

# *The Violence of Translation in the Arab World: A Sociological Perspective*

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A Being without violence would be a Being which would occur outside the existent: nothing, nonhistory, nonoccurrence, nonphenomenality. A speech produced without the least violence would determine nothing, would say nothing, would offer nothing to the other, it would not be history and it would show nothing: in every sense of the word (Derrida 1978, 184).

## **Abstract**

The present article examines the role of an aspect of translation in the Arab World. It hypothesises that translation can engage in violence against the other group. This engagement is the result of the translation ‘habitus’ that translators accumulate. To check the validity of such assumption, the live simultaneous interpreting of two presidential speeches by Barack Obama broadcasted by Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabia were scrutinized. Attempts were made to find interventions that are deployed to ‘reframe’ the source text. It has been found that there are motivated deletions, additions, and substitutions that composed certain patterns. A close reading of these patterns showed that they contribute to two kinds of violence: sectarian and political. Therefore, much needs to be done, such as the design of intensive training programmes and the establishment of independent monitoring institutions, in order to lessen translators’ involvement in sectarian and political conflicts.

Keywords:

*simultaneous interpreting      habitus      reframing      sectarian and political violence*

## **1. Introduction**

Translation is a means of three types of violence. First, the source text is written to a specific audience at a specific time and place. To transform it into another context will definitely impose a set of linguistic and cultural requirements that determine its readability. In this process, the choice between source and target language-oriented translation strategy plays a crucial role. This aspect has been skilfully addressed by Venuti (1996) in his argument of the ‘ethnocentric violence’ of translation when preference is given to domesticating the target text. He (ibid: 196) strongly opposes ‘the construction of the foreign text in accordance with the values, beliefs, and representations that pre-exist in the target language’. That is to say, the closer to the target language and culture the text is, the more violent the role of translation is.

Second, translation can be influentially violent to translators and interpreters. Whether at zones of conflict or the seemingly safer environments at health or legal settings, they have been exposed to different degrees of physical and mental violence. In Iraq, for example, hundreds of those working with the coalition forces and international corporations involved in the reconstruction process have been killed after 2003. Many more were incredibly fortunate to flee the country with their families. They have been viewed, to borrow Beebee’s (2010) term, as ‘transtraitors’ who have helped the occupiers to dominate the country and oppress its people. On the other hand, translators and interpreters can be psychologically influenced by the text they process as well as their producers. One significant example is cited by Maier (2007). She (ibid: 3) reflects on one of her students’ experiences who was ‘haunted’ after interpreting for a caseworker interviewing an abused mother who attempted suicide. Because the student was already a mother, she was highly influenced by the victim’s ‘pain, her helplessness’.

Finally, translation can be a basic tool of the social struggle for domination. In other words, because there is always a power struggle between two or more cultures, or sometimes even within the same culture, translation can be deployed by its producer to subvert or resist the beliefs of the 'other' group. Although they have not used the term violence, Alvarez and Vidal (1996) have embarked on this particular purpose of translation. They (ibid:4) propose that translation is 'a complex process of rewriting that runs parallel both to the overview of language and of the 'Other' people have through history; and to the influences and balances of power that exist between one culture and another'. The key players here are the translators and interpreters. Consciously or unconsciously, they modify the texts to match the interests of their group. I do, and those of my age might too, remember the crisis between the Iranian government and the American CNN network where the Iranian government banned the network in Iran for a few days. While a live broadcasting on January 14<sup>th</sup> 2006, the CNN interpreter quoted President Ahmedinijad saying 'the use of nuclear weapons is Iran's right' but it appeared later that what the President really said in Farsi is the equivalent of 'the use of nuclear technology' not 'nuclear weapons'. Although the Iranian officials accepted the network's apology, they wanted to know whether this incident was pre-planned or a mistake. What is interesting in this example is that the interpreter has consciously or unconsciously decided to engage in the controversy over Iran's nuclear program. That is to say, influenced by the public narrative that Iran threatens global security, the interpreter could not control detaching herself from the involvement in this power struggle. It is this kind of violence that we are going to elaborate on here where the constraints under which translators or interpreters operate lead them to engage in narratives that de-legitimises the 'other'. Two important contributions that view the individual as a social agent will be of great relevance and significance to this argument,

namely, Pierre Bourdieu's 'symbolic' violence' and Mona Baker's approach of narrative theory.

## **2. Translation and Violence**

After the so-called 'cultural turn' in Translation Studies in 1990, linguistic (e.g. Nida's understanding of equivalence) or functionalist (e.g. Vermeers's skopos theory) approaches based on concepts from language and literature have given way to a cultural turn where the boundaries between translation and other disciplines are re-negotiated. Consequently, new insights from humanities or social sciences have been called to account for the role of translators and interpreters. One of these approaches is Bourdieu's emphasis on subjective agency (see Inghilleri 2005a; 2005b). According to Bourdieu, 'one cannot fully understand language without placing linguistic practices within the full universe of compossible practices: eating and drinking habit, cultural consumption, taste in matters of arts, sports, dress, furniture, politics, etc.' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:149). To put it differently, when analysing translation and interpreting as products, we must first investigate the social, political, economic, etc. constraints under which translators and interpreters perform. Hence, it is significant to review Bourdieu's terminology before applying it to the analysis of the sample.

Bourdieu believes that the social world is divided into unbalanced 'fields'. Each field consists of a number of 'structured space of positions'. What determines the positions and their interrelatedness is the distribution of various resources or 'capitals' (Thompson 1991:1) where 'capital' is not confined to an economic field but is extended to involve 'monetary and non-monetary, as well as tangible and intangible forms' (Bourdieu 1986:243). There are three main kinds of 'capital': economic (e.g. money), cultural (e.g. dispositions accrued through socialisation), and social (e.g. titles of nobility). Any or all of these may be converted at any time to a fourth kind which is symbolic capital (ibid.).

Hence, whether the agent is in a modern or premodern society, s/he must be under the exposure of these pressures or capitals. With the passage of time, s/he will accumulate his/her 'habitus' which consists of a set of dispositions. These dispositions drive him/her to act and react in certain ways: they 'generate practices, perceptions and attitudes which are regular without being coordinated by a rule' (Thompson 1991:12). Like any other field, translation and interpreting consist of different positions. Only one position is for the agent, i.e. the translator or interpreter. Other positions are for the editors or translation commissioners. Among these positions, the one that the translator or interpreter occupies is the less powerful. As a result of the different financial, social, cultural restrictions under which s/he performs, the translator or interpreter will accumulate a translating or interpreting 'habitus' that drives him/her to view his/her actions, i.e. his/her translation and interpreting products, and those of his group as well, as natural or unproblematic. From the point of view of the other, or the out-group, these actions are part of the dominant-dominated struggle. They are deployed to promote the interests of the translator's or interpreter's group compared to the downscaling or even the de-legitimation of those of the other. In this power struggle, therefore, there are two victims: the translator or interpreter and the other group. Although the other group might be aware of the subversive strategies used to combat them, the violence exercised on, and consequently by, the translator or interpreter is more influential because it is, as Bourdieu (2001:1-2) describes, 'a gentle violence, imperceptible and invisible even to its victims exerted for the most part through the purely symbolic channels of communication and cognition (more precisely, misrecognition), recognition or even feeling'. To put it another way, the risk of this violence lies in its hidden power according to which the translator or interpreter unconsciously misrecognizes not only his own beliefs but the beliefs of the other group as well. But how is this violence materialized?

One effective way is through the individual or collective engagement in and therefore the promotion of a form of narrative where narratives ‘are public and personal ‘stories’ that we subscribe to and that guide our behaviour. They are the stories we tell ourselves, not just those we explicitly tell other people, about the world(s) we live in’ (Baker 2005: 5). This means that there are as many stories or narratives of the same event(s) as there are individuals or groups. For example, different stories or narratives describe the war in Iraq in 2003. While some Iraqis and non-Iraqis view this intervention as liberation from Saddam’s regime, others believe it to be an occupation. In this respect, although personal narratives may be effective, they have less currency compared to public ones which are adopted by groups such as families, tribes, parties, sects, institutions, or societies. Moreover, since narrative does not dominate unless through the displacement of another (Bennett and Edelman 1985: 160), this increases, if not guarantees, the translator’s or interpreter’s involvement in this struggle. That is to say, as a result of their ‘habitus’, translators or interpreters are driven to believe that their, and their group’s, understanding of certain event(s) is right while that of others is not, so they use all the available efforts- primarily their translation or interpreting outcomes- to weaken or even delegitimise these opposite ‘stories’ or narratives. To do so, there are different strategies at their disposal. One major strategy, which is also a feature of the narrative approach, is selective appropriation. It is ‘realized in patterns of omission and addition designed to suppress, accentuate or elaborate particular aspects of a narrative encoded in the source text or utterance, or aspects of the larger narrative(s) in which it is embedded’ (Baker 2006: 114). Therefore, to ‘re-frame’ narratives according to their interests, translators and interpreters resort to systemic deletions or additions. Nevertheless, it is important to consider motivated substitutions as well because translators or interpreters may not delete or add at all, but their shifts in providing equivalences divert the narrative perspective of the source text. In this respect, we suggest that in order to

identify (de)selectivity in translation and interpreter, an investigation for patterns of deletions, additions, and substitutions within or among different texts should be carried out. Although this investigation may extend linguistic as well as non-linguistic resources ‘from paralinguistic devices such as intonation and typography to visual resources such as colour and image, to numerous linguistic devices such as tense shifts, deixis, code switching, use of euphemisms, and many more’ (ibid.: 111), in the following analysis we will exclusively focus on linguistic ones.

### **3. The Violence of Translation in the Arab World**

For decades, the Arab audience was conditioned to listen to a single voice in the media, which is, the voice of the ruler and his group. There was no room for the minority to resist the political, social, economic or sectarian violence they encounter because alternative opinions were sanctioned. Even the translations and the transcripts or recorded interpretations were censored if they indicated aspects that ran counter to the state’s ideology. This monopoly has, however, been gradually broken with the spread of the internet and satellite broadcasting channels by the end of the 1990s. To obtain information, the audience has many alternatives. Beside the various translation and interpreting versions of English texts or utterances, for example, the audience can obtain the source texts. But this easy access of information has also come at a price. Divisions not only among societies but within the same community have been widened as a result of the growing propaganda in the media. Corporations like the Saudi-funded Al-Arabia and the Qatari-funded Al-Jazeera appear to have certain national and international political, social, economic or sectarian agendas that match the perspectives on their sponsors. As a result of both the continuous exposure to institutional regulations as well as the orientation of the training provided, their translators and interpreters have gradually turned to be conscious or unconscious ideologically-motivated secret agents who do not hesitate to

suppress the rights of the other through the modifications of the texts under their control. For instance, Al-Jazeera's sympathy with extremism is well-known. Such stance stems from adopting a supposedly anti-Islamophobic public narrative. It is expected that its translation and interpreting will, at least, lessen the criticism of extremism delivered by Western officials. Therefore, to investigate the kinds of public narratives, as narratives of violence, within which translators and interpreters are involved, the live rendering of two political texts by a number of Arab satellite channels will be elaborated on below. Source texts used are two presidential speeches by Barack Obama delivered in 2009 and 2011 titled 'A New Beginning' and 'A Moment of Opportunity' respectively. They were chosen for three reasons: what is conveyed is more powerful than that of other Western powers because America has become the key diplomatic and military player across the world; the variety of issues addressed ranging from the reflection on the divisions among Sunni and Shia to the so-called War on Terror; and finally because they are delivered to a specific audience, which is, Muslims. To facilitate a systemic analysis, moreover, the source texts are broken into numbered sentences. The target texts are the transcripts of the live interpreting of these speeches provided by Al-Arabiya and Al-Jazeera. Our attempts will focus on finding patterns of deletions, additions, and substitutions within one text and then among the two texts which, we suggest, promote various kinds of public narratives that are violent to certain groups or society.

#### **4. Data Analysis**

Through the examination of the renderings to the two speeches involved, provided by the interpreters of Al-Arabiya and Al-Jazeera, it has been discovered that neither provides a non-modified version. On the contrary, patterns of deletion, addition, and substitution that show the interpreters' engagement in



violence can be clearly identified. This violence can be classified into two main kinds: sectarian and political.

#### **4.1. Sectarian Violence**

Although the Arab community is a multitude of different sects, the division of Muslims into Sunni and Shia is the most effective. Such division has led to tragic consequences especially in Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, Yemen and Bahrain. It is true that these conflicts have social and political dimensions as well but the sectarian division is the fundamental one. It has determined not only the stand of other Muslims but also of the international community. More influential is the Iranian role. Iran is accused of supporting Shia insurgency against Sunnis. This has led to a ‘cold war’ between Saudi Arabia and its national and international allies on the one hand, and Iran and its Shia supporters on the other. We believe that the interpreters of Al-Arabia and Al-Jazeera are engaged in these conflicting narratives: they tend to legitimise the voice of their group at the expense of the other group. In what follows, an examination of this tendency whenever an issue of sectarian implications is addressed throughout the investigation of the interpreters’ selective appropriation, first within the single text and then between the two texts under scrutiny.

After the war in Iraq in 2003, Shia has for the first time come to power after decades of exclusion. As a result, Iran has strengthened its ties with the new government while there was weak or even no diplomatic relationship with influential Arab countries. Although democratic elections took place where both Sunni and Shia Iraqis chose their representatives in the parliament, the Arab public is driven to believe that Sunnis are marginalized and denied their basic rights. Such a narrative dominates the Arab street. The present interpreters seem to be involved in this narrative so they modify the source texts through deletions, additions or substitutions. See this example:

*ST: That is why we will honor our agreement with Iraq's democratically-elected government to remove combat troops from Iraqi cities by July and to remove all our troops from Iraq by 2012*(Barack Obama, A New Beginning: 116).

**Al-Arabia Interpreter:**

ولهذا فأنا سوف ننفذ أتفاقياتنا بسحب القوات في مطلع جولاى وأزالة كافة القوات المتبقية في العراق في الثاني عشر من شهر يوليو.

BT: That's why we will accomplish our agreement to withdraw the troops by the beginning of July and the remove of all the remaining troops in Iraq on July12.

As can be seen above, Al-Arabia interpreter ignores the speaker's declaration that the Iraq's government is legitimate: his rendering does not show any equivalence for 'Iraq's democratically-elected government'. This suggests that he rejects the legitimacy of this government because it does not represent the two major Iraqi sects. That is to say, to side with his group, he uses the power position he occupies and de-selects a modification that is important to the audience to perceive, especially because it is declared by the president of the United States. Our scepticism in the interpreter's performance is further emphasised in his interpreting of a subsequent sentence where he continues to question the speaker's opinions towards Iraq and its government:

*ST: But we will support a secure and united Iraq as a partner and never as a patron* (Barack Obama, A New Beginning: 118).

**Al-Arabiya Interpreter:**

ولكننا سوف نسعى لضمان العراق لتكون شريكاً لنا وليس عدواً.

BT: But we will try to ensure Iraq to be a partner and never an enemy.

### **Al-Jazeera Interpreter:**

لكننا سوف نساعد العراق كعراق موحد وذو سيادة كشريك وليس كتابع.

**BT:** But we support a united and sovereign Iraq as a partner and never a patron.

He deletes 'a secure and united' because he seems to believe that Iraqi Sunnis are neither safe nor considered part of the country. More importantly is the substitution of 'patron' with 'عدوا' (an enemy) which may reflect his understanding of Iraq because it has become, due to Iranian domination, an enemy not only to Western countries but to its Arab neighbours. To a lesser degree, Al-Jazeera interpreter also questions the legitimacy of Iraq's government: he substitutes 'secure' with 'وذو سيادة' (sovereign) as can be seen above. Like Al-Arabiya interpreter, the interpreter here appears to be dissatisfied with present-day Iraq because of the Iranian domination over the country which has resulted in a lesser or even no role for Sunnis in the new Iraq. Signs of a similar tendency can be identified in the second speech as well. Consider the example below:

**ST:** *In Iraq, we see the promise of a multiethnic, multi-sectarian democracy* (Barack Obama, A Moment of Opportunity: 129).

### **Al-Arabiya Interpreter:**

وفي العراق رأينا الديمقراطية التي تقوم على اثنية متعددة.

**BT:** In Iraq, we saw multiethnic democracy.

### **Al-Jazeera Interpreter:**

في العراق نرى ان هناك بوادر ديمقراطية تعددية الطوائف وتعددية السياسة.

**BT:** In Iraq, we see the promises of multi-sectarian and multi-policy democracy.

Beside shifting the tense of the verb from present to past, Al-Arabiya interpreter deletes 'multi-sectarian' from his version. He seems to believe that Iraq's government is mono-sectarian, i.e. composed only of Shia Muslims. Al-Jazeera interpreter, on the other hand, substitutes 'multiethnic' with 'تعددية السياسة' (multi-policy) which gives the negative impression that the kind of democracy in Iraq is unstable. Both interpreters have, therefore, been selective in their rendering of aspects on Iraq and its government that are important to the audience to know.

Another aspect to the Sunni-Shia conflict in which the interpreters appear to be involved is the view that Iran is the source of terror through its encouragement for insurgency in some Arab countries as well as its construction of an illicit nuclear programme. Their antagonism towards Iran can be touched in many occasions. See the example below:

**ST:** *Since the Islamic Revolution, Iran has played a role in acts of hostage-taking and violence against U.S. troops and civilians* (Barack Obama, A New Beginning: 185).

**Al-Arabiya Interpreter:**

ومنذ الثورة الإسلامية أيران لعبت دوراً ايضاً في اخذ الكثير من الاسرى الامريكيين من المدنيين.

**BT:** Since the Islamic Revolution, Iran has also played a role in taking many American civilians as prisoners.

The interpreter's de-selectivity here is influential because while the speaker criticises Iran's hostage-taking and violence against both troops and civilians, the interpreter deletes 'violence' and 'troops', thus focussing on civilian victims, an aspect which leads to intensify Iran's hostility. In other words, if transparently transferred, the audience may regard Iran's hostile acts against American troops as self-defence, so the interpreter intrudes to leave no room to such justifications by focusing on the imprisonment of civilians.

There are other interpreting decisions that seem to be influenced by the interpreters' anti-Iranian stand. See their rendering of the example below:

**ST:** *I recognize it will be hard to overcome decades of mistrust, but we will proceed with courage, rectitude and resolve* (Barack Obama, A New Beginning: 189).

**Al-Arabiya Interpreter:**

أدرك تماماً بأن هناك عقود من عدم الثقة بيننا ولكن علينا ان نعمل الآن بطريقة تتسم بالصرامة.

**BT:** I ultimately recognise that there are decades of mistrust but we should now act strictly.

**Al-Jazeera Interpreter:**

انا ادرك انه من الصعب تجاوز عقود من عدم الثقة لكن علينا ان نتصرف بشجاعة وبصواب وتصميم وعزم.

**BT:** I recognize that it is hard to overcome decades of mistrust but we should act with courage, rectitude, determination and resolve.

The selectivity of Al-Arabiya interpreter is clear in more than one position. First, he intensifies the mental verb 'realize' by the addition of the adverb 'تماماً' (ultimately). Second, he deletes 'it is hard to overcome'. Third, he shifts from 'but we will proceed' to 'ولكن علينا ان نعمل الآن' (but we should now act). Finally, and most importantly, he substitutes 'courage, rectitude and resolve' with 'بصرامة' (strictly). Rather than the positive impression that the speaker's utterance indicates, such decisions may denote the interpreter's desire that Iran should be reacted to more boldly than the speaker is suggesting, because its threat should be stopped. Moving to Al-Jazeera interpreter, he has shifted 'but we will proceed' to 'لكن علينا ان نتصرف' (but we should act) and inserted 'تصميم' (determination). Though his opposition is less apparent, there are still

indications that could be interpreted as signs of detestation towards Iran, especially in view of his last decision to insert.

If we investigate the interpreters' performances in 'A Moment of Opportunity', we can also identify their opponent position. Consider this example:

**ST:** *So far, Syria has followed its Iranian ally, seeking assistance from Tehran in the tactics of suppression* (Barack Obama, A Moment of Opportunity: 113).

**Al-Arabiya Interpreter:**

حتى الآن سوريا قد أتبعّت نفس النهج الإيراني.

**BT:** So far, Syria has followed the same Iranian approach.

As can be seen, Al-Arabiya interpreter disregards the second part of the sentence, which is, 'seeking assistance from Tehran in the tactics of suppression'. This may show that, unlike the speaker who focusses on the borrowed 'tactics of repression', he believes that Syria is a replica of Iran because it follows literally all of the Iranian hostile approaches.

As for Al-Jazeera interpreter, indication of his opponent stand to Iran emerges in his rendition of sentence no.115:

**ST:** *Let's remember that the first peaceful protests in the region were in the streets of Tehran, where the government brutalized women and men, and threw innocent people into jail* (Barack Obama, A Moment of Opportunity: 115).

**Al-Jazeera Interpreter:**

دعونا نتذكر ان اول مظاهرات سلمية احتجاجية كانت في شوارع طهران حيث الحكومة استخدمت الوحشية في التعامل مع الرجال و النساء والقتهم في غياهب السجون.

**BT:** Let's remember that the first peaceful protests were in the streets of Tehran where the government brutalized men and women and threw them in the darkness of jails/prisons.

Although he does not provide an equivalence for ‘innocent people’, his rendition of ‘into jail’ into ‘غياهب السجون’ (the darkness of jails/prisons) is more effective. It shows his sympathy with the prisoners whom he believes to suffer from long-term detention.

As mentioned earlier, the current conflict in Syria has a sectarian dimension. Nowadays, we can see the outcomes of such a dimension through the Saudi, and some other Arab countries, unlimited support for Sunni groups fighting against the Alawi Shia President Bashar Al Assad who is, in turn, generously backed by Iranian government. Consequently, the Arab public has been mobilised to believe that Iran will extend its Shia domination if Al Assad remains in hold of power in Syria. The interpreters’ participation in this sectarian conflict could be signalled out. See the following example:

**ST:** *The Syrian government must stop shooting demonstrators and allow peaceful protests* (Barack Obama, A Moment of Opportunity: 109).

**Al-Arabiya Interpreter:**

الحكومة السورية عليها ان تتوقف عن اطلاق النار على المتظاهرين الذين يبحثون عن الديمقراطية.

**BT:** The Syrian government must stop shooting demonstrators who are seeking democracy.

**Al-Jazeera Interpreter:**

الحكومة السورية يجب ان تتوقف عن اطلاق النار على المتظاهرين وتوقف العنف ضد المحتجين السلميين.

**BT:** The Syrian government must stop shooting demonstrators and stop violence against peaceful protesters.

The sympathy with the demonstrators is evident in both versions. Al-Arabiya interpreter, on the one hand, de-selects the speaker’s ‘and allow peaceful protests’. Moreover, he brings into the situation his own evaluation of the

demonstrators when he adds 'الذين يبحثون عن الديمقراطية' (who are seeking democracy), a modification that supports the legitimacy of the demonstrators. Al-Jazeera interpreter, on the other hand, substitutes the same part by 'وتوقف' (and stop violence against peaceful protesters) where there is a recall for 'violence' and the shift of 'protests' to be 'protesters'. This anti-Syrian government stance is also clear in the interpreters' rendition of the subsequent sentence:

**ST:** *It must release political prisoners and stop unjust arrests* (Barack Obama, A Moment of Opportunity: 110).

**Al-Arabiya Interpreter:**

ولا بد لها ان تقوم باطلاق كافة السجناء.

**BT:** It must release all prisoners.

**Al-Jazeera Interpreter:**

يجب ان تتوقف عن الاعتقالات العشوائية.

**BT:** It must stop unjust arrests.

As can be seen, Al-Arabiya interpreter disregards 'political' and 'and stop unjust arrests' in his version. Although the speaker focuses on the kind of prisoners that should be released as well as the arrests that should be terminated, the interpreter keeps the audience's attention on a single aspect, which is, the release of all prisoners. This may show his rejection for the speaker's classification of prisoners and arrests, that is to say, he may believe that all prisoners are innocent and all arrests are unjust because their main target is Sunnis. The same stance towards the Syrian government could be noticed in the decisions that Al-Jazeera interpreter takes. He does not provide an equivalent for one major part, which is, 'release political prisoners' so that emphasis is given to the termination to unjust arrests. That is to say, he sees that underlining



the penalties the demonstrators face for their uprising is more important than translating the call for the release of political prisoners.

However, when it comes to the uprising in the Sunni-led Bahrain, the interpreters try to lessen the speaker's criticism of the government compared to the disregard of the legitimacy he attaches to the demonstrations. Examine the example below:

**ST:** *The only way forward is for the government and opposition to engage in a dialogue and you can't have a real dialogue when parts of the peaceful opposition are in jail* (Barack Obama, A Moment of Opportunity: 126).

**Al-Arabiya Interpreter:**

الطريق الوحيد في المستقبل بالنسبة للحكومة و المعارضة هي الأنخراط بحوار حقيقي لكن هذا الحوار لن يحدث اذا ما كان احد الاطراف في السجن.

**BT:** The only way in future is for the government and opposition to engage in a real dialogue but this dialogue will not take place if one side is in jail.

**Al-Jazeera Interpreter:**

السبيل الوحيد الامام هو ان على الحكومة و المعارضة ان تتخرطا في حوار و لا يمكن ان يكون هناك حوار حقيقي عندما يكون هناك بعض المحتجين السلميين في السجون.

**BT:** The only way forward is for the government and opposition to engage in dialogue and there can't be a real dialogue if there are some peaceful protesters who are in jails.

Al-Arabiya interpreter, on the one hand, renders 'peaceful opposition' into 'احد' (one side) where there seems to be an underestimation for the opposition. To do so, he may believe that the speaker is exaggerating in viewing those who are in jail as opposition, that is to say, they are only a few people who are encouraged by Iranians to bring into power a Tehran-friendly government. Similarly, but to a lesser degree, Al-Jazeera interpreter appears to

downscale the speaker's legitimacy of Bahraini opposition. He replaces 'when parts of the peaceful opposition are in jail' with 'بعض المحتجين السلميين في السجون' (some peaceful protesters are in jails) where both the insertion of 'بعض' (some) and the substitution of 'opposition' with 'المحتجين' (protesters) lead the speaker's utterance to lose the strength attached to the opposition.

#### **4.2. Political Violence**

Two important issues define the relationship between Muslims, Arabs in particular, and the West. The first is the so-called *War on Terror* following the tragic attacks of 9/11. As a response, wars were launched in many places such as Afghanistan and Iraq to combat violent extremism. Muslims at home and in Western communities were considered a source of terror. Therefore, anti-Muslim sentiment has rapidly grown during the past two decades especially under the doctrine of Islamophobia. The other equally important issue is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Muslims in general and Arabs in particular believe Israel to be an occupier of Palestine (which could be the only view on which they totally agree). The majority of Western countries, especially the United States, on the other hand, believe Israel to be a legitimate Jewish country, so they provide it with unlimited political and economic support. In fact, whether Islam is a source of terror or not or Israel is an occupier or not is irrelevant here: what is relevant is the public narratives that dominate the Arab street and influence the interpreters' performance. In fact, the present interpreters seem to be highly influenced by anti-West and anti-Israel narratives and, moreover, act as agents who promote such narratives throughout their politically-motivated selectivity. We can find such acts of (counter-) violence in many positions of the two speeches. Examine the example below:

**ST:** *Moreover, the sweeping change brought by modernity and globalization led many Muslims to view the West as hostile to the traditions of Islam* (Barack Obama, A New Beginning: 10).

### **Al-Arabiya Interpreter:**

فضلا عن ذلك التغيرات الكاسحة التي قدمتها الحضارة و العولمة قد ادت الى الكثير من المسلمين للنظر الى الغرب بصفتهم اعداء لهم.

**BT:** Moreover, the sweeping changes brought by civilization and globalization have led many Muslims to view the West as their enemies.

### **Al-Jazeera Interpreter:**

ايضا التغيرات التي جاءت بها العولمة و الحداثة جعل الكثير من المسلمين ينظرون بعين العداء الى الولايات المتحدة باعتبارها تنتظر بعين العداء للاسلام.

**BT:** Also the changes brought by globalization and modernity have led many Muslims to look through the eye of enmity to the United States because it looks through the eye of enmity to Islam.

As can be noticed, Al-Arabiya interpreter brings the idea of enmity to the West instead of the traditions of Islam because he substitutes ‘to view the west as hostile to the traditions of Islam with ‘النظر الى الغرب بصفتهم اعداء لهم’ (to view the west as their enemies). In addition to bringing the word ‘enemy’, Al-Jazeera interpreter, on the other hand, replaces ‘the west’ by ‘الولايات المتحدة’ (the United States) which shows how deeply he is influenced by America’s stands. Significantly, both interpreters emphasise these views in their rendering of subsequent sentences, in sentence no. 12 for example, where Al-Arabiya interpreter changes ‘hostile’ into ‘أعداء’ (enemies) and Al-Jazeera interpreter entirely disregards the speaker’s criticism of Muslims:

***ST:** The attacks of September 11th, 2001 and the continued efforts of these extremists to engage in violence against civilians has led some in my country to view Islam as inevitably hostile not only to America and Western countries but also to human rights(Barack Obama, A New Beginning: 12).*

### **Al-Arabiya Interpreter:**

و الهجمات التي وقعت في الحادي عشر من سبتمبر عام ٢٠٠١ وكذلك الجهود المستمرة للمتطرفين للانخراط بعنف ضد المدنيين قد افضت الى النظر الى الاسلام في دولتي بان المسلمين هم اعداء لامريكا واعداء لاوروبا وكذلك هم ضد حقوق الانسان.

**BT:** And the attacks that have taken place on 9/11/ 2001 and also the continued efforts for extremists to engage in violence has led to viewing Islam in my country...that Muslims are enemies of America and enemies of Europe, and they are also against human rights.

### **Al-Jazeera Interpreter:**

هجمات الحادي عشر من سبتمبر في الح... واستمرار جهود هؤلاء المتطرفين لشن عمليات عنف ضد المدنيين جعلت الكثيرين ينظرون بان الاسلام....

**BT:** The attacks of 9/11 in the fir...and the continuity of the efforts of those extremists to carry out violent operations against civilians have led many view that Islam....

This antagonism towards the West can also be identified in the rendering of ‘A Moment of Opportunity’. Al-Arabiya interpreter, for example, rejects the speaker’s criticism of Bin Laden:

**ST:** *Bin Laden was no martyr (Barack Obama, A Moment of Opportunity: 15).*

### **Al-Arabiya Interpreter:**

No rendering.

Such an act may denote that, like some other Muslims, he may believe Osama Bin Laden to be a martyr because he was killed by Americans while he was in his home. This sympathetic approach to Bin Laden and his doctrine, Al-Qaeda, can also be found in his rendering of sentence no. 64 where he softens the speaker’s stance from ‘believe’ into ‘نعتقد’ (think) as well as deleting any reference to ‘Al-Qaeda’ in his version:

**ST:** *We believe that no one benefits from a nuclear arms race in the region, or al Qaeda's brutal attacks* (Barack Obama, A Moment of Opportunity: 64).

**Al-Arabiya Interpreter:**

نعتقد انه لن يستفيد احد البته من سباق حرب نووية او من خلال عمليات هجوم دموي.

**BT:** We think that no one at all benefits from a nuclear war race or through brutal attacks.

Likewise, Al-Jazeera interpreter shows this kind of politically-motivated performance but to a lesser degree. In his rendering of the following sentence, he seems to believe that Bin Laden's views are dominantly spreading among Muslims. That is why he does not provide an equivalence for the speaker's 'won some adherents':

**ST:** *Bin Laden and his murderous vision won some adherents* (Barack Obama, A Moment of Opportunity: 18).

**Al-Jazeera Interpreter:**

بن لادن ورؤية المبنية على القتل.

**BT:** Bin Laden and his murderous vision....

On the other hand, there are many positions where we can clearly recognise the interpreters' selectivity with regards to their anti-Israel stands. For instance:

**ST:** *It is based upon cultural and historical ties and the recognition that the aspiration for a Jewish homeland is rooted in a tragic history that cannot be denied.... Threatening Israel with destruction - or repeating vile stereotypes about Jews - is deeply wrong and only serves to evoke in the minds of Israelis these most painful of memories while preventing the peace that the people of this region deserve*(Barack Obama, A New Beginning: 130&135).

### **Al-Arabiya Interpreter:**

فهي مبنية على اواصر تاريخية وثقافية وكذلك ان الطموح اليهودي هو موجود بتاريخ لا يمكننا ان ننكره الان...وان تهديد اسرائيل بالدمار او تكرار هذه الصورة النمطية هي مسألة غير صحيحة وهذا سوف ياخذ اليهود في ذكرياتهم الى الاحداث التي عاشوها في التاريخ السابق.

**BT:** It is based on historical and cultural ties and that the Jewish ambition exists in a history that we cannot deny now. ...Threatening Israel with destruction or repeating this stereotypical image is wrong and this will take Jews back to their memories of the events that they have lived in the previous history.

### **Al-Jazeera Interpreter:**

ويستند الى روابط ثقافية وتاريخية وعلى الاعتراف بان تطلعات امتلاك وطن قومي يهودي متجذر في تاريخ ماساوي لا يمكن نسيانه وانكاره... تهديد اسرائيل بمحوها من الوجود او تكرار الصور النمطية ضد اليهود هو خطأ فادح ولا بد ان يثير في اذهان وذاكرة اليهود ان السلام الذي تستحقه شعوب المنطقة لن يتحقق.

**BT:** It is based on cultural and historical ties and the recognition that the aspiration for a Jewish national homeland is rooted in a tragic history that cannot be forgotten or denied...Threatening Israel to erase (wipe) it from on existence or repeating the stereotypical image against Jews is a great mistake and must provoke the minds and memories of Jews that peace that the people of this region deserve will not be achieved.

An examination for the rendering of Al-Arabiya interpreter shows that he engages in violence against Jews because he rejects the speaker's evaluation of the Jewish history. More specifically, he neither provides an equivalence for 'a tragic history' nor for 'this most painful'. Moreover, he deletes 'while preventing the peace that the people of this region deserve'. Similarly, Al-Jazeera interpreter denies the painfulness of the Jewish memories because he neglects 'this most painful' in his version. What is significant in both versions

is, however, the rendition of 'Israelis' to 'اليهود' (Jews) which is a common expression that Arabs use to delegitimise Israelis.

Signs of such tendency can also be seen in the rendering of 'A Moment of Opportunity'. Consider the following examples:

**ST:** *The international community is tired of an endless process that never produces an outcome... The dream of a Jewish and democratic state cannot be fulfilled with permanent occupation* (Barack Obama, A Moment of Opportunity: 219-220).

**Al-Arabiya Interpreter:**

وان الاسرة الدولية قد ملّت وسئمت من هذه العملية التي لم تاتي باي اكل حتى الان ان حلم اليهود بدولة لايمكن ان يتحقق من خلال وجود احتلال.

**BT:** The international community has become tired and bothered of this endless process. The dream of a Jewish state cannot be fulfilled throughout the existence of an occupation.

**Al-Jazeera Interpreter:**

فالمجتمع الدولي تعب ومل من مبادرات لاتنتهي و لاتتمخض عن نتيجة. فامال اليهود لن تتحقق باستمرار احتلال اجرامي.

**BT:** The international community is tired and bothered of endless initiatives that never produce an outcome. The hopes of Jews will not be fulfilled throughout the continuation of a criminal occupation.

The interpreters' sympathy with the Palestinians' suffering is clear. They upscale the speaker's 'is tired'. To do so, they seem to be upset by the continuous Israeli attempts to hinder the establishment of an independent Palestine. A similar impression may be identified in their following decisions. Al-Arabiya interpreter, on the one hand, delegitimises Israel because he does

not provide an equivalence for the speaker's 'democratic'. Moreover, he appears to accept that one day this occupation will be removed because he disregards 'permanent', used to evaluate the Israeli occupation. Al-Jazeera interpreter, on the other hand, shifts 'permanent' into 'أجرامي' (criminal) which is an indication of his antagonism against Israel.

## **5. Conclusion**

There is sufficient evidence that reveals the interpreters' conscious or unconscious engagements in violence against the other group. The general map of this violence is summarized below:

1. The Arab interpreter's engagement in violence is inevitable. As a social being, his/her interpreting 'habitus' drives him/her first to accept and then to participate in different multi-faceted 'stories' or 'narratives'.
2. This violence is verbal; it is materialised in texts through addition, deletion, or inappropriate substitution.
3. Like symbolic violence, the violence of interpreting is invisible to its first victim, i.e. the interpreter, it drives them to act and react in ways that seem to them natural or unproblematic.
4. The power of this violence depends on the currency of the public narrative it represents. That is to say, if a certain narrative is adopted by the majority, the violence of interpreting will be powerful. It will be less powerful, on the other hand, if the public narrative is adopted by the minority.
5. Though it is bloodless, it has serious consequences. It misrecognises the rights of the other declared in the source texts which may disturb the speaker-audience and, therefore, their groups' relationship. Moreover, it could be life-threatening to those who carry it, i.e. the interpreters, if



discovered and further treated as a deliberate act by the misrecognised group.

6. It could be of different kinds: sectarian, ethnic, political, etc. depending on the dominant narratives circulating among the Arab public at certain times.
7. Because this violence matches the orientation of Arab monitoring and training institutions, no attempts are made to lessen or even terminate its impact neither through disposing its strategies nor by improving interpreting programmes.

## **6. Suggestions for Further Research**

It is true that the investigation of simultaneous interpreting in the Arab media has showed signs of sectarian and political violence. Therefore, it would be helpful to examine other modes such as translation or consecutive interpreting to see whether or not these two types prevail. Moreover, the inclusion of the interpreting output of other national media, especially those of minority groups, will be also significant to see the types of narratives these outlets are engaged in. Furthermore, the study of Arabic translations or interpreting provided by international media sponsored by Western countries such as the BBC or CNN could indicate the violence the West wants to promote through its media.

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## عنف الترجمة في العالم العربي: منظور اجتماعي

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### الخلاصة

تتناول هذه المقالة بحث دور الترجمة في العالم العربي وتفترض ان بالامكان استخدام الترجمة بوصفها أداة للعنف ضد الآخر. و من اجل اختبار افتراض كهذا فقد تم تحليل الترجمة الفورية الحية لخطابين للرئيس الاميركي باراك اوباما بثنهما قناتا الجزيرة والعربية الفضائيتان. وقد تم التركيز على كشف مواضع تدخل المترجمين التي ادت الى اعادة صياغة النص الاصلي بمفهوم مغاير عما قصده المتحدث. وقد لوحظ وجود حذف وأضافة واستبدال جبرها المترجمون لخدمة مصالحهم او مصالح المؤسسات التي يعملون لديها. أن من اهم انواع العنف التي يمكن للترجمة ان تشارك بها هما العنف المذهبي والعنف السياسي. ولكي يتم تحجيم مثل عنف كهذا في الترجمة لابد من تصميم برامج خاصة لتدريب المترجمين على الامانة في نقل النص للمتلقي دون تحريفه فضلا عن انشاء مؤسسات مستقلة تأخذ على عاتقها مراقبة اداء المترجمين وبالاخص في ترجمة الخطابات السياسية التي تبث بشكل مباشر على القنوات الفضائية العربية.