



# Explicitation and ideology in media translation: The case of MEMRI

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**Abstract:** This article describes some of the socio-political (ideological) factors affecting the use of explicitation. It explores how explicitations are utilized by a media organisation whose translations continue to construct a negative public image of a particular community. Drawing on critical discourse analysis and descriptive and functional models to translation studies, a corpus consisting of 26,000 words from Arabic-English translated news articles published by MEMRI was analyzed. The results reveal a strong tendency in explicitations to maintain the ideological perspective of the original at the micro-textual level, while promoting a religious and cultural Other at the macro-level. Instead of compromising its credibility by using misleading or inaccurate explicitations, MEMRI uses apparently accurate and faithful explicitations in translations strategically selected to accentuate an intended negative image. This casts light on the paradoxical function of explicitation in media translation: while it is assumed to reduce ambiguities and improve cultural understanding at the textual level, it may promote misunderstanding and cultural prejudice at a larger discourse level.

**Keywords:** critical discourse analysis; explicitation; ideology; media translation; MEMRI

## 1. Introduction

The concept of *explicitation* continues to occupy a prominent place in the study of translation. Explicitation can be defined both as a translation strategy, which involves making explicit in the translated text what is implicit in the original text (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1958/1995), and as a translation universal or norm, that is, translated texts tend to be more explicit than their originals (Blum-Kulka, 1986/2000; Toury, 1995/2012). My fascination with the study of explicitation in translation started when I used it in the analysis of some literary translations during my PhD study with Prof. Jeremy Munday at the University of Leeds in 2011. For several years after graduation, using corpora of English-Arabic and Arabic-English literary translations, I continued to research the role of explicitation in the interpretation and translation process and its effect on the linguistic and cultural aspects of the translation product (see Abualadas, 2019; 2020). I often had a positive view of explicitation, believing that it fills linguistic and cultural gaps at the micro-textual level, and therefore improves clarity and comprehensibility, and bridges linguistic and cultural divide (cf. Pápai, 2004; Pym, 2005; Saldanha, 2008; Klaudy, 2009). However, this optimistic view of explicitation can only hold true if we

assume that translation is neutral and not affected by its producer's personal or institutional objectives, which of course is not always the case.

This invites us to question the role of explicitation in translations that emphasize cultural differences and boundaries, and ultimately construct a negative image or narrative of other communities (Baker, 2010). It seems worth investigating how explicitation, as a translational tool whose perceived function at the textual level is to bridge cultural gaps, is used in translations that, at a macro level, promote cultural prejudice and misunderstanding (cf. Davies, 2012, p. 384). This is what the present study investigates in a corpus of Arabic-English translated newspaper articles circulated by Middle Eastern Media Research Institution (MEMRI), a Washington DC-based press agency that has an established reputation for publishing selective and manipulated translations that portray to the English-speaking world a negative stereotypical image of Arabs and Muslims (Whitaker, 2002; Harris, 2003; Baker, 2006). The study focuses on the use of explicitation in this corpus at micro levels and then links the patterns of use to the institutional (sociocultural) dimensions of the translation event (Munday, 2007; Bielsa and Bassnett, 2009; Schäffner, 2018). It is argued in this study that choices made at the micro-textual level are best analyzed and interpreted as a part of a larger *discourse* determined by the social practices of a group of people (Fairclough, 1989/2015; van Dijk, 1998).

Although explicitation is often seen as a means to bridge cultural and linguistic gaps (see Murtisari, 2016), some previous empirical studies on the use of explicitation in media translation (e.g., Gumul, 2010; Loupaki, 2010; Hamdan et al., 2021; see Hernández Guerrero, 2022, pp. 233-237) analyze explicitation as a tool of *manipulation* that can sometimes be used by translators and media agencies to change the original perspective at the micro-textual level (see Munday, 2007, pp. 204-206). However, prominent and influential media agencies, including MEMRI, pay considerable attention to the accuracy of their translations at the textual level, since their credibility would be at stake if their opponents were able to identify any constant and deliberate manipulation in the original content (Baker, 2010, p. 357). Instead of using manipulation at the micro-textual level, these agencies would rather resort to the ideological strategy of *selective appropriation* (cf. Valdeón, 2008, 2014; Baker, 2010), that is, choosing to translate only the texts that serve their ideological viewpoints. Therefore, the present study argues that for a more valid analysis of the manipulative potential of explicitation, we not only need to check whether explicitations alter the original perspective, but also see if the selection of what gets explicitated contributes to the construction of a particular image of a group of people and serves certain ideological goals. This is what the present study aims to investigate in MEMRI's translations, using an interdisciplinary approach combining theoretical concepts and views from both critical discourse analysis and translation studies. Before embarking on the analysis, it is essential to provide a brief review of the concepts and views that will serve as a roadmap for the study's main arguments.

## **2. Ideology and explicitation in media translation**

### ***2.1 Ideology in media translation***

Because of the problematic nature of the concept of ideology itself, the literature on it shows a wide range of theories and approaches (see Lee, 2020, pp. 252-253). In his *historical* and *descriptive* overview of ideology, Eagleton (1991/2007) analyzes

ideology as a tool used to legitimize the dominance of a certain group of people or social class, as a set of (false) philosophical thoughts used to support a certain political system or regime (e.g., Nazism). He proposes a list of complex, and sometimes overlapping, views of ideology, from which two common contrastive views can be summarized (pp. 1-2). The first is negative and pejorative (derived from Marxism), which regards ideology as “illusion, distortion and mystification” and which is often applied to the others, while the second is more neutral and more related to “the function of ideas within social life” (Eagleton, 2007, pp. 2-3).

In his *discourse* approach to ideology, van Dijk (1998) emphasizes the functional and interpretive role of ideology. He proposes that ideology is not limited to false consciousness or illusory ideas, but also essentially includes the beliefs and value system of both individuals and communities, and thus is involved in meaning creation and comprehension in discourse. Van Dijk believes that ideology has three fundamental dimensions: *cognition* (beliefs and thoughts shared by groups), *society* (how these beliefs and thoughts create group interests or relations, e.g., dominance) and *discourse* (the communication of these beliefs and thoughts). In his critical discourse analysis, Fairclough (1989/2015) links ideology to power and argues that ideological assumptions are embedded in social conventions, which are often determined by power relations between people. He argues that language use reveals how people position themselves in power and social relations. As an example, he explains that in a police-public interaction or doctor-patient consultation, it is common sense assumptions about hierarchy and authority that guide the linguistic contribution of every interlocutor (2015, pp. 119-120).

Recently, globalization and digitalization have dramatically fueled the demand for translators and translations. The spread of English as a global lingua franca and its dominance in the media have led to a strong demand for media translation from other languages into English (see Bielsa and Bassnett 2009, pp. 1-2). However, translators are sometimes expected to “play a critical role in questioning and/or resisting existing power structures”, where their translations are required not only to function as “a conflict mediating and resolving action” but also as “a space where tensions are signaled and power struggles are played out” (House, 2018, p. 128). Ideological tensions and struggles are among the challenges that translators cannot skate over. While translators may in some cases need to uncritically reproduce the ideologies of the original (e.g., by adopting a literal translation technique), in some other cases they may need to confidently confront them (e.g., through manipulation or intervention) (see Schäffner, 2018, pp. 331-332).

The notion of ideology has been looked at differently in different translation studies. Munday (2007, p. 196) explains that sometimes it is the *negative* connotation of ideology (i.e., manipulation, distortion, concealment) that has largely influenced the type of research in translation. As Munday (2007, pp. 196-197) argues, it is the translator’s own (political) ideology that often dominates the process and product of translation, where also most of their ideological interventions or alterations can often pass unnoticed. On other occasions, as Calzada Pérez (2014, pp. 4-5) explains, translation researchers have shifted away from the destructive to the constructive side of ideology, where ideology is viewed as a vehicle to support the interests of a certain social group, rather than a means to attack opponents. It is this (positive) view of ideology that enables scholars to explore the different “modes of thinking, forms of evaluating, and codes of behavior which govern a community by virtue of being regarded as the norm” (Calzada Pérez, 2014, p. 5). Hatim and Mason (1997, pp. 120-123) draw a distinction between *the translation of ideology*, what happens to the ideological beliefs

embedded in the source text after translation, and the *ideology of translating*, how the ideological settings affect the translation activity itself. However, this distinction may fade away in practice; how a translator deals with ideological assumptions in a text may partly depend on the sociocultural or institutional environment in which translation takes place (Lee, 2020, p. 253).

Several studies have examined ideology in media translations (e.g., news reports, feature or opinion articles, political speeches and comments) from an empirical standpoint (see Schäffner, 2018, pp. 329-330). Hursti (2001), for example, analyzes the textual transformation processes in translating Reuters English media texts into Finnish. He finds that addition, omission, and substitution are among the major processes, and he relates them to certain ideological and institutional dimensions, like the local media standards and text readability and acceptability. Munday (2007) examines how ideology is expressed in some English translations of political speeches, writings and interviews of three revolutionary leaders in Latin America. He finds some instances of shift (e.g., manipulation, distortion and concealment), which may result from a conscious or unconscious strategy. However, he concludes that these shifts do not regularly happen and may not necessarily be ideologically motivated (2007, p. 213).

In translations of newspaper articles, stories and comments from Greek into English, Loupaki (2010, pp. 55-56) explores the general techniques and strategies used to handle the ideological conflict embedded in the original. She identifies three major strategies (2010, p. 72): (i) reproducing the ideological conflict in target text (by literal translation technique), (ii) erasing the ideological conflict (by neutralization and omission) and (iii) introducing a new conflict (by explicitation or addition). She argues that these micro-level choices can lead to a macro-level shift in the ideological position. She concludes that translation in the media environment is rarely innocent as newspapers, through their editorial policies and translation guidelines, govern translation strategies to maintain their ideological and political positions. Bielsa and Bassnett (2009) identify omission and reorganization as major forms of textual manipulation in the translation practice of major global news agencies like Reuters, Agence France-Press (AFP) and Inter Press Service (IPS). They explain that the news translation in these agencies undergoes reshaping, editing, synthesizing and transforming for the consumption of a new audience (2009, p. 2). So, media translation is not just “an act of faithful reproduction but, rather, a deliberate and conscious act of selection, assemblage, structuration, and fabrication – and even, in some cases, of falsification [and] refusal of information” (Tymoczko and Gentzler, 2002, p. xxi)

Ideology as a motivation for changes has also been observed in media translation in some Arabic-English and English-Arabic translation contexts (Bazzi, 2015; Allawzi, 2018; Hamdan et al., 2021). Using English translations of Arabic media texts from international news agencies like Reuters, AFP, and the BBC, Bazzi (2015) examines the ideological orientations behind certain repetitive linguistic structures (e.g., clause organization, lexical categorization, and modal expressions) in texts reporting political conflicts in the Middle East. She finds that these linguistic patterns can reflect sectarian discourses and the exercise of power in the media during political conflicts (2015, p. 135). Allawzi (2018, p. 133) compares some Arabic and English media reports and articles from the BBC’s coverage of the Saudi- Houthi conflict in Yemen. She finds that while the English reports and articles use content that may condemn or provoke the Saudi authorities, the Arabic originals do not. While this manipulation reflects how BBC English reshapes its media content to suit its global English audience, it also suggests some

political partiality in the BBC Arabic content toward the Saudi's side in the war. This practice, as Allawzi (2018, p. 139) argues, could be because dictatorial societies do not allow media content to be made public unless it aligns with their official ideologies. Hamdan et al. (2021, 93-94) analyze a sample of Arabic-English media translations from MEMRI relating to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. These translations include feature/opinion articles, speeches and addresses. Hamdan et al. identify several textual strategies including addition, substitution and omission that are used to propagate the political ideologies of the media agency that sponsors the translation task.

## **2.2 *Explicitation in media translation***

Explicitation was first introduced by Vinay and Darbelnet (1958/1995, p. 342) as a translation strategy that involves “making explicit in the target language what remains implicit in the source language because it is apparent from either the context or the situation.” Explicitation was later proposed by Blum-Kulka (1986/2000, p. 300) as a universal feature of translation consisting of increased cohesive explicitness of a target text as compared to the original due to the interpretation process inherent in translation, and more importantly, in the stylistic attributes of the target language and reader's expectations. Ever since Blum-Kulka proposed the universality of explicitation, the notion of explicitation has been researched and refined intensively. Klaudy (2009, p. 106) and Klaudy and Károly (2005, pp. 16-18), for example, distinguish between *obligatory* explicitations that result from language constraints (e.g., specifying the gender of the pronoun “you” when translating from English into Arabic) and *optional* explicitations that stem from a difference in cultural presuppositions rather than in linguistic systems (e.g., translating “Al-Mutanabbi” into English as “the Arab poet, Al-Mutanabbi”).

Pápai (2004, p. 150) views explicitation as a conscious translation strategy that involves multiple processes, such as lexical explanation, lexical repetition, filling elliptical structures and addition of explanatory conjunctions, discourse-organizing items, cataphoric reference and cultural presupposed information. She (2004, p. 160) argues that the ultimate function of explicitation is to resolve any potential ambiguity and to meet the target audience's expectations (i.e., the linguistic and cultural conventions expected by the target audience). Pym (2005, p. 41) proposes that explicitation can be looked at as an act of *risk* avoidance, that is, because translation often involves communication into a context with less shared information, translation involves more communicative risks (e.g., misunderstanding) compared to non-translation, and where there are risks, there should be more opportunities for risk avoidance. Saldanha (2008, pp. 32-33) links explicitation to the translators' assumptions about their readership and their cognitive environment. She argues that explicitation improves the text's clarity and interpretation and that it often stems from the translators' realization of their job as mediating across different languages and cultures.

Explicitation (which is often referred to as *addition* in many media translation studies) is commonly approached as one of the local transformations (micro-strategies) involved in news translation to meet the expectations of the new audience (see Munday, 2007, p. 201; Loupaki, 2010, p. 68; Schäffner, 2018, p. 330). According to Hernández Guerrero's most recent account of media translation strategies (2022, pp. 233-237), which draws on many important previous accounts (e.g., Fujii, 1988; Bielsa and Bassnett, 2009; Valdeón, 2014), explicitation is considered as one of the message supplementing tools and gatekeeping operations (filtering the translated content before dissemination) that can be used to create a

functionally adequate translation for a given use. Explicitation is also one of *transediting* strategies, the strategies that are used by both translators and editors to adapt the translated media content to the intended function of the translation and the conventions of the target language and culture. Explicitation is among the manipulative tools that enable translators to imbue translations with the ideological attitudes of the translators themselves or of the media agencies they work for (Hernández Guerrero, 2022, p. 237). Some studies that investigated the manipulative potential of explicitation in media translation (e.g., Puurtinen, 2003; Gumul, 2010; see also Sidiropoulou, 2004) view explicitation as a (conscious or subconscious) manipulative strategy that can shift the target reader's point of view and build a different social reality from that of the original. This is often achieved by adding new or different information/structures that reflect the translators' or translation agencies' viewpoints and modify those expressed in the original media text.

Finally, as the previous review has shown, explicitation is largely described or used as a micro-textual tool to clarify or disambiguate media content and adapt it to the linguistic and cultural context of the new recipients as well as the communicative purpose of the media agency carrying out the translation task. Explicitation is also investigated as a potential manipulative tool that can modify the original viewpoints, often through apparent textual additions that alter the viewpoints expressed in the original text (which are often referred to as unfaithful explicitations). Too little attention has however been paid to how faithful explicitations that are often employed at a micro-textual level can operate with other larger discourse elements utilized in media translation, most importantly selective appropriation, to achieve macro-level (socio-political) goals. To better account for the manipulative power of explicitation, we need a new approach that not only looks at the interpretive or disambiguating function of individual explicitations or compares source and target texts to identify unfaithful explicitations, but also investigates faithful explicitations and their subtle ideological functions in the entire ideological framework adopted in translation.

### **3. Corpus and methodology**

The corpus of the present study consists of a collection of MEMRI's English translations of excerpts from different newspaper articles (feature articles, editorials and opinion articles) written by two well-known journalists in the Arab media, Abdel Bari Atwan and Saleh Al-Qallab. The selection of both MEMRI and these two Arab writers for the corpus is based on their political and ideological orientations. Firstly, MEMRI is a press monitoring and analysis organization based in Washington D.C. It publishes timely English translations of Arabic, Turkish, Persian, Urdu, Russian and Chinese media texts. On its own site (MEMRI, 2024), MEMRI says that it is an independent, nonpartisan and nonprofit organization that "bridges the language gap between the West and the Middle East and South Asia". However, MEMRI is often accused of being pro-Israel and both anti-Arab and anti-Muslim (Baker, 2006, pp. 73-74; see also Baker, 2010; Davies, 2012). Whitaker (2002) and Harris (2003) describe MEMRI as a well-founded organization that publishes selective and decontextualized excerpts of Arabic media texts in a way that portrays Arabs and Muslims as extremist and anti-Semites while neglecting mainstream views. With these assumptions, one may expect MEMRI to tend to use micro-level explicitations in its translations from Arabic into English more as a tool

to *shift* or *manipulate* rather than *preserve* the original ideological viewpoints (Hamdan et al., 2021). The selection of feature articles, editorials and opinion articles is also intentional. These types of media texts, which normally contain “stories with background and personal opinion” (Sidiropoulou, 2004, p. 49), are more prone to manipulations of ideological perspectives, and therefore can form valuable material for the study of “ideologically-loaded translational shifts” (Gumul, 2010, p. 102).

The two Arab writers selected for the corpus tend to have different and oftentimes conflicting ideological perspectives. The British-Palestinian Journalist Abdel Bari Atwan is the editor-in-chief of the London-based Arabic electronic newspaper *Raialyoum* and founder and former editor-in-chief of the London-based pan-Arab daily newspaper *Al-Quds Al-Arabi*. He was born in a Palestinian refugee camp in the Gaza Strip and was educated mostly in Jordan and Egypt. He is known for his strong support for regional and global Islamic movements, such as al-Qaeda and Taliban in Afghanistan, Hamas in Gaza and the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) in Jordan and Egypt, and Iran-backed Shia militias, such as the Lebanese Hezbollah and the Houthi rebels in Yemen. Atwan’s writings always show support for Arab resistance against Israeli occupation and Western imperialism. Saleh Al-Qallab is a former Jordanian information and culture minister and now a columnist for the Jordanian state daily newspaper *Al-Rai* and the London-based Arabic international newspaper *Asharq Al-Awsat*. He is known for his strong criticism of the ideology of pan-Islamism, which he sees as a threat to domestic and regional security. His writings express his strong opposition to the pro-Muslim Brotherhood regimes (e.g., Turkey and Qatar) and movements or parties (e.g., Hamas, Houthis and Hezbollah). He believes that Arabs can work with Israelis to achieve peace in the region. The selection of Arab writers with conflicting ideological orientations can help reveal if the difference in the original ideology has any consequences on the level or type of MEMRI’s intervention in the translated text. We may, for instance, anticipate a less frequent use of explicitation altering the original ideological viewpoints in the translations of Al-Qallab’s articles than in Atwan’s, as Al-Qallab’s expressed political positions are more compatible with MEMRI’s ideological orientations.

For the selection of the target texts, the study (at the time of its commencement, February 2022) examined all MEMRI’s translations of the newspaper articles written by the two Arab writers through MEMRI’s digital search engine. The study found English translations of different excerpts amounting to approximately 33,000 words. Most translated excerpts were published by MEMRI between January 2002 and February 2022 under the category of “Special Dispatch”. The total number of the original Arabic articles from which these excerpts were selected is 75; 49 by Atwan and 26 by Al-Qallab. Most of these articles (69 out of 75) were originally published in the four Arabic journals *Al-Quds Al-Arabi*, *Raialyoum*, *Al-Rai*, *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*. After closely analyzing the content of the original articles, the themes of these articles were found to be highly related to (i) the ideology of Islamic groups and organizations, (ii) the Arab-Israeli conflict and (iii) the Western and American role/intervention in the Middle East and the Muslim world. However, 65 of these articles have appeared on MEMRI’s website under four different major themes: “Antisemitism Documentation Project”, “Jihad and Terrorism Studies Project”, “9/11 Documentation Project” and “Democratization in the Arab and Muslim World”. This special thematic categorization, which is apparently based on stereotypes and prejudice, allows MEMRI to depict certain people or events of the original Arabic stories as a part of its public narrative about antisemitism and Islamic Jihad and “terrorism”. Instead of the translated stories being seen as part of

the original Arabic narrative or reality, they would now be seen as part of MEMRI's own narrative and construction of reality (see Baker, 2010). The total wordcount of all translations of Al-Qallab's articles is approximately 13,000, while that of Atwan's is approximately 20,000. To balance the corpus, 13,000 words were randomly selected from the translations of Atwan's articles to match Al-Qallab's wordcount (total corpus for both writers: approximately 26,000 English words). The most striking observation of the analysis of the ideological perspective in the translated excerpts is that Atwan constantly takes a pro-Islamist, anti-West, anti-US and anti-Israel line, while Al-Qallab takes an opposite line, moderate, anti-Iran, anti-Muslim groups, pro-Western Arab regimes and pro-normalization with Israel. Within MEMRI's stereotype-based thematic representation, the views of the two writers, although selected from a large set of open-ended and overlapping experiences or representations of reality, would now help weave and elaborate one narrative, that of antisemitism and Islamic "terrorism". The different views and perspectives would all be now depicted as elements of one story through which MEMRI constructs a particular stereotypical image of Arabs and Muslims.

The theoretical and analytical framework of the present study draws on critical discourse analysis (e.g., Fairclough, 1989/2015; Eagleton, 1991/2007; van Dijk, 1998) and descriptive and functional models to translation studies, most importantly those centering around the *negative* connotation of ideology and the view of ideology as a motivation for change and manipulation in translation (e.g., Munday 2007; Loupaki, 2010; Gumul, 2010). The analysis process involves three steps. Step (1) consists of identifying the explicitations affecting (e.g., maintaining, shifting or omitting) the original ideological content at the micro-textual level. Step (2) involves quantifying and categorizing these explicitations, drawing an overall picture of the tendencies of these explicitations and their potential influence on the ideological perspective of each writer. Stage (3) involves interpreting these tendencies in the light of the ideological and institutional settings of the translation. It is important to note that MEMRI does not display the names of its translators publicly, as it focusses on the analysis and translation of media texts from the Middle East and concentrates on the content itself rather than the individual attributions. It is also worth noting that MEMRI constantly uses explicitations in its translations, and these explicitations may not affect the original ideological perspective in every case. Explicitations must not automatically be considered as ideologically motivated, as their analysis needs to go beyond the *micro-textual* level to the *extra-linguistic* (socio-political) realities (cf. Gumul, 2010, p. 101).

#### 4. Analysis

After analyzing the translated excerpts and their originals in their socio-political context and at both micro and macro levels, the study has found that there are 264 instances of explicitation that can affect the original ideological perspective in a particular way. These explicitations were quantified and categorized as shown in Table 1 below.

Firstly, there are 225 instances of explicitation that can maintain (help reproduce) the original ideological perspective. These involve a micro-level addition of some information that is in line with the presupposed ideological orientations of the original writer. This added information is often inferable from the surrounding text or the cognitive context (cf. Gumul, 2010, p. 100). See Examples (1), (2) and (3) below. It is worth noting that MEMRI constantly uses



square brackets to enclose explicitations or any other additional information that is not part of the explicit content of the original, so throughout the given examples, underlining has been used to indicate the explicitations in question.

Table 1: Categories and occurrences of explicitation in the corpus

Category	Translations of Atwan's articles	Translations of Al-Qallab's articles	Total
Explicitations <i>maintaining</i> the original ideological perspective	98	127	225
Explicitations <i>shifting</i> the original ideological perspective	21	6	27
Explicitations <i>omitting</i> (neutralizing) the original ideological perspective	7	5	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>264</b>

1. Source Text (ST):

دولتان من السهل على الغزاة احتلالهما، أفغانستان واليمن، ولكن من الاستحالة البقاء فيهما، ... ليس بسبب طبيعتها الجغرافية الجبلية الصعبة، وإنما أيضاً بسبب صلابة شعبيها وإرادة المقاومة القوية، والتمسك بالكرامة وعزة النفس.

(*Raialyoum*, April 15, 2021)

Target Text (TT):

Afghanistan and Yemen are two countries that invaders find easy to occupy but impossible to remain in, ... This is due not [only] to the difficult mountainous terrain of these countries, but to the steadfast character of their peoples, their intense determination to resist [occupation] and their strong pride. (MEMRI, 2021)

2. ST:

زمن الهزائم الأمريكية قد بدأ، وها هو بايدن يستجدي الرئيس فلاديمير بوتين للقائه، ويسحب سفنه الحربية من البحر الأسود، ويعرض على إيران تنازلات لم تحلم بها في مفاوضات فيينا، وتقصف الصواريخ خلفاته وسفنهم.

(*Raialyoum*, April 15, 2021)

TT:

The age of American defeats has already begun. Look how Biden [needs to] beg for a meeting with Vladimir Putin. [Look how] he is withdrawing his warships from the Black Sea and offering Iran concessions it never dreamt of in the Vienna talks, while [Iranian] missiles are targeting his allies [i.e., the Gulf states and Israel] and their ships... (MEMRI, 2021)

3. ST:

أسطوانة أسلحة الدمار الشامل التي استخدمت في العراق تدار حالياً وبشكل مكثف.

(*Al-Quds Al-Arabi*, April 26, 2013)

TT:

The [broken] record about the weapons of mass destruction that was used [to justify the war] in Iraq is now being played again at full volume. (MEMRI, 2013)

The Arabic text in Example (1) and (2) is taken from Atwan's article "Biden Admits Defeat in Afghanistan" in *Raialyoum*, where he describes how Biden's decision to withdraw from Afghanistan is considered an admission of defeat by the

American forces and a major victory for Taliban fighters. In (1), Atwan praises the people of Afghanistan and Yemen for their adherence to the path of resistance. The English translation fills the elliptical phrase “to resist” with the word “occupation”, which is derivable from the context. The word “occupation”, which clearly refers to the American interventions in both countries, was used several times in Atwan’s article and is therefore in line with his anti-American ideology. In (2), Atwan adds that the “era of American defeat” has already begun, giving as examples Biden begging the Russian president for a meeting and Biden making many concessions to Iranians while they are targeting his allies in the region. The English translation inserts four explicitations (“needs to”, “Look how”, “Iranian” and “the Gulf states and Israel”), which in this context can only help indicate the decline of American influence in the world, and express the original writer’s negative point of view. Using the modal-auxiliary verb and the relational interpersonal marker “needs to” in “Biden [needs to] beg for a meeting with Vladimir Putin” can further accentuate the proposition that Biden is less powerful than Putin. Reusing the directive expression “Look how” in “[Look how] he is withdrawing his warships from the Black Sea and offering Iran concessions” invites readers to take the subsequent information as additional evidence of the American decline. The explicitation “Iranian” in “offering Iran concessions..., while [Iranian] missiles are targeting his allies [i.e., the Gulf states and Israel]” reminds readers that the country that the US is making concessions to is the same country that threatens its allies (the Gulf states and Israel). Within this context, such explicitations can only push toward emphasizing the failure of the American president to handle conflicts in the Middle East and accentuating the original writer’s criticism of the American administration.

In (3), while the US Defense Secretary, Chuck Hagel, was on a tour of several Gulf countries in 2013, Atwan in his article “The War Is Coming” wrote that the Middle East was on the brink of war and that the US and the UK seemed to have been planning for this war several months earlier. He wrote that the US was using the pretext of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) to invade Syria, just as they had done in Iraq in 2003. The additions “broken” and “to justify the war” in the English translation “The [broken] record about the weapons of mass destruction that was used [to justify the war] in Iraq is now being played again at full volume” intensify the negatively charged language of the translated text, which of course goes with the negative evaluative perspective of the original writer.

The previous three examples have shown how the first category of explicitation can help support and achieve a clearer manifestation of Atwan’s ideological perspective in the translated text. The following examples show how these explicitations occur in the translations of Al-Qallab’s articles.

#### 4. ST:

... لكن دون اللجوء إلى ما حصل يوم الخميس الماضي وسواء أكان مقصود أو غير مقصود والمؤكد أنه كان نتيجة إخراج وغير مقصود... ما كان يجب أن يمر هذا الذي جرى على من هم في مواقع المسؤولية العليا وكان عليهما أن لا يرضخا لأي إخراج بالنسبة لدوس علم كنا كدولة قد أبرمنا معها معاهدة ومن منطلق أنها لمصلحة دولتنا وشعبنا...

(*Al-Rai*, December 31, 2018)

#### TT:

But [the state] is not entitled to do what was done [by the minister] last Thursday, whether it was intentional or not – and it was clear that this was the result of [an attempt] to embarrass [the minister], not a deliberate action [on her part]. ... this should not have happened to figures in top positions, and they should not have succumbed to [attempts to] embarrass them by [causing them to] step on the flag of

a country with whom we signed a [peace] agreement because it serves the interests of our state and our people...(MEMRI, 2019)

5. **ST:**

.... فحركة «حماس» بات التعامل الإسرائيلي معها كأنها حركة إرهابية، وباتت مطلوبة ومطاردة في كل مناطق فلسطين التاريخية، وأصبح الإسرائيليون يتعاملون مع الفلسطينيين كشركاء في الحاضر وفي المستقبل،  
(*Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, December 16, 2021)

**TT:**

... since Israel now treats Hamas as a terrorist organization, and its [members] are persecuted and hounded throughout historical Palestine. At the same time, the Israelis have begun to treat the [other] Palestinians as present and future partners, ... (MEMRI, 2022)

6. **ST:**

وهكذا، فإن هذا الامتحان القاسي الذي دفع ثمنه الشعب الفلسطيني دماء زكية قد أنهى كذبة «فسطاط المقاومة والممانعة» الذي بقي يتغنى به خالد مشعل حتى فترة قريبة والذي بقيت تتغنى إيران به حتى الآن، بينما بقي حسن نصر الله يهدد به العرب دفاعا عن العجم، ...  
(*Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, August 7, 2014)

**TT:**

This difficult test, in which the Palestinian people lost pure blood, has put an end to the lie of the resistance camp, of which [Hamas political bureau chief] Khaled Mash'al continuously boasted until recently, and of which Iran boasts to this day, [and which Hezbollah secretary-general] Hassan Nasrallah uses to defend non-Arabs [i.e. Iran] by threatening Arabs, ... (MEMRI, 2014)

In (4), Al-Qallab criticized Jordanian Information Minister, Jumana Ghunaimat, after she stepped on an image of the Israeli flag at the entrance to Jordan's trade union headquarters, a body largely controlled by the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) organization and known for its opposition to Israel and the Jordan-Israel peace treaty. He wrote that neither Jordan as a state nor a minister in a senior position is entitled to behave like this with a country with whom Jordan freely signed a peace treaty, accusing the MB of trying to embarrass Jordan and its minister. The translation adds seven explicitations that can help emphasize the perceived negative ideological stance of the original writer. The explicitations "the state", "by the minister" and "on her part" reintroduce Jordan and its minister as the agents of the action, stressing their ethical and political responsibility over succumbing to trade union pressure. The explicitations "an attempt", "attempts to" and "causing them to" increase the original writer's accusing tone and his negative evaluation of the role of the trade unions and the MB in this crisis. Finally, the addition of the premodifier "peace" to the Jordan-Israel agreement would help emphasize the original writer's opposition to the minister's conduct.

In (5), Al-Qallab, in his article in *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, describes the change in many Arab governments' perception of Israel. He writes that while Islamic movements and regimes (e.g., Hamas, Egyptian MB, Iran) are regarded as a threat to regional stability, Israel is not seen as an enemy anymore. He therefore thinks that Israel must make use of this shift and work with moderate Palestinians to establish a peace agreement that ends the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The addition of the word "members" in the translation "Israel now treats Hamas as a terrorist organization, and its [members] are persecuted and hounded" identifies all Hamas individual members (leaders and fighters) as terrorists persecuted and hounded by Israel. Considering Al-Qallab's negative view of Hamas (as a threat to the security

of the region), this addition can intensify his charged language and stereotypical description of Hamas. The addition of the word “other” in “the Israelis have begun to treat the [other] Palestinians as present and future partners”, which means here “other than Hamas members”, is another discrimination against Hamas members that can intensify the original writer’s negative image of Hamas. In (6), in another article critical of Muslim movements’ handling of conflicts in Palestine, Al-Qallab discussed the role of Hamas, Hezbollah and countries having a pro-Muslim Brotherhood orientation in bringing more fighting and violence to Palestine. The background-information explicitations “Hamas political bureau chief” and “Hezbollah secretary-general” not only clarify the referents “Khaled Mash’al” and “Hassan Nasrallah”, but also bring to light the involvement of Hamas and Hezbollah in the event described. The specification of “non-Arabs” as “Iran” also contributes to a racially charged language that accentuates the original writer’s negative attitudes to Iran.

The last two groups of explicitations in Table (1), which are fewer in number than the first group, involve either *shifting* or *neutralizing* the original ideological perspective. The 27 cases of the *shift* in the original ideological perspective involve changing the original perspective and introducing ideological conflict. The 12 cases of *neutralization* involve using a neutral form that omits or normalizes the original ideological perspective. The following are examples:

**7. ST:**

فإننا لا نستبعد أن تُؤدِّي ما يُسمَّى باتِّفاقات السَّلام التي ستُوقَّع في البيت الأبيض غدًا الثلاثاء إلى عودة العرب، والفلسطينيين خاصَّةً، أو بعضهم، إلى نظريَّة الدكتور حداد، بطريقةٍ أو بأخرى، آجلاً أو عاجلاً.  
(*Raialyoum*, September 14, 2020)

**TT:**

I do not consider it impossible that the so-called peace agreements that are to be signed at the White House tomorrow [September 15] will lead the Arabs, particularly the Palestinians, or some of them, to return to the theory of Dr. Haddad [i.e. terrorism], one way or another, sooner or later. (MEMRI, 2020)

**8. ST:**

ربما تتقبل الولايات المتحدة قدرها، وتقرر التعايش مع المتغيرات الزاحفة الى المنطقة، ولكن سيكون من الصعب على اسرائيل ان لا تصاب بالهلع، فحالة الرخاء والاستقرار والعجرفة التي عاشتها طوال الثلاثين عاما الماضية، بات مصيرها مرتبطا بأيدي المنتفضين المصريين، وما يمكن ان نجزم به هو ان سنواتها السمان توشك على الانتهاء لتبدأ سنواتها العجاف، فهي محاصرة بانتفاضة «ديمقراطية» مثقلة بالصواريخ (٤٠ ألف صاروخ وقيادة تتمنى الشهادة) وثورة شعبية تملك ارتا حضاريا يمتد لسبعة آلاف عام،

...  
(*Al-Quds Al-Arabi*, January 27, 2011)

**TT:**

The U.S. will possibly accept its fate and decide to tolerate the changes brewing in the region, but Israel will find it difficult not to panic – because the state of stability, wellbeing, and arrogant [domination] that it has enjoyed for the past 30 years is now dependent upon [the actions of] the Egyptian protesters.

It could be said that its fat years are over and its lean years are about to begin, for it is surrounded [by dangers]: a ‘democratic’ intifada armed with 40,000 missiles and with a martyrdom-seeking leadership [i.e., Hezbollah], a popular revolution with a 7,000-year history [i.e., the protesters in Egypt]. (MEMRI, 2011)

In (7), ahead of signing peace agreements between some Arab Gulf states and Israel, Atwan wrote that Palestinians would not gain anything from these

agreements. Citing the suggestion of the leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Dr. Wadia Haddad, Atwan argues that if Palestinians want to defeat Israel, they must be mad and irrational in their war. That is, the West and Israel tend toward rationalism (use of logic and accurate calculations), and to defeat them, Palestinians must do the opposite, i.e., use irrational strategies like hijacking planes and bombing airports and embassies, just like what the Houthis and the Taliban do. While Atwan views these irrational strategies as a way of resistance, the English translation refers to them as “terrorism”, a term commonly used by Western media to refer to the acts of violence perpetrated by Muslims. This use of the word “terrorism” can here shift the original perspective and introduce ideological conflict.

In (8), after many violent anti-government demonstrations (led by MB and Iran as Atwan argues) had started to spread through many Arab countries (Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon, Yemen and Jordan) in 2011, Atwan predicted that the “resistance camp” would achieve victory against the pro-American and pro-Israel Arab regimes. While Atwan regards these demonstrations as resistance movements that will end the Israeli occupation, the English translation, by inserting “by dangers”, moves the evaluative point of view to Israelis and introduces ideological conflict by showing how these demonstrations are regarded from their ideological perspective (dangers). Finally, the word “domination” in “the state of stability, wellbeing, and arrogant [domination]”, which refers to Israel, is an explicitation that can naturalize the original perspective. While Atwan in the given context views Israel as occupation and his perception of Israel is strongly negative, the word “domination” is a more neutral form that conveys a less negative point of view and normalizes the perceived image of Israel to the Western audience.

## 5. Discussion

The numerical data in Table (1) indicate that the first group of explicitations constitutes almost 85% of the total explicitations, suggesting a strong tendency toward *maintaining* and *reproducing* the original ideological perspective. This means that there is a tendency in explicitations to strengthen/emphasize rather than to shift or neutralize the ideological attitudes of the original writer. This suggests that explicitations, as a micro-level local transformation process (Munday, 2007; Schäffner, 2018), may not always result in a different social reality from that of the original (Gumul, 2010) or a shift in the ideological position at the micro-level (Loupaki 2010). They may rather confirm the original overall political stances and hence can be seen as a means to producing a more faithful *translation of ideology* (Hatim and Mason, 1997, p. 121). At the local textual level, these explicitations can be considered as a tool to supplement (Hernández Guerrero, 2022, p. 233) rather than conceal, manipulate or distort the perceived ideological stance of the original writer (cf. Eagleton, 2007, p. 2; Munday, 2007, p. 196).

This move toward a greater explicit contextual information, which leads to a more *marked* ideological perspective and more *polarized* representation of the world in the translated text (Loupaki, 2010, p. 63), is manifested in the translations of the two writers, though it is slightly more remarkable in the translations of Al-Qallab’s articles (constituting almost 92% of total explicitations compared to about 78% in Atwan’s articles). This suggests that the overall direction of the explicitations in the English translations of the selected articles of the two writers is toward *intensifying* the two writers’ ideological perspective (see Gumul, 2010,

pp. 99-100). Given his extreme anti-Western and pro-radical Islam political orientation, this intensification pattern in the translations of Atwan can reinforce the “fringe nature” of his ideological views and, in turn, increase the *distance* that separates the West from the Muslim World in the translated texts (Bassnett, 2005, p. 127). This pattern would in this context promote more foreignness, separation and ideological conflict (Hernández Guerrero, 2022, p. 236). The study argues that the accentuation of Atwan’s pro-Islamist and anti-Western ideology in the translated text may lead to more stereotyped Western views of the Middle East and more negative perception of Arabs and Muslims, which can only “fan the flames of intercultural conflict” and burn intercultural bridges rather than build them (Davies, 2012, p. 371). Given MEMRI’s thematically-oriented selection process, which suggests its anti-Muslim sentiment and its selectivity in translating and publishing some extreme views from Arabic (see Section 3, see also Whitaker, 2002; Harris, 2003; Baker, 2006, 2010), this *distancing* pattern can actually help emphasize the negative narrative of Arabs and Muslims (see Hursti, 2001; Tymoczko & Gentzler, 2002; Lee, 2020).

In the translations of Al-Qallab’s articles, the intensification pattern may however point to a move in the opposite direction: toward *approximating* the original ideological perspective to the Western audience (see Bielsa and Bassnett, 2009, p. 2; Schäffner, 2018, p. 331). Al-Qallab’s articles demonstrate his strong opposition to and criticism of Islamist movements and regimes (e.g., Hamas, Jordanian and Egyptian MB, Iran). Many of his ideological views can generally appease many Western readers, so making these views more accessible and visible in the translated text can invite more *ethical* and *emotional* involvement with these views on the part of the readers (Toolan, 2016, p. 38). The explicitations here can help tell Western readers what they want to hear and may, in turn, help them engage better with the original ideological perspective. One may argue that the explicitations in the translations of Al-Qallab, which elicit more approximation and emotional engagement, can “oil the wheels of intercultural communication” and push for more cultural understanding (Davies, 2012, p. 375). But with MEMRI’s selective translations, which involve only excerpts that reflect Al-Qallab’s negative criticism of the Muslim groups, and which seem only to promote Islamophobic propaganda in the Western countries, the study reveals that these explicitations seem to be used to promote more misunderstanding and ultimately to contribute to the negative narrative about Arabs and Muslims.

Although fewer in number compared to the explicitations *maintaining* the original perspective, the explicitations *shifting* the original ideological perspective can also suggest a certain translational behavior (see Loupaki, 2010, pp. 68-69). The numerical data in Table (1) indicate that the explicitations shifting the original perspective are more frequent in the translations of Atwan (21 instances) than in the translations of Al-Qallab (only 6 instances). This suggests that, compared to the original ideological views that *suit* the functional and ideological needs of the media institution sponsoring the translation task, there is a higher chance that unsuitable views will be manipulated and adapted (cf. Bielsa and Bassnett, 2009, p. 11; Hernández Guerrero, 2022, p. 232). Above all, media institutions are also part of “cultures, with their own preconceptions, their own motives, their own messages to convey as well as those of the people they translate” (Davies, 2012, p. 371).

Although the present study adopts a research approach that is purely *product-oriented*, some claims about the translation *process* (i.e., intentionality, motivation) can be derived from the data (cf. Toury, 2012, p. 4). The study has, for instance, found that MEMRI has consistently used square brackets to enclose explicitations

in all translations. All the explicitations analyzed in this study have appeared in square brackets in the translation (e.g., [occupation], [to justify the war], [Iran] and [terrorism]). This suggests that MEMRI's translators/translation editors are aware of this mediation or intervention in the text (see Munday, 2007, p. 197). At the micro-level, the explicitations can reflect a *conscious* translation strategy that aims to make the original political and ideological messages more accessible and comprehensible for the receiving audience (see Pápai, 2004; Pym, 2005, p. 41; Saldanha, 2008). At the macro level, since "the selection of what gets translated may seem to promote misunderstanding" (Davies, 2012, p. 371), these explicitations seem to be used to strengthen cultural boundaries and introduce more separation and differentiation. One could also argue that this explicitation trend may be related to the target audience profile (cf. Loupaki, 2010, p. 70). The preference for explicitation and clarity may, for instance, indicate that MEMRI's translators expect that the target readers are less willing to process the micro-level contextual information during the interpretation (cf. Pápai, 2004) or that they may be "more willing to take up the role of a denier" when reading local implicit or unclear propositions (Sidiropoulou, 2004, p. 33). This argument may hold true for the local analysis of micro units (e.g., clauses or sentences), but when considering some larger discourse elements of MEMRI such as its selective appropriation, narrative and ideology, it may seem less convenient.

## 6. Conclusion

This study has analyzed the use of explicitation in a corpus of Arabic-English translated news articles published by MEMRI. The goal is to investigate how explicitation is used by a particular media organization to construct a negative public image or narrative of a particular community. The findings reveal that explicitations at the micro-textual level tend to *intensify* rather than *shift* the original ideological perspective. At the macro-level, given MEMRI's strategic selective appropriation and thematic organization of translated texts, this intensification pattern pushes for more promotion of a religious and cultural Other in translation (cf. Bassnett, 2005; Schäffner, 2018). The majority of the explicitations MEMRI uses do not, at the textual level, convey any false information (cf. Eagleton, 2007) nor manipulate or alter the original ideological views in the selected translated texts (Gumul, 2010; Loupaki, 2010; Hamdan et al., 2021). They rather tend to strengthen the original ideological views in the translated texts, which in turn may intensify the political conflict between the West and the Arab and Muslim World. This sheds light on the *paradoxical* role of explicitations in media translation or translation in the socio-political context: while they reduce ambiguities and improve comprehensibility at the text level (cf. Pápai, 2004; Pym, 2005; Saldanha, 2008; Klaudy, 2009), they help promote misunderstanding and prejudice and increase separateness between groups at a broader discourse level (cf. Davies, 2012). Thus, for a better understanding of their role, explicitations should be analyzed at both the individual (textual) and the institutional (socio-political) level (Fairclough, 1989/2015; van Dijk, 1998).

The use of accurate or faithful rather than inaccurate or misleading explicitations in strategically-selected and thematically-organized translations allows a neo-conservative media organization such as MEMRI to elaborate its ideological viewpoints without jeopardizing its credibility. This use of explicitation may help translation function as a barrier rather than a bridge (Davies, 2012),

undermining the claim that the goal of international media is *comprehensibility* (cf. Bielsa and Bassnett, 2009; Schäffner, 2018). Given MEMRI's strategic selective appropriation of the material to be translated and its awareness of its intervention in the translated text, future research projects could further investigate the political motivation(s) for this use of explicitation. Regardless of any possible future intentionality and motivation claims, the present study has more importantly shown how an apparently innocent and impartial tool like explicitation can in some socio-political contexts of interaction have a significant ideological influence.

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