

Research Article

A History of the Term "*Translation*" in the Western Context

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Abstract

The present research undertakes a historical and semantic exploration of the term *translation*, tracing its conceptual and linguistic evolution from antiquity to modernity. Rooted in a comparative approach, it examines the development of the term in both French and English, while contextualising its cultural and ideological underpinnings across key historical epochs. From the Greek *metaphrasis* and Roman *interpretatio* to the medieval and Renaissance reconfigurations of textual transfer, this study traces the shifting meanings and practices associated with the concept of "*to translate*." Special attention is given to the French linguistic transition from *translater* to *traduire*, revealing deeper insights into how language reflects epistemological change. Moreover, the research explores the emergence and transformation of the figure of the dragoman, a term of Eastern origin, and its reception within the Western tradition. By charting the evolution of translation as both a term and a practice, this study illuminates the rise of two central agents—the translator and the interpreter—and frames the conceptual tension between *Content Translation* and *Quality Translation*, a dichotomy born from centuries of cultural negotiation and linguistic innovation.

Keywords

Translate, Translator, Translation, Interpret, Interpreter, Interpreting, Interpres, Translatore, Transfere

1. Introduction

History is the ultimate recipient where minor histories meet and melt. Everything has its own history where its activities are memorised from the very beginning to the very end. Be it a living being, a place or a word. "*To translate*" is a term that warrants its own history, which needs to be explored within its cultural context to examine its cultural function, identify its genetic dynamism, and understand its purpose. To fully grasp the term "*to translate*," it is primordial to delve into its history (its etymology and evolution) and pause at its major milestones to question it and examine it. In the European context, the term has undergone *five* main stages that simultaneously contributed to shaping the concept of translation, both theoretically and practically, as it is known and considered today.

2. "*To Translate*", in the Time of the Greeks

Historians regard the Greeks in the classical era as not translating what the neighbouring cultures and civilisations produced. They showed little interest in that during the centuries of their reign over the ancient world. Nevertheless, two ancient Greek terms related to (written and verbal) translation were used to denote two aspects of "*translation*", translating and interpreting, or *hermeneuein* and *meîpherein*. These two terms have survived in modern Romance languages and Anglo-Saxon ones, referring respectively to *hermeneutics* and *metaphor*.

Later, in the time of *Plutarch*, the term "*metaphrazein*" appeared for the first time and seemed very close to "*paraphrase*", which is used very commonly nowadays. Accord-

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ingly, the Greeks seem to have positioned translation within *three* fields: the fields of metaphor (transfer of meaning), the field of interpretation (hermeneutics) and the field of reformulation (paraphrasing), with the possibility of linking translation with one of the aforementioned activities and fields. [1].

3. "To Translate", in the Time of the Romans

Contrary to the Greeks, who neglected translation and overlooked the neighbouring civilisational endeavours, the Romans made Rome the capital of translation in the West, and contributed to making the West itself the birthplace of translation and the cradle of it ever since. From the very beginning, the Romans understood that translation involved hard work, including reading, understanding, interpreting, and rendering a given text from its source language into their Latin language. Yet, the difficulty grew double when the Roman translators and scholars found no translation terminology to work with or communicate their views through.

Initially, the concept of translation activity in the Roman era had no specific term to denote it or distinguish it from other mental activities. It neither had a noun to refer to it nor had it a verb to describe it or define the way it works. According to German grammarian *Lohmann*, the concept of translation first saw light with Roman philosopher, writer and orator *Cicero*, who, in the absence of a specific concept or term for translation in his time, introduced several verbs and terms to describe translation, such as *vertere*, *convertere*, *exprimere*, *verbum e verbo*, *ad verbum exprimere*, *reddere*, *verbum pro verbo reddere*. [2].

Some other Roman terms, such as *interpretes* and *transferre*, had become widely used by the end of Antiquity. *Interpres* was used to denote both *translator* and *interpreter*. The other Latin verb indicating translation, "*transferre*", was used to represent transfer and conversion. The verb "*transferre*" was a compound of "*trans-*" (across) + "*ferre*" (to carry). The present active infinitive (main verb) was "*transferre*", meaning "to carry across" or "to transfer." The past participle (or perfect passive participle) was "*translatus*", meaning "having been carried across" or "transferred" when used in passive constructions. The present participle was "*transferens*" and the gerund was "*transferentis*", meaning "carrying across" or "transferring."

While the correct classical Latin verb was "*transferre*" (to carry across, transfer, translate), the past participle was "*translatus*" (used in perfect passive constructions), the frequentative form "*translatiare*" developed later, probably due to vulgar Latin or Medieval usage. In Italian, "*traslatiare*" meant "to transfer" or "to shift," derived from Latin "*transferre*". Accordingly, out of those *two* Roman terms, "*interpres*" and "*transferre*" widely used by the end of Antiquity, only one manages to establish itself and pass into the Middle

Ages and prevailed over the other terms: The noun *translatio* (meaning: "*translation*"), with the verb *translatiare* (meaning: "to translate").

Nonetheless, this term, *translatio*, was not used to denote *translation* only. It used to indicate so many other activities at the same time. *Translatio* could mean the transfer, transport, change, conversion, removal, conveyance of people, objects, thoughts, metaphors, rights or properties from one man to another, from one body to another, from one place to another, and from one language to another. That is, '*translatio*,' in *Latin*, can refer to all sorts of transfer and conversion, both tangible and intangible, as well as literal and symbolic movement.

4. "To Translate", in the Middle Ages

In the Middle Ages, the term "*translation*" in its *Latin* context was used to mean transport, transfer, change, transposition, transition, and conversion, much as it had been used earlier in Antiquity. By virtue of this semantic plurality, the Latin Middle Ages developed the concept of *Translatio Studii*. However, despite the dominance of "*translation*" as a term corresponding to "translation" in European Medieval texts, it could not prevail over the other terms and establish itself as a single, unique term invariably associated with the act of translating.

Indeed, the Medieval French language, or Old French, used so many other verbs that were as common as the verb "*to translate*". There were, for instance, *espondre*, *turner*, *mettre en romanz*, *enromanchier*, *translater*, etc. [3] before the French verb "*traduire*" emerged in the light by the start of the sixteenth century AD, coming from Italy, crossing France, before reaching the other remaining Romance languages (Spanish, Catalan, Portuguese and Romanian), and settling down in their cultures, along with the noun "*traduction*".

Unlike Romance languages, English kept the Medieval term, "*Translation*", clung to it, and adopted it officially as the only term in the field and developed around it a typically English vision towards translation, best known later as "*literal translation*", or "*word-for-word translation*", or "*direct translation*", or "*overt translation*", or "*linguistic translation*", etc. Thus, the Medieval term, *Translation*, remained common and established in the English language to this day.

5. The Term "Translation" in the European Renaissance

"*Traduire*" and "*traduction*", as they became common in early 16th-century France, had been in use since the 15th century, but were initially limited to the *legal* field, as seen in phrases like "*il a été traduit en justice*" (meaning: "He was brought to the court"). The use of these terms for linguistic translation came through an erroneous translation by the Italian humanist Leonardo Bruni, who, willingly or unwillingly, when trying to translate Aulu-Gelle's *Vocabulum* grae-

cum vetus traductum in linguam romanam, (Noctes, I, 18, 1) [*Latin Loans from Romance Languages*], he translated the aforementioned verb, "tradūcere" as though it were "tradurre" (meaning: "to translate").^[4] while the context of the passage indicated that the Latin verb, "tradūcere" meant "to introduce", "to convey", or "to insert", in Latin.

Bruni's translational error at the beginning of the 16th century caught the interest of the European Renaissance humanists. It was immediately embraced by the translators and scholars of the time, who grasped the *newly coined* term (neologism) and adopted it as a new, distinctive term denoting a concept specific to a new discipline, worthy of the autonomy claimed and won by the arts, sciences, and letters in the Renaissance era.

Since the early decades of the Renaissance, certain fields of knowledge have claimed independence from philosophy and literature, much like the field of criticism. Other fields claimed independence from encyclopedism in a manner similar to the experimental sciences. Some other fields claimed independence from astrology and superstition, the way astronomy did. Some claimed independence from morality, the way politics did. Some others have gone further and declared independence from religion. In this context, it was quite logical that translation could have a demand to reveal: to be independent from all the spheres of knowledge with which translation would deal, since the latter was regarded as part of the field translated.

That is, Leonardo Bruni's translation error came in its appropriate historical context. This justifies the 16th-century humanists' immediate adoption of Bruni's term. The objective fixed in Bruni's time was to establish a new climate where translation can breathe and move freely, conveying the nectar of human cultures from one language to another, and working with new tools against the backdrop of a new philosophy that gives translation the expected independence from the remaining fields of knowledge that were accustomed to dissolving it, possessing it to the extent of annulment, to the point of obliteration.

6. The Term "Translation" in Modern Times

6.1. French Language and the Transition from "Translator" to "Traduire"

The English verb "to translate" corresponds to two different

verbs in French, "translater" and "traduire". As far as usage is concerned, the first term, "translater", came first in time. However, the European Renaissance accepted to share some tasks with the new term, "traduire", which devoted itself quasi-completely to keep pace with the first steps of the early translation theorisation and the conscient translation practice while the old term, "translater", kept the remaining tasks that would deal with issues far away from translation, mainly in fields of biology, mathematics and astronomy.

6.1.1. In the Beginning Was "Translator"

Since the Middle Ages, the terms "translater" and "translation" have been commonly used in French, solidifying the original Latin meanings of the words in French linguistic circulation, even as they expanded to include additional scientific and technical denotations. However, it generally continued to mean "to transfer" from one language to another, from one place to another, or from one time to another. Sometimes, the term would denote "to carry" (e.g., "translater la croix": to carry the cross). At other times, it would denote "to relocate" (e.g., "translater un prisonnier": to relocate a prisoner). Thirdly, it would denote "to transfer financial or real estate." Fourthly, it would denote changing an appointment, altering a date, or postponing it.

In the first edition of his dictionary, published in 1679, Pierre Richelet explicitly stated that the term "translater" was not used outside the religious domain in the French context. It used to denote the transfer, relocation, and movement of clergy and church property, as well as the postponement and delay of church activities. ^[5]

In the 19th century, Émile Littré's dictionary omitted the religious usage of "translater", as it had been included in Richelet's dictionary two centuries prior. It also reinforced the term's exclusion from cultural usage, so that "translater" sometimes became an old and abandoned word and at other times it denoted "poor and base translation," with the term "translateur" meaning "bad and poor translator."

With Émile Littré's dictionary, new administrative and scientific meanings were added to the term "translater". The administrative meaning is encountered in "to transfer a prisoner from one correctional institution to another," "to move the capital of a state from one city to another," and "to transfer ownership from one name to another." As for the scientific meaning in Émile Littré's dictionary (physical and mathematical usage), the term "translater" came to mean the rotation of physical bodies in space around another body or the sliding and gliding of mathematical geometric shapes on design paper. ^[6]

On the technical front, the terms "translater" and "translation" nowadays have different denotations. In astronomy, "translater" denotes the "revolution" of planets around a given star, as opposed to the other movement of planets in the cosmos, "rotation" ("tourner autour d'un axe": to rotate around an axis), which denotes the rotation of planets on their own axis. In geometry, the term denotes a geometric transfor-

1- In French :

"traducere signifiait en latin 'transporter', acception largement attestée dans l'italien des premiers siècles, survivant encore dans l'usage judiciaire (Italian: tradurre in tribunale) et d'ailleurs fréquente. Mais l'humaniste Leonardo Bruni, par une interprétation erronée de traducere dans le passage d'Aulu-Gelle vocabulum graecum vetus traductum in linguam romanam (Noctes, I, 18, 1) – qui ne signifiait pas 'traduit', mais 'introduit' – donna l'essor à une signification nouvelle du mot, celle de 'transporter d'une langue à une autre'; jusqu'au XVe siècle, le mot le plus employé pour 'traduire' (en latin ainsi qu'en italien, en français) était translatare (avec sa famille translatio); or, l'extension de traducere avec l'acception nouvelle fut si forte qu'il gagna toute l'Europe Occidentale ainsi que le roumain".

mation corresponding to the intuitive idea of an object sliding a certain distance without being affected in terms of size, direction, or reflection. In computer science, the term denotes a conversion of a computer program with modification, if necessary, of the references to addresses so that the program could run from its new location without error or malfunction.

In brief, the term "translator" in the French context retained its Latin meanings (to move, relocate, or reschedule) for religious purposes and the transfer of prisoners or property until the 17th century. In Pierre Richelet's 1679 dictionary, the term was reserved for religious contexts. Later, in Emile Littré's 19th-century dictionary, the term shifted to administrative and scientific contexts (e.g., transfers, relocations, revolutions, slidings, etc.). Nowadays, the French term "translator" specialises in non-linguistic uses only, leaving the linguistic uses to the other term, "traduire".

6.1.2. Then, There Came "Traduire"

The first use of the term "tradurre" in the European Renaissance as a synonym for the medieval Latin word "translatare" began in Italy. Then, it spread to France. The rest of the Romance European languages followed later. The verb "traduire" was first used in French in 1509, where the new verb "traduire" was sometimes used alongside the then-current verb "translator" in the same paragraph of the same text within the same context, as documented in the texts of Jehan Divry. The interchangeable use "traduire" and "translator" shows that the two terms were synonymous in French when referring to "translation" before the Latin word, "translator", gave way to the newly coined term, "traduire". This was highlighted in Richelet's dictionary in 1679, when he considered the term "translation" an old and abandoned word that once meant "translation."

Since the 16th century, the terms "traduire" and "translator" shared the meanings of "transfer" inherent in their Latin roots. While the verb "translator" monopolised the physical meanings of transfer in scientific and technical usage, "traduire" specialised in the symbolic meanings of that transfer to mean "to bring before the courts" or "to appear before justice," or to mean "to reverse" the apparent surface in order to "to reveal" and "express" the deep essence, or to mean "to interpret" and "to explain." The last symbolic transfer referred to by the verb "traduire" is the transfer of a speech, a text, or a collection of works by an author from a source language to a target one.

By examining French dictionaries from the Renaissance to the present day, one can closely trace the growth of the term chosen to denote translation and the evolution of the concept underlying it. In Richelet's dictionary at the end of the 17th century, the term denoted both "to convert into a language different from the first language in the original version" and "to plead in court." In the dictionary of the French Academy, the term "traduire" monopolised all the meanings associated with translation and transformation. It meant "to convert a written work from one language to another," as it meant "to render" someone in a different image or form. [7] It also

meant "to transport people from one place to another." Here, "traduire" intersects with "translator" but does not fully coincide with it.

At the end of the 19th century, Émile Littré's dictionary reinforced the legal meaning of the French term. In addition to "transporting, relocating, and transferring suspects, accused persons, prisoners, and detainees," the term came to mean "to appear before the courts," *traduire en justice*.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Le Grand Larousse encyclopédique (in ten volumes) expanded the term's meanings to include "representation", "expression", "interpretation", and "indication of something." [8] As for le Grand Robert de la langue Française, it morphologically broke down the French term "traduire" into *trans*, meaning "beyond", and *ducere*, meaning to "lead" and to "convey", so that "traduire" denotes the transfer to a different culture and the conveyance to a different language. [9].

While Pierre Richelet had limited the scope of the term in the ecclesiastical religious field, Claude Augé in his Grand Larousse encyclopédique, defined two domains for the term. The first field is cultural, where the term refers to the act of translation. The second one is legal, legislative, and judicial, referring to the transfer, relocation, and movement of accused persons, suspects, prisoners, and detainees.

The French Robert dictionary, on its part, dedicated four entries to translation: the act of translating and its result, a translated version of the original, the corresponding word in the source/target language, and the material expression of something immaterial, as in the sentence: "In the spread of crime, a translation of insecurity." Additionally, the term also means "appearing before the court and the law." [10].

Over time, "traduire" gained dominance over "translator" and "traduction" prevailed over "translation". This may be due to two factors. The first factor is that "traduction" belongs to a different linguistic family consisting of *ductio* and the verb *ducere*, which corresponds to "to lead" and "to drive". This family includes words such as *Induction*, *Déduction*, *Production*, *Reproduction*, which are the words forming the four systems of transformation. *Induction* abounds in the experimental field, such as chemistry. *Déduction* is relevant in the logical-mathematical field and similar disciplines. *Production* is prevalent in various practical fields, including economics and technology. "Traduction" predominates in the field of transforming texts of all kinds, whether human or machine-generated, written or spoken, literal or figurative. All four systems share the fact that they end in *-duction*. [11].

The second factor contributing to the dominance of "traduction" over "translation" in the French context since the Renaissance was the dynamism and expressiveness of the former term compared to the latter. While "translation" emphasises transfer or conversion, "traduction" emphasises the energy and activity that underlie this movement of transfer, in what can be called the transformative force (*la force transformante*). In clearer terms, "traduction" refers to an intentional, conscious, and deliberate process and is an activity that

presupposes the existence of an agent, like all words containing "-duction," whereas "translation" is merely an anonymous process of crossing.

6.2. English Language and Loyalty to the Term "to Translate"

The Oxford English Dictionary (full title: A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles), a twenty-volume work, enjoys a high reputation among contemporary dictionaries for being the largest in terms of volume as well as quality, as it adopted an approach different from the method established by Arab lexicographers since the 8th century AD. The aforementioned dictionary adopted an alphabetical order of linguistic entries, rather than the order based on linguistic roots used by Arabic dictionaries to the present day. Besides, it enhanced its presentation of the linguistic items by including the phonetic transcription of the word, which was not common in the other European dictionaries at the time, while Arabic dictionaries use vowelisation or discretisation to ensure the correct pronunciation of the word.

The Oxford English Dictionary also adopted a historical method based on determining the birth records of the word, similar to those for individuals and families in real life, which made the linguistic items vibrant, far from any absolutism that once prevailed and still prevails in other dictionaries. It also adopted the option of diversifying the explanation by including proverbs, maxims, sayings, and common expressions on the one hand, and citing poetic verses or expressions of writers with reference to the paper source of the quoted phrase. That is, it was, first and foremost, a corpus-based approach.

Honestly, this choice was first suggested by French lexicographers during the discussion of the project of the first French dictionary, the Dictionary of the French Academy, during the reign of King Louis XIV in the 17th century. However, they rejected it in the long run, only to return to it in the following century, the 18th century, and adopt it in subsequent editions.

The Oxford English Dictionary is also credited with transferring the lexicographical action from the era of voluntary individual action that characterised the Arab lexicographical experience since the publication of the first dictionary in History during the Abbasid era (starting with Al-Jawhari, passing through Ibn Duraid, Al-Asqalani, Al-Zubaidi, Al-Fayruzabadi, Al-Fayyumi, Al-Safadi, Al-Nawawi, Al-Qali, Al-Azhari, Al-Suyuti, Kra' al-Naml, Ibn Sidah, Al-Rumi, Al-Dimashqi, Al-Razi, Al-Saghani, Ibn Manzur, etc.) into the era of organised institutional action, where the Philological Society in Oxford in the 19th century appointed James Murray as supervisor of the project over twenty-seven years. Work on the dictionary began in 1857 and was completed in 1884. Perhaps the most notable contribution made by the working team in this project was its collaboration with other scholars, writers, artists, and clergy, without fear of falling into the trap of encyclopedism that might take it out of the linguistic do-

main and into the cognitive domain. The team was open from the beginning in this endeavour to the contributions of philologists and scholars in comparative and historical linguistics, as well as other actants in other disciplines, until the Oxford Dictionary was considered a second historical shift in lexicographical work after the first Arab shift that founded this science ten centuries before the maturation of the British Oxford Dictionary.

The Oxford English Dictionary traced the origin of the term "to translate" in the history of the English language, pinpointing its Latin roots. The Byzantines of the Middle Ages inherited from the ancient Romans the various uses of the term, "to translate", denoting translation and transfer, "trans-ferre", which was the present active infinitive form, while the past participle form was "translatus", which in the 11th century AD evolved into a new independent Latin verb meaning transfer and translation: "translatore". It was with the rise of vernacular European languages that the term "translatore" passed from Latin to the nascent Western languages, such as English, which adopted the verb "to translate" to this day. [12].

The English verb "to translate", as presented by the Oxford English Dictionary, conveys the meaning of movement or transfer in various disciplines, ranging from physical to figurative, as well as scientific and literary transfer. The first physical meaning is related to transfer, relocation, movement, targeting professionals, craftsmen, clergy, and prisoners from one place to another. The figurative meaning conveys the transfer of ideas, emotions, hopes, and dreams ("divine transfer", "the ascension of prophets", "transfer of the remains of the dead from one place to another" for either honour or vengeance, etc.). In physics, "to translate" is related to the physical body orbiting another one or rotating around its own axis. In geometry, "to translate" is related to the transfer of geometric shapes by sliding on a design paper. Finally, the literary meaning is related to "the transfer of written texts from one language to another."

The American Heritage Dictionary adds other subordinate meanings to the English verb "to translate". The first is "to express in another language while retaining the original meaning." The second is "to explain and interpret using simple words." The third is "to convert from one form to another and from one style to a different style." The fourth is "to work in translation." [13] Translation, according to the American Heritage Dictionary, is a profession in which the practitioner can either focus on translating form or content.

Webster's Dictionary, the well-known American dictionary, lists several meanings for the noun "translation" and the verb "to translate": the act of translating, the state of being translated, a translated product, a translated version of a text (in the fields of humanities), the transfer of people or the transfer of corpses or human remains (ecclesiastical glossary), the transfer of property (rare usage), the transfer of rights, conversion and transformation, the revolution of a body around another body (in the field of physics), the sliding of geometric

shapes (in the field of mathematics).[14].

The semantic range of the term "translation" in its Anglo-Saxon context may seem richer and broader than its French counterpart, as Antoine Berman noted. It may also sound more capable of expressing concrete and figurative transformations and conversions broadly, and that this is only achieved in French by using the term "traduction" metaphorically. However, the truth is that it would be unfair to compare the French term "traduire" with the English term "to translate", knowing that the latter encompasses the meanings of both French terms altogether, "translater" and "traduire". The difference between the French and English terms, in the context of translation studies, extends far beyond the richness and abundance of semantic meaning.

From Antoine Berman's viewpoint, it is no coincidence that the English language has retained the original Latin term, "*translation*". This is closely related to the conception defined by Anglo-Saxon culture, since the Middle Ages, when the pattern that the English language should follow was to facilitate communication by adopting a terminological system inspired by the language of daily communication, which has always been considered as "translation." This choice stems from an early functional and communicative orientation in Anglo-Saxon cultures. As early as the 14th century, thinkers like Nicolas Oresme considered translation as part of a larger system of communication. Thus, English evolved into a language of exchange, or even a language that is itself a form of translation, marked by adaptability and lexical flexibility.

Thus, the English language appears, in its essence, as translation. For this reason, translation occupies a central significance in this particular language that has become, firstly, the primary medium for the production of the term (or the specialised signifier) capable of conversion and translation; secondly, it has become the fundamental medium for technological communications across the world, where English acts as a model language for other languages hoping to become languages of connection and communication; and thirdly, English has become the main medium for the transfer of written texts, in what has come to be termed "distant languages" (such as Chinese, Hindi, and Japanese) by Westernising their texts and transforming their meanings to facilitate their generalisation.

Nowadays, considering that Spanish is a phonetic language that is read as it is written and vice versa, English has become the language of translation par excellence. It has become so because it primarily adheres to a self-conception based on a pure system of interchangeable and exchangeable signs. Consequently, every translation in the Anglo-Saxon context is necessarily governed by the horizon of "translation" as defined seven centuries ago by Nicolas Oresme (1320 - 1382). In other words, English does not translate. Rather, it exchanges a word from its source language for a word from the target language and vice versa. That is, it generalises the contents of a translatable nature.

The term "to translate" has several meanings in English, but

the central meaning against the backdrop of which the image of translation is formed in the Anglo-Saxon context is the one used in the field of physics. While Arabic uses one single verb "دَارَ، يَدُورُ، دَوْرَانَا" (dāra, yadūru, dawarān - to rotate, to revolve, rotation) to denote the rotation of a planet first around itself and secondly around another star that forms the nucleus of a hypothetical solar system, English uses two verbs. The first verb is "to rotate" to express the movement of a planet around itself. The second verb is "to orbit" or "to revolve" to express a planet orbiting a star that forms the centre of the solar system. This means that English conceives of every word as a planet. When the word "rotates" around its own axis, the other side of that word, which was hidden moments ago, becomes visible (just as the other side of a rotating planet becomes visible due to factors of light and darkness, or proximity and distance). These two sides, which alternately appear and disappear due to the revolution of planets in the cosmos or the movement of words in the text, are what linguists call the original word in the source language and the equivalent word in the target language. That is, the English language expects every single word in one language to have an equivalent in another language. Suffice it to rotate (i.e., "to translate") the word so that one can read the equivalent of that word on the other side of the other language.

7. On the Origin of the Term "Dragoman" and Its Evolution in the Western Context

The dragoman was known in ancient Latin as *Interpres*, a word composed of two elements: *inter*, meaning "between," indicating mediation and interrelationships, and *Pretium*, meaning "price" or "value." The term "*interpres*" denoted, firstly, a "mediator"; secondly, a "messenger" or "envoy"; thirdly, an "explainer" or "commentator"; and lastly, a "translator" or "dragoman." [15].

The Arabic word "*tarjumān*" or "*turjumān*" (meaning "dragoman") was also in circulation in European languages from the Middle Ages to the 18th century. In Italy, the dragoman was called "*dragomanno*". In Turkey, Persia, and the rest of the East, "drogman" was a title given to the person performing translation in his country's consulates and embassies abroad until the end of the 19th century. [16] The term "dragoman" was also used in various languages, including German, Swedish, Spanish, Dutch, Polish, Romanian, and English.

Dictionaries of Western languages indicate the Arabic origin of the word "dragoman". In Merriam-Webster's dictionary, for instance, it is stated:

"Dragoman is a term applied especially to a professional interpreter in Near Eastern countries. The first use of the word in English was in the 14th century."2

2- Merriam-Webster's dictionary:
drag o man | \ˈdra-go-mən\.

The Oxford English Dictionary confirms what was stated in the previously cited dictionary:

"Dragoman is an interpreter or guide, especially in countries speaking Arabic, Turkish, or Persian."³

As for 16th, 17th, and 18th-century France, in parallel with the use of the term "dragoman" in most European languages, the use of the "truchement" (or "trucheman") was common in France, either as a positive equivalent of the Arabic term "tarjumān" [17] or as a pejorative equivalent, as used by Blaise Pascal, to denote a "weak interpreter" or a "treacherous interpreter." [18] The derogatory aspect of the term "truchement" characterised simultaneous translation and emphasised the immediacy of translation, implying that the "truchement" was a poor interpreter due to the spontaneous nature of his rendition. As for written translation, a bad translator had another different name to distinguish him, as recorded in Émile Littré's dictionary: "traducteur".

However, beyond positive and pejorative labels, the word "truchement" or "trucheman" referred, firstly, to a mediator in general, and secondly, to the person or employee responsible for the verbal translation of the conversation taking place between two people belonging to different languages. The word "truchement" or "trucheman" was also used figuratively to denote the human ability to convey feelings and images through speech.

In the mid-20th century, following World War II and coinciding with the Nuremberg trials, a pressing need arose for specialised, professional simultaneous interpreters to bridge the communication between judges and war crime defendants accused of war crimes. This need also led to the distinction between this category of translators and others. Thus, the old Latin term "interpres" was revisited and coined with a symbolic regional variation: "interprète" in French and "interpreter" in English for simultaneous translation versus "traducteur" in French and "translator" in English for written translation.

8. Conclusion

To sum up, the act of translation in the English context differs from that in French. Translation in English means exchanging one word for another and swapping one phrase for another. This requires, above all, two essential skills. The first

skill is discerning what is essential in the source material versus what is peripheral and likely to be marginalised and forgotten during the translation process. The second skill is translating only the exchangeable and swappable linguistic items or content. That is, only the solid part of the source text which can be grasped and can resonate in earthly languages is translated. Anything beyond that (such as rhetorical enhancements and verbal embellishments) is allowed to fade away and disappear in the translation. [19] Therefore, the English term "translation" presupposes the existence of items and the presence of content stripped off their original linguistic clothing, waiting to be exchanged for new words and re-clothed in new linguistic form.

The French and Anglo-Saxon views of translation diverge from the very moment of coining the term denoting translation ("to translate" or "traduire") and lead to different translation outcomes. The French term "traduction" is inherently more liberating as it emphasises the process of translation, being fundamentally transformative and changing in nature, like all nouns derived from -duction. Accordingly, it is not surprising that French culture produced one of the most liberated models of translation in Western history: *Les belles infidèles* (or the Beautiful Unfaithful).

Hence, if English views translation as an exchange of meanings without regard for the familiar and the foreign, French sees in the act of translation an opportunity to domesticate the foreign. That is, an Anglophone and a Francophone find it hard to grasp the same concept of translation, nor can they practice translation in the same manner. This conceptual difference is embedded and implicit in the distinctive term for the act of translation itself: "traduire" in French and "to translate" in English.

It is clear from the above that coining a term to define the act of translation not only differs in linguistic expression across languages but also in its underlying philosophy and practice. This made Antoine Berman deduce that it is difficult to equate the English term "to translate" with the French one "traduire", as they do not serve the same function nor do they lead to the same goal since the latter, "traduire", is transformative, aiming to create a (very) free translation, while the former, "to translate", is more concerned with content because its horizon is preplanned to create a "literal translation".

These two models would go on to form the two poles of translation theory starting from the 19th century, passing through the 20th century, and reaching the 21st century, taking on several names: quantitative translation and qualitative translation, literal translation and semantic translation, linguistic and literary translation, faithful translation and free translation, etc. However, perplexing the nomenclature may sound, the truth is one. The French and English terms, "to translate" and "traduire", are the two foundational seeds that have established, shaped and framed translation philosophy from the European Renaissance to the present day both at both levels of performance (comprehension and rendition), from both perspectives (source-text orientation and target-text

Plural: dragomans or dragomen \ 'dra-gə-mən\.

A dragoman is an interpreter chiefly of Arabic, Turkish, or Persian employed mainly in the Near East.

First Known Use of dragoman: 14th century.

History and Etymology for dragoman: Middle English drugeman, from Anglo-French, from Old Italian dragomanno, from Middle Greek dragomanos, from Arabic tarjumān, from Aramaic turgēmānā.

3 The Oxford English Dictionary:

Pronunciation / 'drægəmən/ / 'drægəmən/.

Noun: dragomans, dragomen.

Definition of dragoman: An interpreter or guide, especially in countries speaking Arabic, Turkish, or Persian.

Origin: Late Middle English from obsolete French, from Italian dragomanno, from medieval Greek dragoumanos, from Arabic tarjumān 'interpreter'.

orientation), in both fields (theory and practice), and at both eras (past and present).

Author Contributions

Mohamed Sa'ïd Raḥani is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

Appendix

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Works in English

Magically Yours! (Short Stories). 2023.

Translation Quality Assessment of the Arabic Versions of English Literature, 2025.

Translatable, Untranslatable, 2025.

Back to Innocence (Short Stories), in preparation.

The Three Keys (An Anthology of Moroccan New Short Story), in preparation.

Short Story Collections in Arabic

Waiting for the Morning (Short Stories), 2003.

Season of Migration to Anywhere (Short Stories), 2006.

Death of the Author (Short Stories), 2010.

A Dialogue between Two Generations (Short Stories) in 2011 (A collection of short stories co-authored with Moroccan short-story writer Driss Seghir).

Behind Every Great Man, There Are Dwarfs (Short Stories), 2012.

No to Violence (Short Stories), 2014.

Flash Fiction in Arabic

Fifty Short-Shorts: Theme of Freedom (Flash Fiction), 2014.

Fifty Short-Shorts: Theme of Dream (Flash Fiction), 2024.

Fifty Short-Shorts: Theme of Love (Flash Fiction), 2025.

Novels in Arabic

The Enemy of the Sun, the Clown Who Turned Out to Be a Monster (Novel), 2012.

I Would Have Loved to Tell It All (A Photo-Autobiographical Novel), 2025.

The Star of Muawiya ibn Abi Sufyan (A Trilogy), in preparation.

When Lucifer Will Write His Autobiography (A Decalogy), in preparation.

Interviews in Arabic Collected in Published Books

Anas Filali, Raḥanyat (Forty Interviews with Mohamed Sa'ïd Raḥani), Amman/Jordan: Sayel Publishing Co, 1st Ed., 2012.

Collective Work, With Raḥani in His Cultural Lodge (Thirty Interviews on Culture, Art & Literature with Mohamed Sa'ïd Raḥani), T'âouan/Morocco: Maktabat Salma Al-Thaqafiah, 1st Ed., 2016.

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