

Ethical Challenges in the Translator's Role in Narrative Discourse of the Palestinian Tragedy

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التحديات الأخلاقية في دور المترجم في السرد الإعلامي للمأساة الفلسطينية

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Abstract:This article examines the ethical complexities surrounding the translation and portrayal of media coverage of the Palestinian conflict. It sheds light on the moral dilemmas faced by communication professionals such as journalists and translators who report on these events. The analysis specifically focuses on the terminology used to describe the occurrences and individuals involved, with a particular emphasis on the ethical considerations of translators. Additionally, it explores how the narratives constructed through linguistic choices shape the perception, understanding, and interpretation of the situation. This study reveals significant ethical dilemmas faced by translators, highlighting the impact of terminology on public perception, and calls for heightened ethical standards and transparent practices in media coverage of conflict zones.

Keywords:Palestine; ethics; translator; narrative;journalism

ملخص:

يتناول المقال التعقيدات الأخلاقية التي يواجهها الصحفيون والمترجمون أثناء تصوير وتغطية أحداث الصراع الفلسطيني الاسرائيلي، ويركز التحليل بشكل خاص على المصطلحات والاعتبارات الأخلاقية للمترجمين. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، فإنه يستكشف كيف تشكل لسرديات التي تم بناؤها من خلال

الاختيارات اللغوية الموقف وفهمه وتفسيره. تكشف هذه الدراسة عن معضلات أخلاقية كبيرة يواجهها المترجمون، وتسلب الضوء على تأثير المصطلحات على الإدراك العام، وتدعو إلى معايير أخلاقية وممارسات شفافة في التغطية الإعلامية لمناطق النزاع.

1. Introduction

Language has become a crucial tool for all sides in any conflict, with certain words and phrases becoming imbued with particular meanings or significance. Each word and phrase carries significant weight, influencing how events are understood and interpreted by global audiences. Amidst the complexity and volatility of this enduring conflict, the ethical responsibilities of translators and communication professionals come to the forefront, demanding a delicate balance between linguistic accuracy and ethical integrity.

This article delves into the ethical considerations that permeate the translation and reporting of media coverage on the Palestinian conflict. It illuminates the moral dilemmas faced by journalists and translators who navigate this terrain, exploring the impact of their terminological choices on public perception. By closely examining real-life case studies and ethical challenges, this study aims to underscore the necessity for heightened ethical standards and transparent practices in media coverage of conflict zones.

As the world grapples with the harrowing images and narratives emerging from the region, the imperative to navigate the ethical complexities of documenting and translating these realities becomes increasingly urgent. This paper seeks to unravel the intricate ethical considerations inherent in portraying and interpreting events unfolding in Palestine. By interrogating the translator's conscience and the ethical responsibilities incumbent upon journalists, it endeavors to shed light on the profound influence of biased reporting and advocate for the adoption of transparent, ethical practices in conflict coverage.

2. Background of the Conflict in Palestine

To understand the origins of the ongoing conflict, it is crucial to explore its historical background. This exploration is particularly important for those who may be unfamiliar with or choose to overlook the complexities of the Palestinian conflict. Although historians agree that mainstream Israeli and Palestinian narratives differ significantly (Sham, p. 58), we aim to provide an objective analysis.

2.1 Historical Context of the Conflict

The Zionist State-Palestinian conflict, with roots stretching back over a century, is a multifaceted issue shaped by competing nationalisms, religious affiliations, and territorial disputes. Its origins can be traced to the late nineteenth century, when Western Christian Zionism emerged, advocating for a Jewish homeland in Palestinian territory. This emergence as a form of "sacred geography," akin to a new kind of crusade, which spurred

a significant influx of Jewish immigrants to the region. Hence, the aim of the Zionist movement has been from the beginning to build a Jewish national home in Palestine. (Forriol, 2023)

The establishment of the Zionist state in 1948 and its subsequent occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967 had a profound impact on the Palestinian people's sense of territory and identity. The displacement of Palestinians during the 1948 War, known as the "Nakba" or "Catastrophe," resulted in the loss of their homeland and a deep longing to return to their ancestral homes. Over time, the Palestinian national movement has sought to assert its identity within the West Bank, Gaza, and refugee camps in neighboring Arab states.

Various significant events in peace negotiations have shaped the landscape throughout the years. The Oslo Accords in the early 1990s aimed to establish a framework for peace and Palestinian autonomy. The Camp David summit in 2000, described by Helga Baumgarten as a "myth-in-the-making" (2004, p. 39), aimed to address final status issues but ultimately failed. In 2003, the United States presented the Roadmap for Peace, which outlined steps toward a two-state solution. However, the peace process remains precarious, with ongoing challenges. United Nations resolutions have advocated for the recognition of Palestinian rights, and international mediation efforts have aimed to facilitate negotiations. Despite this, media coverage and international involvement often fail to accurately portray the complexities of the conflict.

2.2 Palestine Unfolded: Today's Realities

These historical events have created a complex political, economic, and social reality for the Palestinian people, greatly affecting their lives. Furthermore, tourism has become a means for the Zionist state to assert control over both land and people. This movement emerged during the British Mandate for Palestine. (Berkowitz, 2012: 217) Zionist state's control over access to Palestine, water resources, and the movement of people and goods also limits Palestinians from fully benefiting from the potential advantages and opportunities that tourism could offer.

Examining the current dynamics and geopolitical realities of Palestine reveals that the conflict is rooted in a complex combination of historical, political, and social factors. The region has been shaped by years of colonialism, displacement, and conflicting national aspirations. The establishment of the Zionist state in 1948, along with subsequent wars and territorial disputes, has only intensified these tensions. Moreover, the ongoing occupation of Palestinian territories, the expansion of settlements, and the construction of barriers have created physical and psychological obstacles to achieving peace. The involvement of regional and international actors, such as neighboring Arab states and global superpowers, adds yet another layer of complexity to the conflict. Understanding these contemporary

dynamics is crucial in fully comprehending the multifaceted nature of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and in identifying potential paths towards resolution and peace-building efforts.

3. Ethical Considerations in Communication Professions

When it comes to conflict reporting, ethical considerations are extremely important in shaping the narratives that are presented to the public.

3.1 The Role of Journalism Ethics in Shaping Public Narratives and Conflict Reporting

Ethical considerations play a crucial role in shaping the narratives presented to the public, especially in conflict reporting, its code focuses on the need to protect the public from harm. (Shweiki& al. 2021:340) Ethics involves critically thinking about what is morally right and using rational inquiry to decide on the best course of action for everyone involved. Ethical communication focuses on finding solutions and emphasizes the importance of ethical behavior and dialogue in professional settings. Key principles include prioritizing safety, well-being, truth, and justice, following the golden rule, considering diverse perspectives, and taking responsibility for decisions. Truthfulness, which encompasses honesty, accuracy, reliability, and trust, is central to communication ethics, along with the fundamental aspect of free speech. In journalism, ethics guide reporters towards truth, accuracy, and minimizing harm. Journalists are responsible for providing factual and unbiased information to the public, acting as societal watchdogs, and maintaining accountability. Upholding ethical standards requires a commitment to truthfulness and impartiality, ensuring that information is presented without bias or distortion. This involves navigating complex cultural and political landscapes with sensitivity and empathy, prioritizing accuracy and integrity in reporting.

Communication professionals frequently encounter various ethical dilemmas, including:

- **Conflicts of Interest:** Situations where personal interests or relationships may interfere with their obligation to act in the best interests of clients or the public. This includes scenarios where professionals might financially benefit from specific outcomes or where personal relationships could compromise their objectivity.
- **Breaches of Confidentiality:** Communication professionals often deal with sensitive information about individuals or organizations. Unauthorized disclosure of such information can seriously undermine public trust and damage reputations.
- **Misrepresentation or Deception:** This includes making false advertising claims, misstating qualifications, exaggerating capabilities, engaging in fraudulent practices, forging documents, or lying under oath. Dishonesty can have severe consequences for a professional's reputation and career.
- **Balancing Transparency with Privacy:** Professionals must navigate the tension between being transparent and maintaining confidentiality, privacy, and profitability. Striking the right balance is crucial for ethical practice. (see Krishnan, 2024)

However, despite the clarity of ethical and deontological codes that govern journalism worldwide, it must be acknowledged that certain Western media outlets violate these codes whenever the Zionist state is involved. In this regard, let us consider the words of Vidya Krishnan, who stated: "From the beginning of the suffering endured by the Palestinians, Western journalists have abandoned basic standards in their coverage of Israel's conduct towards Palestinians. None of this is new. The failures of Western journalism have helped Israel justify its occupation and violence against Palestinians for over 75 years" (2024). In recent months, we have seen a weakening of the omerta that used to reign over the media world. This is evident in the criticisms made by these two journalists towards American media leaders: "New York Times, Washington Post, and Los Angeles Times's coverage of Israel's war on Gaza showed a consistent bias against Palestinians... major U.S. newspapers disproportionately emphasized Israeli deaths in the conflict, used emotive language to describe the killings of Israelis, but not Palestinians" (Johnson & Ali, 2024).

3.2 Ethical Dilemmas in Translation Work

It is well established within (and beyond) Translation Studies that the translator's role exceeds that of a mere technical communication facilitator. (Hutchings, 2021) Cross-cultural challenges in ethical translation require translators to navigate cultural and political contexts while maintaining integrity and avoiding biases. When it comes to ethical translation in cross-cultural settings, translators must navigate cultural and political contexts while maintaining integrity and avoiding biases. They need to exercise discernment in evaluating their sources, considering potential impacts, and avoiding ideological imposition. By adhering to principles of accuracy, sincerity, empathy, and cultural sensitivity, translators ensure that their translations are free from misinformation, harmful stereotypes, and manipulation. Translators who report on sensitive topics like the Palestinian conflict face the challenge of conveying information accurately while respecting privacy and dignity. Balancing linguistic accuracy with ethical considerations requires translators to exercise judgment, prioritizing impartiality, fairness, and respect for human dignity. By striking this balance, translators help to disseminate accurate and ethical information, fostering understanding and empathy in the midst of complex conflicts.

3.3 Ethical Considerations and Translator Autonomy

Examining real-life case studies provides valuable insights into the ethical dilemmas faced by translators reporting on the Palestinian conflict. These case studies shed light on the challenges and complexities inherent in the translation process and highlight the ethical considerations at play. For instance, translators may find themselves grappling with decisions regarding the translation of sensitive terms like "terrorism" or "martyrdom," which carry loaded connotations and can shape public perception of any conflict. Similarly, translators may face pressure to omit or downplay certain information in their translations, either to avoid controversy or to conform to editorial biases. These ethical dilemmas underscore the

importance of translator autonomy and integrity in upholding ethical standards in reporting, even in the face of external pressures or constraints. In this specific case, Al-Hirhani examines the ethical and political challenges confronted by Palestinian translators who worked on Donald Trump's controversial 2020 Israel-Palestine peace plan. He distinguishes between deontological ethics, which prioritize impartial translation, and teleological ethics, which emphasize the outcome and its potential to reinforce power imbalances. Al-Hirhani highlights the significant ethical burden placed on translators who risk contributing to ethnic cleansing or legitimizing colonialism. He proposes a strategy that reconciles these ethical approaches through careful translation and the use of paratexts, peritexts, and epitexts to address power asymmetries. As he notes, "the ethical burden on the translator [was] considerable given the implications of unintentionally contributing to the ongoing process of potential ethnic cleansing and/or legitimizing colonialism." (Hutchings, 2021: 349)

Translators and journalists at the service of the West employ various methods to contribute to the pro-jewish narrative. Let's summarize these points:

Guiding translation strategies:

In an article titled "Arabic-English Translation in the Palestinian-Israeli 'Conflict': Ideology in the Wings," lecturers from the University of Amman in Jordan discussed the Zionist intelligence involved in manipulating translations. They analyzed translations conducted between 2012 and 2017 by MEMRI (Middle Eastern Media Research Institution), a research institution based in Washington D.C. (Hamdan & al. 2021: 83) The translators employ three main strategies: substitution, omission, and addition.

) معتقلات For the substitution, the authors of the article gave the example of the term (detention centers) implies معتقلات translated into (prisons). While the Arabic word (unlawful detainment and political oppression, the translation to (prisons) frames Palestinian prisoners as criminals under legitimate legal systems. This linguistic shift manipulates the narrative to obscure the political context and human rights violations. (Hamdan & al. 2021:) as الشعب الفلسطيني or (هزيمة) as Defeat (نكسة) 86) The same strategy was used to translate (Palestinians), as if this people did not have its own homeland. Some, not to say most,) (fighter) as المحارب أو المقاتل Western journalists have got into the habit of translating (إرهابي) terrorist .

The terminological substitutions and linguistic choices mentioned demonstrate how lexical choices can shape collective perception and profoundly influence the understanding of complex realities. These decisions transform semantics into a minefield where each word can lead to divergent interpretations. As Combis (2023) aptly states, "One word too many, or one word too few, and you are accused of taking sides." How, then, can we navigate this lexicon, this highly inflammable and potentially connoted semantics?

Regarding the omission, MEMRI's translators translate (القدس المحتلة) as Jerusalem, omitting the adjective (المحتلة). Even worse, the authors of the above-mentioned article provide us with a most pertinent example. When the source text in Arabic cites eleven thousand martyrs and injured, including women and children, the translator simply says: casualties. The translator's manipulation of the text is evident in the omission of the number of losses, which aims to diminish the extent of the brutality of Zionist crimes. Moreover, the replacement of (شهداء وجرحى) with (casualties) aims to reduce the reader's empathy factor. (Hamdan& al. 2021: 91)

In terms of addition, the authors give the following examples (تبنى الولايات المتحدة إقامة دولة (يهودية) translated into (the idea that Palestinians must recognize Israel as a Jewish state). In this example, the translator adds a new sentence with the modal verb "must," altering the original text's meaning. The translation changes the U.S. support for a Jewish state to imply that Palestinians are obliged to recognize it, introducing a biased narrative. (Hamdan& al. 2021: 93)

Passive Voice and Dehumanization

Nadda Osman discusses the tactics used by the Zionist state, as described by several linguists, to manipulate the media through the use of passive voice and selective terminology. These strategies not only serve to downplay the severity of the crimes committed in Gaza, but also strip Palestinians of their agency and dehumanize them. Lara Gibson, an Egyptian writer and linguist, highlights the prevalence of passive voice in Western media when referring to Palestinians, while Israel is typically portrayed in the active voice.

Another example of this manipulation can be found in a Reuters report from October 13. The report states that "Issam Abdallah, a Reuters photojournalist and videographer, was killed while working in southern Lebanon." Here, the passive voice is used, effectively concealing the identity of the responsible party behind the killing. (2023)

Toponymic Changes

The translation of Palestinian city names in Western media often influences people's perceptions, highlighting different political perspectives. For instance, "القدس" (Al-Quds) is commonly translated as "Jerusalem," while "نابلس" (Nablus) becomes "Naplouse," and "الخليل" becomes (Hebron). However, these translations sometimes fail to capture the local, religious, or cultural identities associated with these places. These seemingly innocent translations sometimes have the power to shape narratives and erase histories for uninformed readers or viewers. It is as if renaming a city could erase its memory, leaving only faint echoes of what once existed. However, it would be a mistake to think that changing a place name could erase the entire history. Such a belief underestimates the informed reader and shows a lack of respect for their analytical skills.

One noteworthy initiative called "ما اسمهاش" seeks to raise awareness about the original names of Palestinian cities and regions that have been altered by the Zionist state. Some examples include:

-Eilat:	"	أم الرشراش	(Umm	al-Rashrash)
- Tel Aviv:	"	يافا/قرية الشيخ مؤنس	(Jaffa/Sheikh	Muwannis village)
- Beersheba:	"	بئر السبع	(Bir	al-Saba)
- Netanya:	"	أم خالد	(Umm	Khaled)
- Akko:		عكا		(Acre)
- Tzipori:		صفورية		(Safuriyya)
- Ahiehud:		البروة		(al-Birwa)
- Ashkelon:	"عسقلان"	(Asqalan)		

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study has delved into the intricate ethical considerations surrounding the reporting and translation of the Palestinian conflict, shedding light on the pivotal role of linguistic choices in shaping public perception. By prioritizing accuracy and fairness in their work, translators and communication professionals can contribute significantly to a more truthful and balanced representation of complex events. Real-life case studies have underscored the importance of ethical translation and reporting in fostering understanding, empathy, and ultimately, justice amidst conflict.

Moreover, the profound impact of linguistic choices in this conflict highlights the shared responsibility of the media and translators. Each linguistic decision, from headlines to the translation of place names, carries significant weight in shaping global perceptions. As we consider the ethical dimensions of conflict coverage, it becomes evident that translators play a central role in shaping our collective understanding of this enduring tragedy. This convergence of universal ethical challenges and cultural nuances necessitates a dialogue on the redefinition of ethical standards rooted in professionalism and cultural sensitivity.

Moving forward, it is imperative for researchers, practitioners, and stakeholders to continue exploring avenues for enhancing ethical translation and reporting practices. By fostering transparency, accountability, and dialogue, we can strive towards a more informed and empathetic portrayal of conflicts.

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