

## To Translate or To Interpret

### From text to intention

الترجمة اللسانية - الترجمة التأويلية

من النص إلى المعنى

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**Abstract (English):** The approach to the notion of faithfulness between linguistic translation and interpretative translation presents an analysis of the "standard" and of the linguistic levels in the field of translation. It is based on the assumption that the linguistics of norms cannot by itself perform a translating operation since it is based on an ontology and a logic that do not take into account the cultural diversity of natural languages. With these languages, which operate with rules and norms, we cannot achieve an adequate degree of fidelity if we remain conditioned by linguistic constraints which govern these rules and standards. It is clear that a text, a sentence or even a word are carriers of culture. On this basis, the author explores the domain of enunciation and interpretation by putting the hypothesis that linguistic levels are levels of organization and description, and that the study of textual semiosis provides a better understanding of language stratification as a whole. This is essential in translation, because it is the textual meaning produced by this *semiosis* that we translate. Therefore, translating focuses on the discourse-to-discourse relationship in order to achieve faithfulness in translation.

Key words: Linguistic translation, interpretative translation, interpretation, faithfulness

ملخص باللغة العربية

تصوب هذه الورقة البحثية الدراسة إشكالية الأمانة في خضم ثنائية "الترجمة اللسانية - الترجمة التأويلية". إذ تتمثل الفرضية الأساسية لهذه الدراسة في حقيقة أنه لا يمكن الاعتماد على اللسانيات في الانتقال من لغة إلى أخرى نظرا لكونها تقوم على أساس المقابلة المنطقية بين اللغة الأصل واللغة الهدف، كما لا يمكن Hهما لدور اللسانيات في عملية الترجمة. من هذا المنطلق، تسعى الدراسة الحالية إلى تبيان دور التأويل في صيرورة العلمية الترجمة، معتمداً في ذلك على أسس النظرية التأويلية ومبادئها، كما تسبر أغوار إشكالية الأمانة من زوايا متنوعة: الأمانة للحرف، للمعنى، للمقصدية الكلمات المفتاحية: الترجمة، التأويل، الأمانة، المعنى، النظرية التأويلية.

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This paper attempts to shed light on the perspective of understanding the message in its context through a mental process. The latter makes it possible to correctly grasp the scope of the message in the source language and to control its reproduction in the target language. The observation and analysis of this practice of deverbalization-reverbalisation and the resulting steps in the translation act have made it possible to better understand this notion of fidelity by taking as a model the Interpretative Theory of Translation.

This theory, commonly known as the Theory of Meaning, is associated with the School of Paris, which has turned it into an Interpretative Theory of Translation (TIT). This theoretical model has as its founding principle the idea that translation and, in fact, the translation process, does not represent an analysis or a work on the language as such and on the words that compose it. This model pays attention to the scope of the "message" in its context and to the meaning attributed to the discursive elements of the message. This brings us back to the idea of consensus among linguists, translators, interpreters and any other user of the transfer process from L1 to L2; an idea which asserts that any translating act, be it (oral, written, literary, or technical) is based on the binomial Translate equals Understand and Say.

Hence, the Translation / Interpretation process which is, first of all, about understanding the message in its context, works according to a mental process available to the Translator / Interpreter. It is namely to understand adequately the scope of the message in L1 and to control its reproduction in L2. In fact, it is a process of deverbalization / reverbalisation that the translator / interpreter must master to allow him to re-formulate or re-express the message when transferring L1 to L2. Admittedly, this process is all the more complex when it comes to the interpretation work. The meaning is thus taken in context from L1 and transposed in a similar context, equivalent or at least adequate to it in L2, with all the cultural characteristics and other nuances which exist between L1 and L2. In our opinion, Lederer (1981) has clearly demonstrated the importance of this process which, according to him, is not only primordial in any translating act but is, above all, a natural mental process.

In fact, the binomial Understanding and Saying, cited above, makes us raise questions about the human translator (the machine has not yet solved this problem - the case of automatic translators available online, on CD-ROM, etc.). It will, therefore, be necessary to see to which extent (s) the Translator / Interpreter can deal with this problem of meaning and significance, not only from a cognitive dimension, but above all from the practical and contextual levels. Thus, we will deal with these two phases to try to demonstrate that an adequate translating operation where ambiguity,

which is the main cause of mistakes, misunderstanding and other language problems, is above all related to knowledge.

This knowledge should be based on the understanding of L1 and its text, the mastery of the semantic field of the text, the mastery of the subject of the discourse with, as a prerequisite, knowledge in writing, the method of translating and interpreting, the strategies of translation (such as free translation, interlinear translation, equivalence, translation by addition or truncation, cultural transposition, exoticism, paraphrase, etc.). This binomial must also make use of well-defined responses from the part of the Translator / Interpreter to allow him / her to better adapt to situations of meaning and significance vis-à-vis the text or the discourse to which he / she is confronted. The purpose of this process is to ensure that the translating operation that is managed by the Translator / Interpreter should not be limited to finding matches (as the machine would do, for example) but to offering adequate equivalences between the source language and the target language. This is what we will try to describe and analyze in the scope of this work.

In the main, linguists and translation practitioners have often had controversial attitudes to the concept of faithfulness. In our opinion, this concept has become even more complex and problematic, because there is no terminological definition in the field of translation. It is only towards the end of her works on the Interpretative Theory of Translation that Danica Seleskovitch tries attempts to establish, for example, taxonomy of some concepts she uses in the field of Interpretation / Translation such as: "discourse», » meaning", "semantic fields", "cognitive baggage", "cognitive complements" and "faithfulness".

In fact, we consider that there is a shift from the theoretical problems of language translation to the message. Seleskovitch speaks of the Conference Interpreter (1975, 1978) and later (1993, 2001) in her theory of the Translator - the focus of interest in any translating activity. This makes us think of authors such as Pergnier (1999) who explains that it is not a question of locking oneself in the search for equivalences of signifiers but that it is much more a matter of mastering the retransmission of the message and the situation that gives meaning to the message. It is not a question of an attachment to the language of departure or the language of arrival, but of an attachment to the addressees of the translation.

It should be noted that D. Seleskovitch had antagonistic and strongly opposed positions to the so-called literal translation and the hold linguistics has on translation. Here, she tried to improve the image of the interpreter and his status in the ethics of the profession. The idea she developed, in the first place, was that if one apprehends a statement from the "meaning" it conveys, one can arrive at

an adequate interpretation, and convey the message to the listener in a more reasoned way. It is in this perspective that the hypotheses on "meaning" in interpretation will be detailed with the contribution of Mr. Lederer in particular. The Theory of Meaning advanced at ESIT took another dimension and imposed itself as the Interpretative Theory of Translation or the Interpretative School of Paris.

In this paper, we attempt to compare approaches to translation, while relating them with the TIT. We, besides, attempt to highlight the strengths of divergence and convergence between these approaches and the TIT. It is, at this level, that we will try to distinguish between the linguistic approach and the interpretive approach to translation.

The concept of faithfulness has always worried translators and interpreters - not to say haunted them - and it is even concerning us today. This notion can be double-edged; to be faithful to the original text in an objective and neutral manner or to be faithful to given objectives by transforming or transposing the original text wrongly and deliberately. Should we be faithful to the letter or to the spirit of the text? If, while interpreting the text, the translator leaves aside the author's statement and assumes his intention by speculating on what he undertakes to be implicit and tacit, he will depart from faithfulness to arrive to a translation, not only of the worst kind but especially to a total drift, a simply pure destruction of the original text.

Our reflection on the issue is the result of a teaching experience in the Department of Translation at the University of Oran for several years. It is also based on observations, reflections and hypotheses of research in a field as controversial as that of Translation and more particularly in the perspective of Linguistic Translation in relation to Interpretative Translation.

In the main, our main observations were inspired by the model of the Interpretative School of Paris, known as the Interpretative Theory of Translation (TIT), which takes as a survey the study of the notion of faithfulness. We consider this issue as a fundamental and primordial one since it has always been raised by translators throughout the history of Translation. This was particularly the case and when the first translations of religious texts were performed. This notion of faithfulness has provoked many contradictory and even virulent debates between linguists and translators. Nevertheless, it has made it possible to open up very interesting lines of research in the area of translation.

In an attempt to highlight the notion of faithfulness, we will start from the assumptions of the TIT. In our view, this notion is at the center of any theoretical and pragmatic reflection on translation.

The notion of faithfulness is often described or presented as an acceptable, even desirable link between two texts. It turns out that this relation between texts is neither a relation of identity because one must be subordinated to the other, nor that of equality because the translated text must try to render the form, the genius and the *semantism*. - among others – of the original text. In fact, the translated text should claim the original or be the faithful mirror and not the distorted mirror of the original text. Nevertheless, any translation inevitably produces what is commonly called a second text.

The problem we are raising here leads to two positions that are sometimes totally opposed. One advocates the notion of fidelity and all that results from it as attitudes, perceptions and apprehension of the translator in relation to the author and the text to be translated. It insists more particularly on the maintenance of the linguistic resemblance, the respect of the form and of the syntactic structure of the initial language. The other position supports the detachment from the departure language, with its linguistic specificities. In other words, it is suggested to move away from the letter of the original text and focus on the spirit of the text with all its connotations: what is said, what is unsaid and what is implied.

Hence, we have to focus on two different approaches: the linguistic approach and the Interpretive Approach. As regards the linguistic approach, the main issue would be to remain consistent with the signs of the original text and their organization. We suppose that this really causes a fundamental problem in Translation for the simple reason that the signs are not stable and therefore they can change when moving from the original to the translated text. In the same way, we notice that the addressees of the two texts - original text / translated text - are not the same either. On the other hand, the Interpretive Approach is often associated with so-called "free" translation. It prefers to move away from the words to join their essence. In this case, it is a translation that subtracts meaning, the intention of the text, and it can even afford to handle the text form to embellish it and make it more "readable" to the addressee. This 'freedom' in translation sometimes makes it possible to adapt a text, to judge it as heavy or anachronistic, for example, and, as a result, to update it, or even to moralize some passages deemed provocative, or immoral, etc. This is all the more valid if it is consider that a translation addresses a given community, a group of addressees probably with different cultures, different religions, different civilizations and a vision of the world and of reality different from that of the original text.

It is important to point out that fervent defenders of this approach (such as Vinay, Jean-Paul and Jean Darbelnet (1958) consider that free translation is synonymous with "disloyalty" to the author, but

they prefer to "betray" the language only in order to ensure a good understanding of the translated text by the addressee. From this point of view, a translation is, inevitably, a form of betrayal of the source text. So, it is clear that faithfulness is never complete in relation to the original text or the text of arrival.

This presentation suggests that there is a fairly clear dichotomy between two ways of translating: linguistic translation on one hand, and free adaptation on the other. In reality, these two approaches seem to us to be much more complementary than divergent in all points of view. They are complementary and work well together because one comes to the service of the other.

In the main, we are in favor of the approach that will be able to ensure a so-called double faithfulness, namely faithfulness to the original text of the source language and faithfulness to the addressees of the translation in the target language. It is this approach that brings to the fore the need for commitment to ideas, to the spirit and therefore to meaning. This is how we translate an idea by an idea and not a word by another word as Saint Jerome points out.

As Cary, E. (1956) suggests faithfulness in translation is twofold. He perceives it as a relationship with three main actors: the author, the translator and the reader. Similarly, Nida, E. (1964, 1969 and 1975) maintains that a translation based on dynamic equivalence privileges the understanding of meaning by excluding literal translation. For its part, the Interpretative Theory of Translation (TIT) considers that the true object of translation is Meaning. The latter, once grasped, has its support or language vehicle put in the background. It is precisely this freedom, this detachment from the linguistic form that allows and facilitates re-expression in the other language or in the language of the Other. Among the proponents of this approach, there are Danica Seleskovitch, Lederer, Pergnier, (France), and Delisle (Canada). Their plea for this theory is the result of observations and practice in this field. In this connection, D. Seleskovich states: "To interpret is not only to understand words, but to understand through words the meaning of the speaker; it is then to express it in an immediately intelligible way". The translator must understand and rephrase as accurately as possible what the speaker - in the context of the interpretation - has produced and exhibited in a given language. It could be argued that the translator's work is more subject to linguistic or meaning constraints than to liberties that may be so dangerous in the sense that unlimited freedom can lead to the destruction of original texts. The translation act is then an intellectual challenge that requires the translator to live up to the challenge of his job.

On the whole, we are of the view that there is no global freedom. Consequently, freedom embodied in the translation practice does not exist in the absolute. It exists only in relation to certain

constraints and, in an essential way, remains so that the translator can be faithful in his re-expression of meaning. It is a question of establishing and defining the limits of this freedom (or these freedoms) to avoid as much as possible those (liberties) which would lead us to erroneous and misleading translations. It is undeniable that without freedom there would be no loyalty to meaning, a loyalty for which the translator would freely choose for the purpose of transmitting a translated and understandable message to the targeted reader.

Indeed, every word, every sentence, every text, is conveyed with an intention. They hold ideas, something to say or to claim that are generally implicit and that the translator must perceive and understand. It is to this implicit, that hidden part of speech that the translator must remain faithful. In short, it is a double faithfulness; namely, the one to the intention and the one to meaning. Forgetting or omitting words is sometimes necessary if we want to achieve a faithful translation. An example would be that of semantic doublets in Arabic and their translation into other languages. The Arabic expression *متواصلة بصفة مستمرة* cannot be translated into English by "in a continually continuous manner"; which would be nonsense in English. A truncation of one of the doublets in Arabic is necessary in this case to lead to an English translation such as: "continuously". Is this not to "be faithful" not only to the meaning but also to the genius of the two languages?

Among the important processes in the translating act, there is the move through the 'non-verbal' phase. The ESIT (the Paris School of Interpreting and Translation) has often defended this nonverbal principle, which consists of forgetting words to move to the next stage of the translating act, that of the deverbalization of thought. . This process is at the center of any translation activity according to the TIT.

One major purpose of translation is to establish contacts between different civilizations and cultures. It is also thanks to translation that people have often discovered other religions, other philosophies, other ways of thinking and acting, and other visions of the world. In fact, the translating act cannot be a mere linguistic mediation, it allows penetrating the civilizational, cultural, social and economic space, as well as the spiritual space of the Other, the "Foreigner". The translating act brings together different peoples and communities and makes them know each other through the translated text.

It has often been difficult for translation practitioners to "make a good translation". For this reason, they always wonder: Should we restore the idea as it is stated in the original text? Should we preserve the form of the original text? Should we respect the structure and form of the original text? Should we be much more concerned with the meaning of the text than with its structure? Should we bring the reader back to the author or the author to the reader? Can we have the freedom to do with

the text the way we want it to be? What are the limits of the translator and that of a so-called free translation?

It seems to us that whatever the method of translation, the big question of principle remains how can one achieve faithfulness? And as a result of this principle, what would be the ideal link between the original text and the text of arrival? Thus, faithfulness to the original text remains the inescapable principle that is called for by all translators. But which faithfulness do we mean? The question remains unanswered; Should it be faithfulness to the letter? Faithfulness to the spirit of the text and to its author? Or faithfulness to the structure and form of the original text? Faithfulness to the genius of the language with its particularities, specificities, and all that is special to the two languages: the source and the target language?

In the main, we support the argument according to which the equivalence in the translating operation must be an equivalence of spirit and not an equivalence of form, that is to say, faithfulness to the spirit of the original text. In fact, we set our viewpoint in this perspective. Our work consists in observing the principle and the notion of faithfulness between linguistic translation and interpretative translation in the light of the Interpretative Theory of Translation taught by the School of Paris. Taking into consideration the hypotheses of the TIT, from which we have built our own research hypotheses, we will attempt to shed light on some translation problems, mainly by raising the following questions:

- Conveying the idea: what is meant by idea?
- Conveying the said and the unsaid. How can we define them?
- Conveying the intention, the tacit, the shortcuts, etc. How can we achieve that.?
- Conveying linguistic elements. But should they be considered as the first object of translation?

We will attempt to propose some answers to the above questions which are of great importance in the field of translation. We will try to define operational concepts that will allow us to better understand and clarify the notion of faithfulness and its relationship with linguistic translation and interpretive translation. Our readings and analyses of the different ways of achieving translation have led us to the conclusion that it is much more the meaning of the message transmitted and reproduced at the level of speech, which must be of prior interest to any translator. Moreover, the translating process is not a comparative approach between two languages; it rather represents a combination of linguistic and extra-linguistic elements.

After addressing the issue of faithfulness, we attempt to deal with the Interpretative Theory of ESIT which, as we have pointed out, is to clarify the translating process mechanisms, and to separate



linguistic significance from the meaning of speech. This theory defends the idea that the principle of faithfulness applies to the meaning stated by the speaking subject, and that it is therefore meaning that determines the corresponding type of translation.

We are convinced that the translating process revolves around a dichotomy: significance and meaning. The translator must aim for meaning in the phase of comprehension and in that of re-expression. Meaning must be separated from significance in which it is conveyed. The objective is to achieve a certain degree of faithfulness in translation. This is what ESIT's Interpretative Theory advocates, and which we consider to be one of the main 'traductological' currents in the West. However, by preconception, many researchers think that this theory would apply only to the oral interpretation or in conference interpretation as practiced by D. Seleskovitch and her followers. We think, that this theory has not merely adepts (as it is the case of any other theory and more particularly in Language Sciences), and that it is subject to questioning by currents of thought under the influence of some linguistic theories on translation.

On the whole, the principle of faithfulness applies to oral interpretation and to a large extent to written translation as well. These two forms of message transmission from one language to another are at the level of speech, the level of words' exchange. Thus, we consider that the linguistic contribution is necessary but not sufficient enough to the translating process. The translator is required to make use of his interpretative faculty to understand and hence to reformulate meaning.

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