

# Ideological Manipulation in Aljazeera Live News Interpretation: A Normative Study

Dana S. AlSuhaim

Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University, Saudi Arabia

**Abstract**—Translation and Interpretation has long been scrutinised from the linguistic, social, and cultural perspectives, with a recent emphasis on the impact of social, cultural, and ideological factors on translation. Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS), pioneered by Gideon Toury, prioritise understanding translations within social and cultural contexts rather than prescribing norms. Political news translation and interpretation, particularly in conflict contexts, underscores the sensitive and controversial nature of translation decisions as they are influenced by political and ideological stances. This study investigates the dominant norms shaping the interpreting of international news on Al-Jazeera's Live Channel. Through qualitative content analysis guided by Toury's framework, the prevailing interpreting norms were identified. Analyses revealed the dominance of target-oriented norms in Al-Jazeera's interpreters, reflecting adherence to the target culture's social, cultural, and ideological norms. The study contributes to our understanding of interpreting as a socially-embedded practice and its implications for political discourse and ideological representation.

**Index Terms**—descriptive translation studies (DTS), ideological factors, international news

## I. INTRODUCTION

Since the dawn of language and civilisation, the practice of translation and interpretation has been examined from the linguistic, social, and cultural perspectives. Recent studies have underscored the influential role of social, cultural, and ideological factors in the interpretation process at both macro and micro levels. A comprehensive understanding of translation recognises its intrinsic connection to the underlying social, cultural, and ideological dynamics, rather than treating it as a detached activity.

There are discussions about the complex relationship between culture and translation that date back as far as 1945, with Casagrande's assertion that 'One does not translate languages, one translates cultures.' Building on this foundation, descriptive translation studies (DTS) emerged in the late 1970s; led by Gideon Toury, they aimed to elucidate the social, cultural, and ideological contexts that shape translation. Pym (2023) concisely defined DTS as an attempt to describe translations as they are, rather than prescribing how they should be. Toury's (2012) groundbreaking work challenged the traditional notion of equivalence, shifting the focus towards understanding translation as a socially- and culturally-embedded decision-making process (Munday, 2012). Central to DTS is the concept of translation norms introduced by Toury in 1980, which explains how social and cultural realities govern translation within a target cultural framework. This conceptualization led to a paradigm shift that has expanded the scope of translation studies to encompass political and ideological dimensions, recognising translation as a pivotal mediation tool.

Bazzi (2009) highlights the significant influence of DTS in constraining translators' choices, decisions, and strategies through the norms present in the target system, which are often shaped by social, religious, and political ideologies. Hamdan et al. (2021) further asserted that translation, particularly in contexts characterised by conflict and instability, embodies sensitive and controversial issues that mirror specific political and ideological stances. The exploration of political news translation using this framework offers valuable insights into the dissemination of information across linguistic and cultural boundaries. In a study conducted by Qin and Zhang (2017), the translation of political news articles from English to Chinese was explored, showcasing that translators often navigated complex ideological terrain to maintain fidelity to the source text while accommodating the target audience's cultural and political sensibilities. Similarly, Al-Awawdeh (2022) investigated the translation of political news into English and Arabic, revealing how translators negotiate ideological nuances to ensure news content accuracy and relevance in diverse cultural contexts. These studies underscore the intricate interplay among translation, ideology, and cultural representation in political news dissemination.

Moreover, the role of ideology in shaping translation practices has been the subject of extensive scholarly inquiry thus far. In their analysis of ideological influences on translation, Munday (2012) emphasised the dynamic nature of ideological constructs, highlighting how translators mediate conflicting ideological discourses to convey nuanced meanings. This perspective aligns with the findings of Wang (2019), who explored the translation of political speeches and documents to demonstrate how ideological positioning shapes linguistic choices and rhetorical strategies. These studies underscore the need to critically examine the ideological dimensions of translation practices, particularly in the context of political news dissemination, where stakes are high and ideological biases can significantly impact public discourse.

The emergence of digital media platforms has transformed the landscape of political news translation and presented new challenges and opportunities for translators and media practitioners. Gagnon and Kalantari (2022) investigated the translation of political news on social media platforms, revealing that translators often grapple with issues of censorship, bias, and misinformation, reflecting the broader ideological tensions inherent in online news dissemination. This study thus underscores the evolving nature of ideological influences on translation practices in the digital age, underscoring the need for interdisciplinary approaches that integrate insights from translation, media, and political science studies to better understand the complex dynamics at play. In short, the political news translation–ideology interplay is a multifaceted phenomenon that requires nuanced analysis and critical reflection. By examining translation practices within the framework of DTS and considering the dynamic nature of ideological constructs, scholars can gain deeper insight into how political news is mediated, negotiated, and interpreted across linguistic and cultural boundaries. This interdisciplinary approach not only enhances our understanding of translation as a social and cultural practice, but also sheds light on the broader implications of ideological biases in shaping public discourse and political narratives.

This qualitative study aimed to investigate the dominant norms observed in international news interpreted and presented on Al Jazeera's channel derived from live Arabic interpreting renditions of accusations leveled against Israel by South Africa at the UN International Court of Justice, presented on January 11 and 12, 2024. This study concentrated on identifying the key instances of dominant norms concerning ideologies in the international news content provided by Al Jazeera. The content analysis primarily relied on the examination of one of Al Jazeera's interpreted international news articles focusing on the Arab–Israeli conflict, as featured on its channel. Given the substantial reliance of Arab news production on translations and interpretation from international media agencies, Al Jazeera website readers often perceive a distinct editorial influence on translated international news. This could be attributed to Al Jazeera's translators and interpreters being selected or instructed to align their translations with either their personal ideologies or the audience's prevailing ideologies.

Departing from the point that translation is a decision-making process, the present study adopts Toury's (2021) target-oriented approach, which proposes the interpretation process as being governed by certain regularities, known as 'norms.' These conventions or norms play a major role in regulating translators' procedures, textual choices, and terminologies. Toury asserted that if any norm is really active and effective, a high rate of regularity in translational behaviour may be observed. Evidence from previous research (Bazzi, 2009; Brook, 2012; Darwish, 2010; Meylaerts, 2008) shows that the choice, accuracy, and volume of translated international news are not solely determined by the source text. Instead, social and cultural ideologies play a vital role, as shown in these cited studies, in manipulating both the volume and selected terminology used to present translated and interpreted international news.

This study enriches the field of DTS, specifically the theory of translation norms, by examining and identifying the dominant norms found in international news translations and interpretation on Al Jazeera Mubasher news channel. It also sheds light on the significant role of translation as a mediator of social, cultural, political, and historical ideologies. Through this exploration, this study seeks to deepen our understanding of how translation operates within these contexts and its impact on shaping ideological perspectives.

The theoretical basis of this study is Toury's (2012) theory of translation as a norm-governed activity. In the realm of translation studies, scholars such as Holmes (2000) have shaped our understanding of translation as a multifaceted activity embedded in social and cultural contexts. Holmes's contributions to DTS have emphasised the importance of examining translation phenomena as they manifest in real-world settings, considering various factors such as norms, strategies, and constraints that influence the translation process. By highlighting the social and cultural dimensions of translation, Holmes enriched our understanding of this complex practice beyond a mere focus on linguistic aspects. Building on the foundations laid by Holmes and others, Toury importantly advanced the DTS field in the late 1970s. DTS, pioneered by Toury, seeks to describe the practice of translation, rather than prescribing rigid rules for its execution. Central to Toury's framework is the concept of norms, introduced in 1980. Toury viewed translation norms as social and cultural realities that governed translators' decisions within the target cultural framework. He categorised norms into three types, as follows: initial, preliminary, and operational. Initial norms determine the orientation of the translation, that is, whether it leans towards source adequacy or target acceptability. Preliminary norms pertain to the selection of texts for translation and decisions regarding directness when an intermediate language is used. Operational norms guide the decision-making process during translation, encompassing matricial norms that shape the macrostructure of the text and textual-linguistic norms that influence micro-level details, such as sentence construction, lexical choices, and stylistic features. Toury's theoretical framework provides a comprehensive lens through which to analyse the translation process, considering both macro- and micro-level factors that impact the final translated product.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on political translation (Bazzi, 2009; Brook, 2012; Darwish, 2010; Meylaerts, 2008) indicated that Toury's theory of translation norms is appropriate for delving into political contexts. They also emphasised that the descriptive approach and translation norms offer great help to translators, providing them with a detailed description and explanation of actual translation practices. Moreover, these studies asserted the role of a descriptive target-oriented approach based on translation norms in constraining translators' choices, alternatives, decisions, and strategies by examining recurrent preferences in the target language. Bassnett (2007) stressed the distinguishing feature of DTS (i.e. translations are target-

oriented and not source-oriented), and investigated how successfully the prevailing linguistic, cultural, social, and historical norms of the target culture are taken into account in translation. These studies can be categorised according to the direction of translation, namely from English to Arabic or from English to other European languages.

Regarding studies based on translations from English to Arabic, Bazzi (2009) touched on the main issues of political translation, such as variant applications of discourse analysis, media discourse, ideological perspectives, translation, and the media. Bazzi (2009) relied on data retrieved from Arab satellite channels such as Al-Jazeera and Al-Manar, and as an experienced practitioner and translation teacher, deployed a myriad of theories and models of translation in a coherent and succinct manner. Darwish (2010) has published many impressive works in the realms of translation theory, practice, and cross-cultural communication, much of which revolve around translation and media. Darwish's (2010) thesis examined translation-mediated news, focusing on the Al-Jazeera Channel as a curious phenomenon in the Arab region. This thesis coherently discusses and analyses various issues regarding alterations driven by cultural, linguistic, and ideological constraints.

The literature on translations from English to other European languages covers numerous studies. For instance, Meylaerts (2008) examined the relationship between translators and norms in a comparative study of two twentieth-century Belgian translators, Ernest Claes and Roger Kervyn. The author showed how translatorship can be redefined in terms of habitus, as an individuation of collective normative schemes related to the translator's personal history, the collective histories of the target and source fields, and the intersections between the cultures concerned. Meylaert's article is very useful for understanding the role of culture in explaining the extent to which translators play a role in the maintenance or dynamics of certain translation norms. Brook's (2012) thesis covered case studies involving translations from Spanish to English, mainly aiming to explore the complex set of processes underlying the translation of political news and discover what happens at various points with regard to who translates, what is translated, where it is translated, and to whom it is translated. The thesis touches upon important issues for translation, such as how translation can be employed to suit the needs of its readership, and for the maintenance of dominant political or cultural ideologies. This cited thesis also examined the extent to which disregard for form, removal from the original context, and over- or under-emphasis on particular terms/phrases actually happen in translated news texts in the Spanish–English context, and the impact that this may have on the readership.

### III. METHODOLOGY

This study aimed to answer the following research questions: 1) What are the prevailing norms that characterize the international interpreted news produced on the Al-Jazeera Live Channel? 2) How do translation norms at the level of ideologies affect the choice, volume, and accuracy of interpreted international news produced on the Al-Jazeera Live channel?

This qualitative study was conducted on the premise that the selection, precision, and quantity of interpreted international news were not exclusively influenced by the original text. Additionally, it was assumed that social, religious, and political ideologies significantly restrict translators' decisions, options, choices, and strategies when presenting interpreted international news.

#### A. *Study Sample*

This study was confined an interpreted news report retrieved from the Al-Jazeera channel, referred to as the Target Text (TT), and the original oral international news extracted from the official global channel of United Nations, referred to as the Source Text (ST). First, the researcher provided a general descriptive analysis of the TT and ST. Then, based on Toury's theory of translation norms and its three norm types, the TT was analysed to provide evidence of normative forces while focusing on the prevailing translation norms. The roles of social, religious, and political ideologies in constraining the choices, alternatives, decisions, and strategies used in presenting the TT were traced and discussed.

#### B. *Data Collection Procedures*

A qualitative content analysis on primary data sourced from the Al-Jazeera channel (TT) and the original oral international news derived from the official global channel of United Nations (ST) was conducted. Following the DTS methodology and adhering to Toury's theory of translation norms, the analyses focused on examining authentic excerpts from a live interpretation on the Arab–Israeli conflict published by Al-Jazeera Live.

### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Drawing on sociology and social psychology, Toury (2021) formulated his concept of norms as follows:

The translation of general values or ideas shared by a community – as to what is right and wrong, adequate, and inadequate – into performance instructions appropriate for and applicable to particular situations, specifying what is prescribed and forbidden as well as what is tolerated and permitted in a certain behavioural dimension. Norms are acquired by individuals during socialisation and always imply sanctions – actual or potential, negative, or positive. (p. 198)

Toury (2021) suggests that norms exist on a continuum, ranging from universally applicable principles to highly individualistic behaviours, and that they are dynamic rather than static in nature. Some norms have stronger validity and

can be seen as more rule-like, while others have weaker validity and can be seen as idiosyncratic. Considering that translation norms refer to the social and cultural realities that govern translation activity, the structure of the present analysis is categorised according to Toury's three norm types.

#### A. Preliminary Norms

Preliminary norms refer to translation policy and directness of translation; in referring to translation policy, Toury intended to describe the factors governing ST selection in a specific language, culture, or time. As the Palestinian Cause represents an Arab cause that unifies the Arab world, every piece of news related to it is considered fundamental to all Arab news production agencies. In the present case, the ST represents a form of struggle over a specific land and the sacrifice of own soul for it. The choice by Al-Jazeera of this ST, governed by preliminary norms, was also ideologically driven. In this case, Al-Jazeera chose an ST that fitted the social, cultural, religious, and ideological values of the target culture, recognising the importance of the ST's content for the target readership. Then, Al-Jazeera made some adaptations or even omissions and additions to the source text, so that the prevailing ideologies in the TT would be accepted by the target readers. As most international news provided by foreign media agencies, Al-Jazeera opted for the official global channel of United Nations as the origin of the ST, and provided the interpretation with comments provided by its field news interpreters.

Regarding the directness of the translation, Al-Jazeera employed no intermediate language because the ST was directly translated from English into Arabic. Schäffner (2003) emphasised the role of preliminary norms that are ideologically driven by interests, objectives, and purposes of social agents, which in turn determine the choice of a text for translation or the final use of the translation.

#### B. Operational Norms

Operational norms refer to the actual decisions made during the translation process. This area is further subdivided into matricial and textual linguistic norms. According to Toury (2021), matricial norms relate to the completeness of the TT, including the omission or relocation of passages present in the ST, textual segmentation, and the addition of passages or footnotes. Meanwhile, the textual linguistic norms govern the selection of the linguistic materials used in the TT, including the lexical items, phrases, and stylistic features. Matricial norms are found at several places in Al-Jazeera's interpretation, showcasing the employment of omission, addition, and discrepancies. Al-Jazeera ascribed most of the added information to its field news interpretation, and the analysis of Aljazeera's interpretation enables the summary of the tokens of matricial norms along with a description of the strategy used in Table 1.

TABLE 1  
TOKENS OF MATRICIAL NORMS ALONG WITH THE DESCRIPTION OF THE USED STRATEGY

ST	TT	Strategy
Around 30 Israeli soldier.....responding with any violence.	-----	Omission
It was not clear what caused his death..... Later on Wednesday.	-----	Omission
Hoping to head off any escalation.....it is also issued apology.	-----	Omission
We are sorry about his death .....with the Palestinian Authority.	-----	Omission
Protest Clashes broke out.....and the wall.	-----	Omission
In Tel Aviv	-----	Omission
Near west Bank	شمال رام الله بالضفة الغربية	Addition
-----	و أكد مدير مجمع رام الله الطبي.....على الرأس	Addition
-----	التوسع الاستيطاني	Addition
-----	تهويد القدس	Addition
-----	انسداد سيل السلام	Addition

Table 1 shows that matricial norms are excessively used in Al-Jazeera's interpretation, accounting for 11 instances in a relatively short random text. Most of the omitted and added segments are handled with the target reader in mind, examples of which include words, sentences, and entire paragraphs. Most of the omitted and added segments are culturally, socially, and ideologically motivated (Table 2).

TABLE 2  
OMITTED AND ADDED SEGMENTS

Omission in ST	Addition in TT
Hoping to head off any escalation.....it is also issued apology.	الاعتداء على المسجد الأقصى
It was not clear what caused his death. it also issued apology.	التوسع الاستيطاني تهويد القدس

The omitted segments imply an easing of the situation and a lessening of the responsibility of Israeli soldiers for the kill and genocide of the Palestinians. Meanwhile, the added segments advocate for the Palestinian Cause and support a view of Israel as a barbaric occupying force characterized by endless violence that knows no bounds. Based on the previous analysis, Al-Jazeera focused on the norms in the target system, and these norms constrain the choice of the added and omitted segments. Al-Jazeera's adherence to the prevailing Arab social, historical, cultural, and ideological norms justifies its translation, which embodies values shared by the Arab community.

Importantly, in the ST, only the name of the region is mentioned (i.e. *the West Bank*), while the TT is more specific and adds the exact names of the relevant village, city, and region (e.g. شمال رام الله بالضفة الغربية). This could be attributed to a deliberate behaviour of Al-Jazeera interpreter, whom may advocate the preservation of the Arabic names of Palestinian villages, cities, and regions. This is in line with the prevailing Arab social, cultural, and ideological norms that resist the Hebraisation of the related names and fight against eviscerating Palestine from the political map of the world. Hermans (1999) argued that translations reveal more about the translators themselves than about the original text being translated.

Regarding textual linguistic norms, a myriad of differences exist between the ST and TT regarding lexical item employment. Al-Jazeera's interpretation contained many lexical choices adherent to the target cultural, social, and ideological norms. According to Toury (2021), 'it is norms that determine the (type and extent of) equivalence manifested by actual translations' (p. 203), and this assertion is evident in the translations of some words and expressions provided by Aljazeera, as listed in Table 3.

TABLE 3  
TRANSLATIONS PROVIDED BY AL-JAZEERA OF SOME WORDS AND EXPRESSIONS

ST	TT
Died	استشهد
Israeli police	جنود الاحتلال
Incident	الاعتداء
Palestinians	الأراضي الفلسطينية المحتلة
Killed by Palestinian Assaultants	رد عليها فلسطينيون بهجمات انتقامية
Israelis have been killed	قتلى مستوطنين

### C. Initial Norms

Initial norms determine whether a translation is primarily source-oriented (tending towards adequacy) or target-oriented (tending towards acceptability). Based on the notion that the initial norms can be revealed through operational norm investigation, Al-Jazeera's interpretation can be described as a target-oriented translation, as the TT does not sound like a foreign text. The TT's sentence structures, lexical choices, alternatives, decisions, and strategies adhere to the target cultural, social, and ideological norms. Al-Jazeera's adherence to norms of the target system indicates a leaning towards the pole of acceptability in the initial norm continuum.

## V. CONCLUSION

According to Toury (2021), the entire translation process should be described from the social, cultural, and ideological perspectives. This process starts with the act of choosing the ST to be translated, the segmentation and strategies to be employed, and the lexical items to be utilised in the presentation of the TT as part of the target culture system. This study investigated how an interpretation by Al-Jazeera bears the signature of the ideological, cultural, and social norms of its target cultural system. Furthermore, the entire process of translation should be seen through a historical lens, whether synchronically or diachronically, as this teaches much about the prevailing norms in a given community. This is evident in the case discussed in this study, where historical aspects of the ST content have their footprints in each single word selected during the translation process.

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**Dana Alsuheim**, Ph.D., is a dynamic scholar in the field of Translation Studies and currently serves as an Assistant Professor at Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University. With a profound passion for audiovisual translation and interpretation studies, Dr. Alsuheim explores the intricate dynamics of language transfer in various contexts.

Her academic journey is marked by notable achievements, including publications in journals such as the Arab World English Journal for Literary and Translation Studies. Notably, her thesis, also featured in the Arab World English Journal, stands as a testament of her dedication to advancing the scholarly discourse in translation studies.

Dr. Alsuheim’s scholarly impact extends beyond article publications, as evidenced by her abstract publication in New Voices of Translation Studies. Through her ORCID identification (0000-0002-2717-3257), she ensures the easy access to and citation of her contributions, facilitating further engagement with her work within the academic community.

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