

## Cultural Problems in Journalism Translation

## المشاكل الثقافية في الترجمة الصحفية

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**Abstract**

Our article shows that cultures are essential in conveying an understandable message from the source text to the target text, especially in journalistic Translation. Thus, every journalist translator must know how to deal with different strategies for translating cultures because he may face rare words, unusual expressions, strange speech and unfamiliar themes that may cause problems in decoding the original message. This paper examines the differences between Arabic and English that have caused cultural problems in the translation of journalism at CNN. The methodology is to compare the three translations of the journalist of CNN. The result is that the journalist neglected the target readers and the techniques of translation.

**Keywords:** Culture; Journalism Translation; Source Language; Target Language; Translation Techniques.

**ملخص:**

يوضع مقالنا أن الثقافات مهمة جدًا وأمر ضروري للغاية في نقل رسالة بطريقة مفهومة للجمهور من النص المصدر إلى النص المستهدف خاصة في الترجمة الصحفية. وبالتالي، يجب أن يكون لدى كل مترجم صحفي بعض المعرفة حول كيفية التعامل مع الاستراتيجيات المختلفة لترجمة الثقافات لأنه قد يواجه كلمات نادرة وتعبيرات غير عادية وخطاب غريب وموضوعات غير مألوفة قد تسبب مشاكل في فك تشفير الرسالة الأصلية. في هذه الورقة، سيتم فحص الفروق بين اللغتين العربية والإنجليزية والتي تسببت في مشاكل ثقافية في ترجمة الصحافة في سي إن إن. المنهج هو مقارنة الترجمات الثلاث لصحفي سي إن إن. والنتيجة أن الصحفي أهمل القراء المستهدفين وتقنية الترجمة. كلمات مفتاحية: الترجمة الصحفية، تقنيات الترجمة، ثقافة، لغة الهدف، لغة المصدر.

## **1. Introduction**

Our world is Babel of languages, and an interlingual communication is impossible to occur between people speaking different languages unless they overcome the linguistic barriers. Thus, this difference in languages led to the appearance of translation, which is a complicated intellectual activity due to two dominant factors: language and culture. We, usually, define the translating process by referring to languages, but the cultural factor in translation is also undeniable if not so obvious. Indeed, no translation is possible unless the target receivers understand the message very well, as the source readers did. Moreover, this understanding can be achieved if the sender has complete information about this language and the received people. In other words, the translator must have background knowledge about the target receivers' linguistic community, their culture, traditions, habits, ways of doing and saying things and have much common knowledge about their country, like its geography, history, climate, its political, economic, social and cultural institutions, accepted morals, taboos (Komissarov, 1991).

Furthermore, Fatiha Guessabi said:

The problem is what happens when cross-culture contacts and interaction occur, i.e., when message producer and message receiver are from different cultures. The contact among cultures increased and made intercultural communication imperative for people to make a concerted effort to get along with and understand those whose beliefs and backgrounds may be vastly different from their own. Language can mark the cultural identity; it is also used to refer to other phenomena and refer beyond itself, especially when a particular speaker uses it for his intentions. A particular language points to the culture of a particular social group. (2011)

Therefore, the variety of cultures obliged the translator, especially in journalism translation, to know more about the target people, which means their traditions, attitudes, beliefs, behavioural conventions, and basic assumptions and values that are shared by them, as V. N. Komissarov explained: "In addition to overcoming the linguistic barrier the translator has to surmount the cultural barrier, to make sure that the receptors of the target text are provided with the presuppositions required for their access to the message contents", said (Komissarov, 1991).

From what is mentioned above, translation enables people of different backgrounds to send and receive information and, successfully, communicate between diverse cultures. Additionally, cultures are essential in the translation phenomenon because they influence the way the members of a society view and perceive the world and are essential for a translator in journalism translation to convey the source message to the audience in the target text in a way understandable. Therefore, every journalist translator should know how to deal with different strategies of translating cultures because he may face rare words, unusual expressions, strange speech and unfamiliar themes. As a result, he will find problems decoding the original message, particularly in journalism translation, where many culture-specific items refer to concepts and

references particular to a given culture. These concepts and references are, sometimes, common in all languages, but they are expressed in a way particular to the culture of the source text (ST).

In this paper, the differences between Arabic and English will be examined. These differences arise from their respective mental culture, which is mainly manifested in thought and form, image and function, integrity and individuality, covertness and overtness. Then, it will, further, provide practical methods to solve culture-bound problems in journalism translation from Arabic into English. This attempt has been made to show the cultural problems in journalism translation and discuss the influence of cultural differences on translation across-cultural communication events: CNN will be taken as a case study: “The Black Decade in Algeria” and other cases.

### **2. Language, Culture and Translation**

Culture is the heart of a society as Chahrour said: “For many people Culture is considered as a gateway to a given society heart, to have a close insight about its identity” (2018), but Language is at the heart of this culture as Wittgenstein once said: “The limits of my language are the limits of my world” (1958). It means that language is a part of the cultural core, and this culture can be found in narrations, poetry, songs, and plays, which are its soft expressions as well as faces. The conclusion is that language and culture are inseparable.

Moreover, Nida and Taber state that translating consists of reproducing the closest natural equivalent of the source language message in the receptor language, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style (Nida, 1969). Nida adds that translation is the transfer of the original thoughts of one social group to another one which is the target thoughts by taking into consideration the culture of the readers. Nevertheless, Catford focuses on the equivalent textual material when he defines translation as replacing textual material in one language with equivalent textual material in another language (1965). The most important thing for him is the language, not the culture. Unfortunately, other translators, like Catford, exclude culture from their definitions of translation as in this definition:

Translation involves the rendering of a source language (SL) text into the target language (TL) to ensure that (1) the surface meaning of the two will be approximately similar and (2) the structure of the SL will be preserved as closely as possible, but not so close that the TL structure will be seriously distorted. (McGuire, 1980)

However, the following definitions prove the importance of culture in translation: Alfred Louis Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn define culture as:

Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiment in artefacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e., historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values. Culture systems may, on the one hand, be

considered as products of action, on the other hand, as conditioning elements of future action. (Qtd in Salehi, 2012)

Furthermore, Paluszkievicz Misiaczek (2005) reports from Bell (Bell, 1991):

Apart from an excellent knowledge of both the source and the target language, which comprises vocabulary and word formation, grammar, spelling and pronunciation, the translator also has to possess so-called sociolinguistic competence, which helps him to understand the text within its context, to determine its functions and predict who is going to receive it. (Misiaczek, 2005)

### **3. Journalism Translation**

Nowadays, translation has a prominent position in mass media, where the international politics themes take the big part. Translating in mass media; particularly politics, is difficult and inaccurate for many reasons: the events are immediately reported especially in wars, newspapers often confront numerous declarations from the parties involved in the conflict, ideologies and beliefs of journalist translators may unconsciously render in the target message and the translations of news agencies or their journalists may be done fast and under pressure, as well. In this context, after analysing a corpus of translated journalistic and quotes from political texts that were recontextualised for the home audience, Christina Schäffner (2008) showed that institutional and ideological conditions of translation production are of decisive importance in these cases of political journalism and political communication. Roberto Valdeón added also, in his case study on the Spanish BBC Mundo (2008), that an underlying difference in status between Anglophone and Spanish-speaking cultures is discovered, where the importance of the former over the latter is often accentuated in the news coverage.

Moreover, Luc van Doorslaer (2009) reveals:

a clear correlation between the news agencies used as main sources and the countries dealt with in international news coverage. Newsrooms in Belgium mainly using AP for example, write more about the USA. Those who mainly use AFP, write much more about France. Though world news agencies may present themselves as ‘global’ nowadays, they obviously do not deny their roots. News agencies inevitably include norms linked to their national origins and this fact is reflected in their selection and deselection principles as well as in their framing approach.

So, it remains an unsolved question: “whether they have sufficiently disengaged themselves from their national and/or regional base in their news production” (Bielsa & Bassnett, 2009, p. 49). Indeed, sometimes in newsrooms, translation and its reformulating power is not so abundantly present, as Luc van Doorslaer noted:

Translation in the journalistic field takes place in a multisource environment and challenges traditional characteristics of translation research, like the clear-cut ST-TT relationship or the concept of authorship. In journalistic text

production, translating and writing are brought together in one process that is both creative and recreative at the same time. In most cases, it is impossible to distinguish the two activities involved in this integrated process. The blurring of the boundaries between the authoring journalist and the translating/recontextualising journalist is an opportunity to empower Translation and make language transfer more explicit. (2016)

He added that every newsroom necessarily conducts a translation, or non-translation policy, which, greatly, impacts the selection and content of the news. He proved his ideas by case studies dealing with the (non-)translation policy of global news media (both TV and online) and more locally-oriented radio stations in multilingual South Africa. (ibid)

Therefore, the target text may convey a slightly different message as Romuald D'Amico said:

In conflict situations, the comments of the various parties and the resulting interpretations are based on the translation and there are usually slip alterations that induce connotations different from those of the source text. These differences sometimes arise from the editing of a passage or the ideological influences of the translator or any other entity in charge of the text before its publication. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one of the most prominent topics in the print media and the statements of each party do not fail to elicit many reactions and analyzes. But if the text may have undergone quite significant changes that lead to a divergence of meaning, what are the consequences for the reception and interpretation of events by the target audience? (2017)

However, in the process of translating, the translator must respect the original message, must handle the omnipresent pressure of the media world (D'Amico, 2017) and must be a natural one. Nevertheless, it remains an unsolved question "whether translators have sufficiently to disengage themselves from their national and regional base in their news production!" (Bielsa & Bassnett, 2009, p. 49).

The conclusion is that the journalistic selectivity visible in the appropriation, translating, and editing of certain materials influences the framing of world perception. Ultimately, the task of translators is not easy in journalism translation, but we cannot deny the vital role of mass media and translation in formulating and transmitting all messages in different languages over the worldwide about crucial developments of global significance, such as terrorism and wars.

### **3. The Case Study: The Translation from English-Arabic of the 'Black Decade in Algeria' by CNN Translators**

The following cases examine how CNN translators reframed conflict narratives and stances of the Algerian society to the world since CNN is the first official American television channel that transmits the foreign news of the world in English.

**Example 1:**

In the table 1, it is noticed that the journalist said in English and French respectively “Ten years after amnesty deal.. ” and « Dix ans après l'accordd'amnistie » while in Arabic he said: “بعد مرور عشر سنوات على صفقة العفو”.

This replacement of deal by صفقة does not modify the meaning but conveys slightly different connotations, and this fact proves the ignorance of journalist translator about the Algerian society and its culture instead he should say: “العفو الرئاسي”, as it is shown below in the table:

**Table 1.** Comparative Study

Source Language	Target Language Arabic	Target Language French
The 'Black Decade' still weighs heavily on Algeria	لا زالت العشرية السوداء تثقل كاهل الجزائر	La "décennie noire" pèse toujours lourd sur l'Algérie
Ten years after the amnesty deal, relatives of civil war victims say Algeria has failed to reach national reconciliation.	بعد مرور عشر سنوات على صفقة العفو، يقول أقارب ضحايا الحرب الأهلية إن الجزائر فشلت في الوصول إلى المصالحة الوطنية.	Dix ans après l'accord d'amnistie, les relatifs des victimes de la guerre civile ont déclaré que l'Algérie n'avait pas réussi à parvenir à la réconciliation nationale.
“Last August, speaking to dozens of former FIS supporters in his stronghold of Jijel, the 56-year-old firebrand made his intentions clear. Mezrag, who spent the 1990s in the mountains fighting against the army until his surrender in 1997, wanted to create a political force. During an interview on the programme El Hiwar (Arabic for “The Discussion”), Mezrag, founder of the Islamic Salvation Army (AIS), the armed wing of the now-banned Islamic Salvation Front Party (FIS), warned ailing Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika about	في شهر أغسطس الماضي أوضح مزراق للعشرات من الأنصار السابقين للجهة الإسلامية للإنقاذ في معقله بجيجل عن نيته في إنشاء قوة سياسية وذلك في مقابلة في برنامج الحوار (العربية من أجل المناقشة)، مزراق صاحب 56 عاما والذي قضى سنوات التسعينات في القتال في الجبال ضد الجيش الجزائري حتى استسلامه عام 1997. وحذر مزراق مؤسس الجيش الإسلامي للإنقاذ (AIS) والجنح المسلح لحزب الجهة الإسلامية للإنقاذ المحظورة الآن (FIS) الرئيس الجزائري المريض عبد العزيز بوتفليقة من	«En août dernier, Mezrag a clairement exprimé ses intentions devant des dizaines d'anciens partisans du FIS dans son fief de Jijel, le brandon de feu âgé de 56 ans, qui a passé les années 1990 dans les montagnes à se battre contre l'armée jusqu'à sa reddition en 1997, voulait créer une force politique. Au cours d'une interview pour l'émission El Hiwar (« La discussion »), Mezrag, le fondateur de L'Armée Islamique Salvation (AIS) du FIS (Parti du Front du

the creation of a new Islamist movement. If he doesn't rethink his position, he will hear from me things he has never heard before,” Mezrag threatened”.	منعه إنشاء حركة إسلامية جديدة، مهددا إياه بقوله: "إذا لم يعيد التفكير في موقفه، فإنه سوف يسمع مني أشياء لم يسمع بها من قبل"	Islamique Salvation), a averti le président algérien malade Abdelaziz Bouteflika, sur la création d'un nouveau mouvement islamiste. « S'il ne repense pas sa position, il entendra des choses qu'il n'a jamais entendues auparavant», menaçait Mezrag ».
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Source: Djamila Ould Khettab, 3 Nov. 2015, p. 1 -CNN News-

Moreover, the second example in the table above is highly noticeable that the journalist retained the French abbreviations of “Islamic Salvation Army” and “Islamic Salvation Front Party” as the Algerian people respectively said “AIS” and “FIS” while in English are respectively: “ISA and ISF.” Additionally, the translator translated the word in the title “still” in Arabic into “لا زالت” but the correct translation is “ما زالت”, while in French it is translated into “toujours” instead of “encore”. In translating the word “ailing”, the translator can face a problem, whether it is an insult for the president, or it shows his health status. Finally, the journalist translator should not neglect his target audience of CNN.

### Example2:

“Israeli-Palestinian Conflicts in the Press: A Translational Maze. **Statement14/247 of European Commission (3rd august 2014)**

### Example 2.1:

Table 2. Comparative Study

Source Language	Target Language Arabic	Target Language French
Gaza has been suffering from intolerable <b>violence</b> for more than three weeks already. We deplore the <b>terrible loss</b> of lives, including <b>innocent</b> women and children.	غزة تتعرض لمعاناة غير محتملة منذ أكثر من ثلاثة أسابيع أودت بحياة الكثيرين بينهم العديد من النساء والأطفال.	Gaza souffre d'intolérables <b>souffrances</b> depuis plus de trois semaines déjà et elles ont coûté beaucoup de vies, dont celles de <b>nombreuses</b> femmes et enfants.
Our Translation	لقد عانت غزة منذ أكثر من ثلاثة أسابيع من عنف لا يطاق. إننا نأسف للخسائر الفادحة في الأرواح،	Gaza souffre d'une violence intolérable depuis plus de trois semaines déjà. Nous déplorons les terribles pertes en vies humaines, y compris

	بمن فيهم الأبرياء من النساء والأطفال.	des femmes et des enfants innocents.
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Source: Romuald d'Amico, 2017, University of Liège.

In English it is said that “Gaza has been suffering from intolerable violence ...”, while the translation in French is “intolerable souffrances” and in Arabic is «معاناة غير محتملة». This replacement of violence by suffering conveys slightly different connotations because violence implies the use of a certain force or power physically and directly evokes the bombings of the Israeli army on Gaza, while suffering alludes to pain, as one can endure psychological suffering as a result of a situation or the living conditions. In this case, suffering draws attention on Gazans and what they endure in more emotive. Moreover, in French and Arabic translations, the adjective ‘innocent’ has been removed. Nevertheless, the fact that the bombings on Gaza made a lot of innocent victims and need to end is an important argument in Van Rompuy’s rhetoric, which is a plea for peace (Romuald, 2017).

### Example 2.2:

Table 3. A Comparative Study of Three Translations

Source Language	Target Language Arabic	Target Language French
We strongly condemn continued rocket fire <u>over</u> Israel. <u>It constitutes an unacceptable threat to its citizens.</u>	ندين بشدة إطلاق الصواريخ المستمر على إسرائيل والذي <u>يهدد سكانها</u> .	Nous condamnons fermement les tirs continus de roquette <u>contre</u> Israël, <u>qui menacent sa population.</u>
Our Translation	إننا ندين بشدة استمرار إطلاق الصواريخ على إسرائيل. إنها تشكل تهديدا غير مقبول لمواطنيها.	Nous condamnons fermement la poursuite des tirs de roquettes sur Israël. Elle constitue une menace inacceptable pour ses citoyens.

Source: Romuald d'Amico, 2017, University of Liège.

"unacceptable" is an important word in the passage, but it has been removed in both French and Arabic by the translator, while the two sentences of the original English version have merged into a single sentence with two clauses. The sentence “**it constitutes**” is removed from French and Arabic translations. The proposition “over” translated in French into “contre” instead of “sur”.

### Example 2.3: A Comparative Study

Table 4. A Comparative Study of Three Translations



Source Language	Target Language Arabic	Target Language French
Only a negotiated solution, based on two States, <b>living side by side</b> and respectful of each other, will bring <b>lasting</b> peace	لا شيء سوى حل تفاوضي يقوم على اساس دولتين تحترم كل منهما الآخر يمكن أن يحقق السلام.	Seule une solution négociée basée sur deux États respectueux l'un de l'autre peut apporter la paix.
Our Translation	فقط الحل التفاوضي، القائم على دولتين ، تعيشان جنباً إلى جنب وتحترم كل منهما الأخرى ، هو الذي سيحقق السلام الدائم	Seule une solution négociée, fondée sur deux États, vivant côte à côte et respectueux l'un de l'autre, apportera une paix durable

Source: Romuald d'Amico, 2017, University of Liège.

Some words, like “**living side by side**” and “**lasting**,” have been removed in the French and Arabic translations; additionally the verb “will bring” is translated with two verbs in the French translation “peut apporter” instead of “apportera”. Thus, the translator is not faithful to the original text in this case.

#### **Example2.4:**

**Table 5. A comparative study**

Source Language	Target Language Arabic	Target Language French
Today we join our voice to those <b><u>of the Secretary General of the United Nations and other international leaders</u></b> that are calling on both sides to put an end to hostilities.	لذلك نضم أصواتنا الى تلك التي تدعو الطرفين الى وقف الاعمال القتالية فوراً.	N/A
Our Translation	نضم صوتنا اليوم إلى أصوات الأمين العام للأمم المتحدة والقادة الدوليين الآخرين الذين يطالبون كلا الجانبين بوضع حد للأعمال العدائية.	

The Secretary General of the United Nations and other international leaders are removed and replaced by إلى تلك التي تدعو (ilā talika allatī tada‘ū, to those calling on); moreover, the Arabic translation of this passage ends by adding the word فوراً (fawran), meaning ‘immediately,’ which is not mentioned in English.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study has examined the cultural problems in journalism translation produced by CNN translators. The first conclusion is that in journalism translation (CNN TV), the translators must be aware of the various cultural words, their meaning and significance, as well as their intertextual relationships (text and context) that have to be examined in order to establish their significance when they are translated into another language and culture. It is essential to transmit the message, adequately, or it may lead to losing the audience. Miscalculating the pertinence of cross-cultural communications can be counter-productive at best or abysmal at worst. Therefore, cultural differences impact journalism translation.

The second conclusion is that translators must be neutral in journalism translation; i.e., they must never show or use their beliefs and emotions in their translation. Therefore, the translators must be trustful and intensely aware of the target readers and their culture.

The third conclusion is that most factors that led to cultural problems in journalism translation are the differences between Arabic and English languages and sociocultural contexts. These factors explain the semantic variations in the translated news and the influence on journalism translation. The empirical study shows that conflicting ideologies and competing interests are the driving force in journalism translation; as a result, faithfulness and equivalence are subjected to censorship; in other words, the journalist translator is not entirely free.

As Tsai noted: “We must go beyond translation studies when researching news translation” (2005). Indeed: “News translation in its nature is interdisciplinary because it is both an inseparable part of journalism and translation practice”. There may also be benefits for journalistic practitioners by elucidating some of the processes involved in news translation, bearing in mind that editorial and journalistic personnel have to be “attuned to cultural differences and the needs of their particular audience above all”, added Bassnett (2005). Finally, the process of journalism translation is a collaborative work in which different textual and journalistic practices occur.

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## 6. Appendices

### The 'Black Decade' still weighs heavily on Algeria

*Ten years after amnesty deal, relatives of civil war victims say Algeria has failed to reach national reconciliation.*

byDjamila Ould Khettab

3 Nov 2015/CNN.

*Last August, speaking to dozens of former FIS supporters in his stronghold of Jijel, the 56-year-old firebrand made his intentions clear. Mezrag, who spent the 1990s in the mountains fighting against the army until his surrender in 1997, wanted to create a political force.*

*During an interview on the programme El Hiwar (Arabic for "The Discussion"), Mezrag, founder of the Islamic Salvation Army (AIS), the armed wing of the now-banned Islamic Salvation Front Party (FIS), warned ailing Algerian President AbdelazizBouteflika about the creation of a new Islamist movement.*

*"If he doesn't rethink his position, he will hear from me things he has never heard before," Mezrag threatened.*

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**The Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the press:  
a translational maze**

رحلة استطلاعية في متاهة الترجمة :  
النزاع الإسرائيلي الفلسطيني في الصحافة المكتوبة

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