### 1.9.1 Data collection

The data of the current study was extracted from the well-known American dictionary titled "Merriam-Webster". I chose ten different slang military terms from the above-mentioned dictionary. In addition, I selected five graduate students in university of Tikrit, department of translation, college of Arts, as subjects to translate the provided military terms in order to evaluate their translations. In fact, I previously told the subjects that the data are slang military terms as well as and then I made a test for them for 30 minutes. The

researcher followed Venuti strategies (1995) as a model of translation analysis based on Foreignization and Domestication.

### 1.9.2 Data analysis

The researcher of the current study adopted Venuti strategies (1995) as a model of translation analysis based on foreignization and domestication in order to conduct translation assessment of ten military terms chosen for analysis of translations .These terms are given to five subjects. It is important to note that all subjects of the study are graduate students in department of translation, university of Tikrit.

So the following slang military terms are extracted from the following from this website:  
<https://www.merriam-webster.com/>

#### SL No. (1) "Buck Private"

**The meaning** (It means a soldier in the U.S. Army who wants a 'bucking for' promotion).  
(Merriam Webster dictionary)

#### **Suggested translation:**

"جندي يكافح من اجل الترفيع"

#### **Subject's translations:**

١. عسكري يطالب بالترفيع
٢. عسكري يطالب بالترقية
٣. عسكري مجند
٤. خصوصيات الدعم الوجستي
٥. جندي يناضل من اجل الترقية

#### **Discussion:**

The third and fourth subjects were unable to translate the slang military term and failed in translating it into Arabic due to a lack of knowledge of the military register. While subjects No. (1, 2, 5) succeeded in translating the above slang military term into Arabic. They employed the strategy of domestication because they added the phrase **يناضل من اجل الترقية** i.e., they coloured the above term with a purely military term in Arabic version.

**SL No. (2) " Grease monkey"**

**The meaning** (A mechanic, who one who works on aircraft).

(Merriam Webster dictionary)

**Suggested translation:**

"ميكانيكي في مجال الطيران"

١. ميكانيكي الليات عسكرية

٢. ميكانيكي دراجات

٣. ميكانيكي عسكري

٤. ميكانيكي الليات عسكرية

٥. ميكانيكي عسكري

**Discussion:**

It is worthwhile to note that subjects No.(1,3,4,5) got correct translations and domesticated the slang military term accurately and they followed the strategy of domestication because they were aware of this specialized term that is particularly used in military domain. While the rest of the subjects got incorrect translation and did not convey the same effect.

**SL No. (3) " Fly-boy"**

**The meaning** (it means pilot in the air forces). (Merriam Webster dictionary)

**Suggested translation:**

"طيار"

**Subject's translations:**

١. طيار عسكري

٢. الولد المرح

٣. طيار في القوات الجوية

٤. الطائر

٥. طيار جوي

### Discussion:

It is noted that subjects No. (1, 3, 5) whose renderings presented above, followed the method of domestication because they coloured the term with slang military one in the Arabic version to be "طيار في القوات الجوية". While subjects No. (3,4) didn't follow any strategy of translation and their renderings are not coined with context of slang military terms.

### SL No. (4) "Brass hat"

**The meaning:** (It means officers who are in a higher-rank officer – especially those with gold braid) (Merriam Webster dictionary)

### Suggested translation:

"ضباط برتب عالية"

### Subject's translations:

١. ضباط اكفاء

٢. ضباط صف

٣. ضباط برتبة محترمة

٤. رتب الضباط العالية

٥. نخبة من الضباط

### Discussion:

As shown above that subjects No. (3, 4,5) succeeded in rendering the slang military term into Arabic .In other words, they followed the method of domestication, because they

had a good knowledge in such a specialized domain. While subjects No.(1,2,) followed the method of foreignization because they failed in translating the slang military terms and didn't to convey the same effect during the process of translation.

### SL No. (5) "Rookie"

**The meaning:** (It is a term used in Britain armed forces. It means a new enlisted soldier) (Merriam Webster dictionary)

**Suggested translation:**

" مجند جديد "

**Subject's translations:**

١. لاعب مبتدأ
٢. مجند مبتأ
٣. عريف
٤. جندي متطوع جديد
٥. جندي مكلف مبتدأ

**Discussion:**

It is important to note that subjects No. (2, 4,5) have succeeded in rendering the slang military term into Arabic but with different degrees. They followed the method of domestication i.e. they domesticated and coloured the term with slang military one. While the rest of subjects inaccurately translated the slang military term that they couldn't convey the same effect of equivalence.

### SL No. (6) " Ring knocker"

**The meaning:** (It is a term which refers to a graduate in a military academy) (Merriam Webster dictionary)

**Suggested translation:**

## "خريج كلية عسكري"

### Subject's translations:

١. طالب كلية
٢. خريج كلية الشرطة
٣. خريج الكلية العسكرية
٤. خاتم الزواج
٥. ضابط عسكري

### Discussion:

It is observed that four out of five subjects translated the above mentioned slang military term into Arabic incorrectly. In other words, they followed the method of foreignization except subject No.(3,) succeeded in translating the slang military term in deep meaning i.e., this subject followed the method of domestication

### SL No. (7) " Four ringer"

**The meaning:** (It means a captain) (Merriam Webster dictionary)

### Suggested translation:

"نقيب"

### Subject's translations:

١. اربع خواتم
٢. سيد الخواتيم
٣. رتبة نقيب
٤. ضابط برتبة نقيب
٥. اربع خواتم

## Discussion:

Subjects No. (1,2,5) used irrelevant equivalent of the slang military term and they failed in translating the term into Arabic. This reveals that they translated the term literally and did not convey the same effect of equivalent due to a lack of knowledge about the register of this domain. While the rest of subjects domesticated the slang military term in the depth meaning and succeeded in translating the slang military term into Arabic.

## SL No. (8) "Grunt"

**The meaning:** (It indicates to infantry soldier or marine one)

(Merriam Webster dictionary)

## Suggested translation:

"جندي مشاة او بحرية"

## Subject's translations:

١. القبايع

٢. صوت الخنزير

٣. جندي مشاة

٤. جنود البحرية

٥. القبايع

## Discussion:

It is noted that subjects No.(3, 4) accurately rendered the English slang military term and captured the same effect of equivalence. They followed the method of domestication because they conveyed the same effect and meaning of the term. While the rest of subjects failed in translating the English slang term i.e., they translated the slang term literally without taking the register of this language into account.

## SL No. (9) " Lifer"

**The meaning:** (It means a draft Army)

(Merriam Webster dictionary)

**Suggested translation:**

"ضابط صف"

**Subject's translations:**

١. ضابط صف عسكري

٢. ضباط دروع

٣. ضابط مشاة

٤. ضابط صف

٥. ضباط صف

**Discussion:**

It is worthwhile to note that three out of five subjects followed the method of domestication because they rendered the in-depth meaning of the slang military term into Arabic. While the rest of subjects followed the method of foreignization because they gave irrelevant equivalent and failed in translating the term into Arabic.

## SL No. (10) " Leatherneck"

**The meaning:** (It means a soldier in the US Marine Corps)

(Merriam Webster dictionary)

**Suggested translation**

"جندي في المشاة البحرية الامريكية"

## Subject's translations:

١. قوة المشاة البرية

٢. جنود المشاة البحرية

٣. الفرقة العسكرية

٤. جندي مشاة بحري

٥. مجند عسكري

## Discussion:

It is worthwhile to note that subjects No.(2,4) domesticated the slang military term accurately. While the rest of the subjects got incorrect translation and did not convey the same effect due to lack of knowledge and skill in this specialized domain.

## Conclusion

It can be concluded that some subjects of the study succeeded in translating the slang military terms while the other subjects failed in translating these terms. In other words, the rate of subject's success is lower than the rate of subject's failure and this is actually verified the hypothesis of the current study. Moreover, it is proved that following the strategies of Venuti (1995) namely domestication and foreignization are very essential and important for translators when translating the military register particularly slang military terms from English into Arabic.

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