Challenges in Translating the Meaning in Political Slogans

التحدّيات في ترجمة المعنى في الشعارات السياسية

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Abstract

Political translation extends beyond mere linguistic transfer to encompass texts, speeches, treaties, media discourse, and election slogans that carry cultural and ideological weight. In this field, accuracy alone is insufficient, as a single word can shift interpretation, influence public opinion, and even affect international relations. Election slogans represent one of the most challenging forms of political discourse, as they condense complex visions into short, emotionally charged phrases that mobilize voters and reinforce party identity. The central problem, however, lies in how translators can remain faithful to the ideological and cultural nuances of such slogans while ensuring their persuasive impact in the target language—a dilemma that raises questions about the limits of fidelity to the meaning. This raises the following question: How translators can effectively use fidelity to meaning while preserving the cultural and ideological impact when translating politically charged slogans? This study examines the translation of Lebanese political slogans during the 2018 and 2022 parliamentary

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elections, focusing on fidelity to the meaning in the first place. Drawing on interpretative theory and a mixed−method approach, it analyzes translations produced by students and professional translators specializing in political media. The findings revealed that fidelity to meaning preserves the ideological and cultural depth of the electoral slogan, and enhances its reception by the target audience.

Keywords: political slogan translation, Lebanese elections, fidelity to meaning, literalism, interpretative theory.

ملخص

تتجاوز التّرجمة السّياسيّة حدود النّقل اللّغوي لتشمل نصوصًا وخطابات ومعاهدات وشعارات انتخابيّة تحمل أبعادًا ثقافيّة وأيديولوجيّة. ولا تكفي الدّقة وحدها في هذا المجال، إذ يمكن لاختيار كلمة واحدة أن يغيّر التّأويل ويؤثّر في الرّأي العام والعلاقات الدّوليّة. وتُعدّ الشّعارات الانتخابيّة من أصعب أشكال الخطاب السّياسيّ، لأنّها تختزل رؤى وبرامج معقدة في عبارات قصيرة وذات وقع عاطفيّ، تسهم في التّعبئة وتعزيز الهويّة الحزبيّة. وتتمثّل الإشكالية في كيفية حفاظ المترجم على الأبعاد الأيديولوجيّة والثّقافية للشّعار الانتخابيّ مع ضمان أثره الإقناعي في اللّغة الهدف، وهو المحافظة على المعنى المراد من الشّعار في اللّغة الأصل. تبحث هذه الدّراسة في ترجمة الشّعارات السّياسيّة اللّبنانيّة خلال الانتخابات النّيابيّة لعامي 2018 و2022، مركّزة على الأمانة للمعنى للنّصّ الأصليّ. وبالاعتماد على النّظريّة التّفسيريّة والمنهج المختلط، تم تحليل ترجمات أنجزها طلاب في قسم التّرجمة في مرحلتي الإجازة (سنة أولى، سنة ثالثة) والماستر ومترجمون محترفون في الإعلام السّياسيّ. أظهرت النّتائج أنّ الأمانة للمعنى تحافظ على العمق الأيديولوجيّ والثّقافيّ للشّعار الانتخابيّ، كما تعزّز قابليّة تلقي الجمهور الهدف لهذا الشّعار.

الكلمات المفتاحيّة: ترجمة الشّعارات السّياسيّة، الانتخابات اللّبنانيّة، الالتزام بالمعنى، التّرجمة الحرفيّة، النّظريّة التّفسيريّة.

I. Introduction:

Translation has long been recognized as one of the most enduring human activities, serving the essential purpose of interpreting and transferring meanings embedded within texts. It is conventionally defined as the process of rendering a source text from its original language into a target text in another language. Beyond being a mere linguistic exercise, translation operates as a bridge that conveys civilizations, cultures, and systems of thought, on the condition that the original meaning is preserved while simultaneously observing the grammatical and stylistic conventions of the target language.

Historically, translation was performed in an instinctive and spontaneous manner, as human beings—by nature social—were compelled through travel and trade to acquire the language of others in order to exchange goods and sustain social interaction. According to Baker (2005), the Arabs were the first to establish an organized and large-scale translation movement. This intellectual enterprise commenced under the Umayyad dynasty (661–750) and reached its zenith during the Abbasid era (750–1258), most notably under the reign of al-Ma'mun (813–833), which has since been celebrated as the golden age of translation. In 830, al-Ma'mun founded one of the most significant institutions of higher education in Islam, which eventually became the most renowned translation center in Arab history.

In the modern era, the demand for translation has expanded dramatically across a wide range of fields, including academic research, scientific inquiry, political discourse, and media communication. This expansion has led to the diversification of translation practices, encompassing literary, medical, scientific, media, and political translation, with the latter constituting the primary focus of this study. Among the most difficult and delicate types of translation is political translation, as it entails cultural differences and challenges that constantly place the translator in a difficult position.

Political Translation and Ideology

Political translation is considered as one of the most demanding fields within the discipline of translation due to its complex interplay of language, ideology, and culture. Unlike literary or technical translation, political texts—such as speeches, manifestos, treaties, and electoral slogans—carry not only semantic meaning but also social, cultural, and ideological weight. A single mistranslated word can shift the interpretation of a message, influence public opinion, or even affect international relations. The translator, therefore, must do more than convey literal meaning; they act as a cultural and ideological mediator, navigating nuanced expressions, rhetorical devices, and political sensitivities. This requires a high level of linguistic proficiency, deep understanding of the political context, and awareness of the target audience's perceptions.

Therefore, Political translation in particular frequently engages with the concept of ideology, which occupies a central place in political theory and analysis.

The term ideology originates from Greek, where idea denotes "thought" and logos signifies "science" or "authority," thus designating the "power of ideas." With the evolution of political thought, the concept came to signify a system of ideas and values through which individuals and groups interpret political reality. Today, ideology functions as a defining feature of political organization, demarcating parties—religious, leftist, socialist, liberal, or radical—on the basis of the doctrines they espouse.

It not only informs political agendas but also mirrors individual convictions, values, and beliefs, thereby shaping both personal orientations and collective practices within the political sphere. The emergence and development of ideology are deeply intertwined with political thought and the historical conditions within which societies evolve. Ideology often originates from the intellectual contributions of thinkers, gradually spreading through familial upbringing, formal education, social networks, and media exposure.

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It is neither static nor immutable; rather, it adapts to social and political transformations, and numerous individuals and parties have redefined their ideological orientations in response to contextual pressures. While questions persist regarding its necessity, ideology remains inherent in every individual and organization—whether explicitly articulated or implicitly expressed.

The interconnection between translation and ideology has been extensively acknowledged in translation studies. Translation has never been detached from ideological influence; indeed, its origins are historically linked to missionary and political endeavors. As Lefevere (1992) argues, translation is invariably entangled with questions of power, legitimacy, and cultural sensitivity, rendering it the subject of ongoing debate. Anthony Pym advances this view by situating ideology not only within the act of translation itself but also within the translator's positionality, affiliations, and cultural identity. Venuti likewise observes that social and cultural institutions exert significant influence over translation practices and the construction of translators' identities, subjecting both to ideological constraints.

Consequently, translators often confront the complex dilemma of reconciling fidelity to the meaning of the source text with adherence to the expectations and norms of the target culture. This dilemma becomes particularly acute in the translation of political texts, especially electoral slogans, which constitute an essential component of campaign discourse.

Electoral Slogans as Political Discourse

Electoral slogans are designed to capture voters' attention and transmit political messages with clarity, concision, and rhetorical appeal. Their translation, however, is fraught with challenges, as the translator must preserve their persuasive force while also accounting for linguistic, cultural, and communicative factors.

Harrison (1995) defines democracy as the Greek concept of "rule of the people," emphasizing citizen participation as central to state welfare

and elections. Kadd (2012) similarly notes that a nation's political future depends on its collective awareness, which can lead either to genuine liberation or false illusions. From its origins in ancient Greece, democracy relied on popular vote to select leaders, later spreading to Europe, America, and eventually Africa and the Middle East (Andersen). Within this system, electoral slogans play a key communicative role, enabling candidates to convey ideologies, persuade voters, and express aspirations for societal change (Nakate, 2011).

Electoral slogans can thus be socially effective for several reasons: they reflect the personality and objectives of the candidate, and they often adopt memorable and appealing phrasing that remains in the voters' minds at the moment of casting their votes. A political slogan is generally characterized by a concise and well-constructed linguistic form, produced by a political entity such as a party, to express the key issues it intends to address. Within this communicative framework, the slogan has a sender (the political body producing it), a receiver (the voter, political opponent, etc.), a discursive context (the electoral environment in which it circulates), a medium (the language and rhetorical strategies used), and an imagined vision (the possible world that the slogan promises or calls for).

Electoral slogans are often described as instruments to attract voters or as a kind of "shop window" for candidates' political products, whose acceptance by the electorate depends on the quality of the "product" and the effectiveness of its presentation. Specialists define electoral slogans as an artistic method intended to influence voters' opinions and convictions through rhetorical devices designed to maximize appeal. They emphasize that such slogans must be simple, clear, non-contradictory, and closely connected to the reality of the electorate.

For this reason, candidates strive to select slogans that can persuade as many voters as possible and to present them in ways that resonate with public expectations, using everyday language that increases their

accessibility and appeal, much like a commercial product marketed effectively to achieve the anticipated demand.

For an electoral slogan to achieve its intended purpose, certain elements are indispensable. Scholars stress that in order to influence voters' attitudes and beliefs, a slogan must first and foremost capture attention, especially amid the overwhelming flood of competing campaign slogans surrounding the electorate from every direction.

The proliferation of candidates and their campaign advertisements across multiple platforms may, however, distract voters, which compels candidates to devise new strategies for capturing attention. Yet securing voters' attention in itself is of paramount importance, as it increases the circulation of a candidate's name among the public and thereby enhances the likelihood of electoral success. Moreover, the slogan must authentically convey the candidate's personality, intellectual orientation, and objectives. Some candidates make the mistake of relying excessively on humor or eccentricity in their slogans or campaign promotions, which can lead to perceptions of frivolity or lack of seriousness, ultimately becoming a source of ridicule.

Strategies such as condensation, borrowing, addition, and paraphrase are frequently employed to ensure that slogans remain intelligible and resonant in the target language. Among the most demanding tasks in this regard is the translation of specialized political terminology. Political terms are highly context-dependent, and they rarely admit fixed equivalents across languages. Given the profound cultural and civilizational differences between Arabic and English, translators must combine linguistic proficiency with a nuanced understanding of political and cultural contexts in order to achieve accuracy and relevance.

3. Challenges in Translating Lebanese Political Slogans

In Lebanon, the challenge of political translation is heightened by the country's intricate social and political landscape. Lebanese politics is deeply intertwined with sectarian affiliations, regional loyalties, and cultural identities, resulting in political discourse that carries multiple layers of meaning beyond the surface linguistic form.

Election slogans, therefore, serve as microcosms of broader political ideologies, often invoking historical, religious, or cultural references that may not be immediately intelligible to foreign audiences. Translating such slogans into English requires meticulous attention to cultural sensitivities, ideological undertones, and linguistic constraints, compelling the translator to balance fidelity to meaning with accessibility and persuasive impact for the target audience, because misinterpretations in translation can lead not only to a loss of rhetorical force but also to potential cultural offense or misrepresentation of political intent.

This challenge highlights that the central dilemma for translators lies in how to maintain strict semantic fidelity to the meaning that better convey ideological intent and persuasive function. Consequently, the primary research question guiding this study is: How can translators effectively use fidelity to meaning while preserving the cultural and ideological impact when translating politically charged slogans? This overarching question is supplemented by four sub-questions:

1. What are the primary cultural and ideological challenges in translating Lebanese political slogans?

2. How do literal, and interpretative theory affect meaning preservation and persuasive impact?

3. How does the translator's level of experience influence the balance between fidelity to meaning and literalism?

4. How can interpretative theory guide translators to achieve both semantic accuracy and audience resonance?

4. The Core of the Article:

Theoretical Framework:

This study is grounded in interpretative theory (Seleskovitch & Lederer, 1984), which prioritizes the transmission of intended meaning over word-for-word equivalence. This framework positions the translator as an active mediator, responsible for re-expressing source messages in ways that are both comprehensible and culturally appropriate for the target audience. As Seleskovitch and Lederer (1984, p. 15) emphasize, "The translator must first understand the sense of the message in the source language and then re-express it in the target language in a way that is comprehensible and culturally appropriate." Interpretative theory is particularly relevant for political slogans, where ideological significance may be subtle, embedded in culturally specific references, or reliant on rhetorical devices that cannot survive literal translation without loss of meaning or impact.

Moreover, the framework is informed by the notion of translation as rewriting (Lefevere, 1992), which views translation as an act shaped by ideology, power, and cultural constraints. From this perspective, the translator does not merely transmit meaning but actively participates in the construction of discourse, potentially amplifying or attenuating ideological undertones in the source text. Political slogans, being highly condensed and ideologically charged texts, foreground the translator's agency in balancing fidelity to the source with the persuasive force required in the target context.

Finally, this framework is reinforced by insights from classical rhetorical theory, particularly Aristotle's tripartite model of persuasion: ethos (credibility), pathos (emotional appeal), and logos (rational argument). Political slogans often derive their persuasive power from a strategic combination of these rhetorical elements, and their translation must preserve not only semantic content but also rhetorical effect. For instance, a slogan

relying on pathos through emotionally charged metaphors may require creative translation techniques to evoke equivalent affective responses in the target culture. Similarly, ethos-based appeals rooted in national identity or collective values must be re-contextualized to maintain credibility, while logos-based arguments should retain their logical clarity and resonance. By integrating rhetorical theory, this framework acknowledges that effective translation of slogans is not merely about conveying meaning but about reproducing persuasive impact across cultural boundaries.

Taken together, interpretative theory, Lefevere's rewriting, and rhetorical theory frame translation not as a neutral act but as a process of cultural negotiation and persuasive re-articulation in which the translator plays a central role in preserving rhetorical impact, political intent, and cultural resonance.

Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods qualitative-quantitative design to examine political translation strategies, combining the depth of qualitative analysis with the breadth of quantitative patterns. Three participant groups—undergraduate translation students, graduate students, and professional translators in Lebanon—were included to allow comparison across different levels of expertise. Data were collected through a corpus of political slogans from the 2018 and 2022 Lebanese parliamentary elections, alongside a structured survey in which participants provided English translations and brief justifications. Analysis combined qualitative content analysis with quantitative frequency analysis, guided by Interpretative Theory (Seleskovitch & Lederer, 1984) and Rewriting and Ideology (Lefevere, 1992) within an interpretative perspective, capturing both sense-making and ideological shifts. Translations were coded thematically, patterns identified, and nuances in decision-making interpreted. Reliability and validity were ensured through iterative coding, cross-checking, reflexive notes, and triangulation of corpus, survey, and theoretical frameworks.

Ethical safeguards included informed consent, anonymity, voluntary participation, and careful handling of politically sensitive material. Limitations include the Lebanon-focused sample, survey-based method, potential influence of political context on participants' choices, small sample size, and the researcher's interpretative lens, mitigated through triangulation and reflexivity.

Findings and Discussion

The forthcoming examples and their analyses in this study aim to demonstrate how translators navigate the complex cultural and ideological challenges inherent in Lebanese political slogans. These cases provide concrete evidence of the strategies employed to preserve meaning, maintain rhetorical impact, and convey ideological nuance, thereby highlighting the critical role of the translator as both a linguistic mediator and a cultural interpreter. The following table offers a comparative analysis of Arabic political slogans alongside their literal and interpretative translations, illustrating how different translation approaches affect the preservation of semantic, rhetorical, and cultural dimensions.

Arabic Slogan	Literal translation	Interpretative Translation
نحنا الخرزة الزرقا يلي بتحمي لبنان	−We are the blue eye that shall protect Lebanon. "We are the blue Bead that shall protect Lebanon."	−From blue bead to bright future: our commitment to Lebanon. − "We are the "Kharzé Zara'" that protects the future of Lebanon.
معك والسما زرقا	"With you the sky is blue."	− "Under the blue sky, with you we stand high." −Standing by you where the future is vividly blue."
صوت لسعادتك مش لسعادتو	"Vote for your happiness not his happiness".	−"Your future matters vote for your, happiness and dignity not for his highness." −"Vote for your, happiness and dignity not for his highness."

3.1. Example 1: "نحنا الخرزة الزرقا يلي بتحمي لبنان"

The slogan "نحنا الخرزة الزرقا يلي بتحمي لبنان" carries both **ideological** and **cultural significance** in the Lebanese political context, which makes its translation particularly challenging. Ideologically, the slogan conveys the political party's message of **protection, loyalty, and commitment to Lebanon's future**. The term "الخرزة الزرقا" (the Blue Bead) is not merely a decorative object; it functions as a **symbol of the party's identity**, reflecting its core values such as trustworthiness, stability, and guidance. The color blue itself is ideologically loaded, signaling calm, confidence, and success, which aligns with the party's desired image and emotional appeal to voters. However, translation attempts often fail to capture these nuances:

Approximately 90% of the undergraduate students relied on literal translation that failed to convey the intended ideological message: "We are the blue eye that shall protect Lebanon."

This version is incorrect because the words were translated inaccurately: "الخرزة الزرقا" does not mean "the blue eye" in Reverso; it correctly translates as "the Blue Bead." This demonstrates that literal translation is not always an effective method for conveying meaning, particularly in political slogans.

while 50% of the master's students also employed this approach. They translated the slogan as:

"We are the blue Bead that shall protect Lebanon."

This literal translation is linguistically correct, as each word has been translated directly. For example, the term "الخرزة الزرقا" appears in the digital dictionary Reverso as "The Blue Bead", confirming the accuracy of this translation. However, this approach fails to capture the implicit meanings embedded in the slogan, particularly those related to the future and the ideological message intended by the political party. Consequently, the slogan loses some of its motivational impact when rendered into a foreign

language. The color blue, for instance, symbolizes the political party associated with this slogan, representing calm, confidence, and success. The party deliberately uses blue in its electoral slogans to appeal to its audience and encourage voter support.

The prevalence of literal translation among students can be attributed to their limited academic and professional experience in translation.

In contrast, 30% of the master's students employed **faithfulness to meaning** in their translation:

"From blue bead to bright future: our commitment to Lebanon."

These students focused on the implicit meaning of the slogan, incorporating the party's ideological message through the keywords "blue" and "future." This approach reflects a strong understanding of proper translation methodology, which begins with analyzing the source text, conducting necessary research, identifying challenging terms, and finally rendering the intended meaning by using **addition** (to bright future, our commitment to Lebanon), a technique highlighted by Vinay and Darbelnet, in a way comprehensible to the target audience. This approach aligns with the **interpretive theory of translation**, which emphasizes conveying the underlying meaning faithfully.

Professional translators specializing in political media translation also prioritize **faithfulness to meaning**, applying borrowing and addition to convey the party's culture and beliefs without compromising the ideological message, while respecting the political culture of the target audience and preserving the source text. Their translation of the slogan was: "We are the Kharzé Zar'a that protects the future of Lebanon."

Here, the translator employed **borrowing**, transferring an expression directly from one language to another—a technique highlighted by Vinay and Darbelnet—rendering Kharzé Zar'a = الخرزة الزرقا to preserve the implicit meaning without altering the essence or ideological content of the

slogan. Additionally, the translator used **addition:** "the future of Lebanon" = مستقبل لبنان, to maintain the party's core ideology and respect its supporters.

Example 2: "صوت لسعادتك مش لسعادتو"

This slogan, "صوت لسعادتك مش لسعادتو", reflects key aspects of Lebanese political ideology, where deputies often rely on personal loyalty and sectarian networks rather than broad party programs. The wordplay in Arabic distinguishes سعادتك("your happiness") from سعادته(a formal reference to the deputy, "his highness"), subtly urging citizens to vote for their own interests rather than blindly supporting a political figure. Literal translations fail to capture this ideological nuance, reducing the slogan to a generic appeal. Interpretative translations, such as "Vote for your happiness/dignity, not for his highness," preserve both the linguistic play and the political critique, demonstrating Lefevere's principle that translation can serve as a strategy of interpretation. By prioritizing faithfulness to meaning, translators not only convey the text accurately but also maintain its cultural and ideological impact, allowing the target audience to grasp the original's socio-political message.

Analysis of the translations shows that 95% of undergraduate students, 70% of master's students, and 5% of professional translators relied on a literal translation, which inaccurately rendered the slogan from Arabic into English as: "Vote for your happiness, not his happiness."

This literal translation fails to convey the implicit meaning of the slogan, which encourages citizens to vote for their own benefit and well-being rather than for the deputy (حضرة النائب /his highness). The wordplay in Arabic relies on the dual meaning of سعادته, which does not translate directly as happiness; rather, it refers to the deputy's title or status. The creativity of the original slogan lies in this linguistic play, and the greater challenge— and artistry—resides in translating it effectively into another language.

In contrast, only 5% of undergraduate students, 30% of master's students, and 95% of professional translators prioritized **faithfulness to meaning**,

resulting in the translation:

"Your future matters vote for your, happiness and dignity not for his highness."

Professional translators were able to replicate the original **wordplay (jeu de mots)** in English, preserving both the aesthetic appeal and the intended ideological message of the slogan. This was achieved by following the **interpretive theory of translation**, emphasizing fidelity to meaning rather than literal word-for-word equivalence.

The translation— "Your future matters: vote for your happiness and dignity, not for his highness"—illustrates the principles of the **interpretive theory of translation** by using **addition** as a technique (your future matters). The translator first decodes the underlying sense of the Arabic slogan, recognizing that it conveys both a **political message** and a **cultural nuance**. The phrase your happiness and dignity re-express the voter's personal interest and agency, while his highness preserves the reference to the deputy, maintaining the slogan's critique of political dependency. By doing so, the translation goes beyond a literal word-for-word rendering and conveys the intended meaning, tone, and ideological content.

From the perspective of **Lebanese political ideology**, this translation captures the slogan's socio-political critique: it urges citizens to prioritize their own well-being and civic responsibility over loyalty to individual politicians, reflecting the localized context of clientelist politics. By combining strategies like borrowing, addition, condensation or cultural substitution with interpretative theory, the translator ensures that both the **explicit message** and the **implicit ideological critique** are effectively communicated to the target audience.

Example 3: "معك والسما زرقا"

The slogan "معك والسما زرقا" carries significant **ideological and cultural weight** in Lebanon, a country where political symbolism and party identity

are deeply intertwined with everyday language. The color blue, used prominently in the slogan, is more than a descriptive term; it symbolizes the political party behind the message, conveying calm, trust, and confidence, while signaling loyalty and alignment with the party's ideology. Thus, the slogan functions as a subtle tool of political persuasion, appealing to citizens' emotions and cultural sensibilities rather than merely communicating literal information.

Analysis of student and professional translations reveals the following patterns:

Approximately 95% of undergraduate students and 70% of master's students relied on literal translation, rendering the slogan as:

"With you the sky is blue."

This literal translation is linguistically incorrect despite word-for-word correspondence. In Lebanese colloquial Arabic, السما refers to the sky, زرقا to blue, and معك to with you. However, the word order and structure were mishandled, resulting in a translation that distorts the original meaning and loses the slogan's essence. More importantly, it fails to convey the implicit ideological meaning: the color blue symbolizes the political party behind the slogan, representing calm, trust, and success. Thus, literal translation alone does not suffice, particularly in politically charged contexts. The reliance on literal translation reflects the students' limited academic and professional experience.

In contrast, 30% of master's students used **faithfulness to meaning**, producing the translation:

"Under the blue sky, with you we stand high."

This version demonstrates creativity while maintaining the slogan's intended sense. The translator preserved both meaning and phonetic rhythm (sky, high) from the Arabic original, reflecting an understanding of proper translation methodology: analyzing the text's meaning, researching

challenging expressions, and re-expressing the intended sense for the target audience. Using **addition**, this approach aligns with the **interpretive theory of translation**, ensuring the implicit ideological message is conveyed with accuracy and integrity, while allowing for some creative expression.

Professional translators specializing in political media translation applied the same principle with greater precision, yielding: "Standing by you where the future is vividly blue."

Here, the translator employed **addition** (e.g., where the future is vividly blue)—a technique described by Vinay and Darbelnet—to preserve the slogan's implicit meaning without altering its essence or ideological content. This interpretative translation conveys the party's cultural and political symbolism, respects the target audience's context, and maintains the ideological integrity of the source text. Furthermore, the professional translation integrates linguistic creativity, enhancing the aesthetic and persuasive impact of the slogan.

The analysis of the three slogans demonstrates the crucial role of the **interpretive theory of translation** in conveying both meaning and ideological content in politically charged contexts. Literal translations, as produced by most undergraduate and some master's students, often failed to capture the implicit messages and cultural nuances, resulting in distorted or weakened slogans. In contrast, interpretative translations by master's students and professional translators successfully preserved the **ideological intent, cultural symbolism, and persuasive power** of the original texts.

Across all examples, translators who prioritized **faithfulness to meaning** were able to:

Decode the implicit sense of the source slogan, including political critique, symbolism, and wordplay.

Re-express this sense in the target language while maintaining clarity, creativity, and aesthetic impact.

Preserve the ideological and cultural context, ensuring the target audience receives the intended socio-political message.

Role of Translator Experience

The experience of the translator constitutes a critical determinant in the selection of translation strategies and the overall quality of the final product. Translators with substantial professional experience, having been exposed to a wide variety of texts and contexts, typically employ interpretative approaches that extend well beyond literal, word-for-word translation. Such experience equips translators with the ability to discern subtle ideological, cultural, and emotional nuances embedded within political slogans and to convey these effectively to the target audience. Experienced translators demonstrate advanced skills in analyzing source texts, identifying ambiguities, and making informed decisions regarding cultural references, symbolism, and persuasive intent. Conversely, less experienced translators often rely on literal translation methods, which may maintain linguistic accuracy but risk undermining the ideological, motivational, and rhetorical impact of the original message. This disparity underscores the vital role of experience in achieving a delicate equilibrium between fidelity to the source text and accessibility for the target audience. As Munday (2016, p. 89) emphasizes, "Literal translations often fail to convey the full persuasive and cultural impact of the original slogans; interpretative theory and strategies help preserve ideological meaning and emotional resonance." Furthermore, experienced translators are adept at employing strategies such as borrowing, addition, condensation or cultural substitution, thereby enabling the preservation of ideological content while aligning with the expectations, cultural norms, and interpretative frames of the target audience. Beyond these technical competencies, translator experience also fosters critical judgment, intuition, and the ability to

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anticipate audience reception, all of which are indispensable in political translation where precision and persuasive effect are paramount. In essence, the translator's experience not only informs strategic choices but also ensures that political communication maintains its intended persuasive, cultural, and emotional impact across linguistic and cultural boundaries, highlighting experience as a central factor in effective and meaningful translation practice. Professional experience further enhances a translator's effectiveness in political contexts.

Additionally, experienced translators demonstrate a heightened capacity for nuanced decision-making, anticipating audience response, and balancing fidelity with communicative objectives (Schäffner, 2012). In Lebanon, seasoned translators were able to handle slogans containing sectarian references, historical connotations, or emotionally charged rhetoric with precision, whereas less experienced translators frequently produced literal renderings that diluted persuasive and symbolic content. This aligns with contemporary translation theory, which posits that professional competence encompasses not only technical skill but also experiential knowledge that informs interpretative judgment and strategic adaptation (Hatim & Mason, 1997).

5. Essential Skills and Ethical Qualities of Political Translators

Political translation constitutes a highly specialized professional practice that operates at the convergence of linguistic expertise, cultural literacy, ideological negotiation, and ethical responsibility. Within the framework of translation studies, scholars have emphasized that the mere ability to convert words from a source language to a target language is insufficient in politically charged contexts; rather, successful translation requires an integrated approach that combines theoretical understanding, practical skill, and ethical awareness (Chilton & Schäffner, 1997; Schäffner, 2004). Political translators are thus not simply bilingual intermediaries, but cultural and ideological mediators who must navigate complex socio-political

landscapes while maintaining fidelity to the source text and adapting content for target audiences.

Linguistic proficiency is a foundational requirement for political translators. This extends beyond lexical and grammatical knowledge to encompass style, register, rhetorical devices, and discourse strategies characteristic of political communication. Translators must be capable of reproducing persuasive elements such as slogans, metaphors, and ideological framings in a manner that preserves both their semantic content and their emotional and rhetorical force (Chilton & Schäffner, 1997). Empirical studies examining Lebanese parliamentary election slogans from 2018 and 2022 illustrate how professional translators successfully adapted political messages for target audiences, maintaining both ideological fidelity and persuasive impact. Conversely, less experienced translators often defaulted to literal translations that, while formally correct, failed to convey the symbolic and rhetorical depth of the original texts. These findings align with Lefevere's (1992) argument that translation involves both a technical and interpretative dimension, in which meaning is mediated according to audience expectations and sociocultural context.

Closely linked to linguistic proficiency is cultural and contextual competence. Political texts are situated within specific historical, social, and institutional contexts that shape meaning and reception. Hatim and Mason (1997) emphasize the importance of understanding socio–political structures, historical events, and ideological frameworks in translation. In Lebanon, where political expression is inseparable from sectarian identity and historical memory, cultural literacy enables translators to anticipate interpretive frameworks and avoid misrepresentation. The study of Lebanese electoral slogans demonstrates that culturally competent translators made strategic choices that preserved the significance of references to historical events, social dynamics, and political affiliations, ensuring that translated messages were both accurate and persuasive.

Interpretative and analytical skills are central to the practice of political translation. Political discourse frequently contains implicit meanings, ideological undertones, and strategic ambiguities that cannot be transmitted through literal translation alone (Lefevere, 1992; Schäffner, 2012). Translators must critically evaluate these layers and make decisions about what to retain, adapt, or emphasize to ensure that the target audience comprehends the intended meaning and persuasive intent. Analysis of Lebanese election slogans revealed that interpretative theory and strategies such as borrowing, addition, and condensation were employed to bridge linguistic and cultural gaps, illustrating the translator's role as an active mediator rather than a passive conduit. These strategies allowed translators to maintain the ideological integrity of the source text while ensuring its resonance with audiences of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Ethical responsibility constitutes a critical dimension of political translation. Translators must exercise impartiality and objectivity, ensuring that personal political beliefs do not influence the translation process. Confidentiality and discretion are essential due to the sensitive nature of political materials, which can influence public opinion, diplomatic relations, or policy decisions (Schäffner, 2012). Furthermore, accuracy, reliability, and professional responsibility are indispensable ethical qualities, as errors or misrepresentation in politically sensitive texts can have substantial sociopolitical consequences (Lefevere, 1992). Ethical vigilance also extends to interpretative choices, where translators must carefully weigh the balance between audience comprehension and fidelity to the source text's ideological content.

In conclusion, political translators exemplify a highly specialized professional and scholarly profile that integrates advanced linguistic proficiency, cultural and contextual literacy, interpretative and analytical acumen, extensive professional experience, and rigorous ethical responsibility. The translation of Lebanese electoral slogans illustrates how these competencies

intersect to produce translations that are both persuasive and ideologically faithful. By bridging linguistic, cultural, and ideological divides, political translators perform a dual role as communicators and cultural mediators, demonstrating that political translation is simultaneously a technical, interpretative, and ethically grounded practice. The integration of empirical research, theoretical insights, and practical experience underscores the importance of political translation as a distinct and complex field within translation studies, one that necessitates specialized training, scholarly understanding, and professional expertise.

Ⅲ. Conclusion

This study examined the translation of political slogans from Arabic into English, offering in-depth insights into how meaning is negotiated within politically charged contexts. The analysis revealed a clear distinction between professional translators and less experienced translators in terms of strategy selection, interpretive choices, and overall translation quality. Professional translators consistently prioritize fidelity to meaning, carefully balancing semantic accuracy, cultural resonance, and rhetorical effect, whereas undergraduate and graduate students often defaulted to literal translation strategies. Such literal approaches, while preserving formal linguistic accuracy, frequently compromise the persuasive, symbolic, and ideological depth of the original slogans. These findings underscore the critical role of professional experience, linguistic competence, cultural literacy, and ethical awareness in producing translations that are both precise and contextually appropriate.

Translators must navigate complex cultural markers, local political ideologies, and historical allusions that may be unfamiliar to target audiences. Furthermore, slogans often carry emotional resonance and symbolic meaning tied to Lebanon's specific socio-political context, making it challenging to preserve both the persuasive intent and ideological nuance in the target language. These challenges require translators to have deep

cultural competence and a nuanced understanding of ideological positioning, enabling them to mediate meaning without distorting the source text.

The study further illustrates how literal and interpretative translation strategies affect meaning preservation and persuasive impact. Literal translation, while maintaining formal accuracy, often fails to capture the rhetorical force and symbolic subtleties embedded in political slogans, leading to a weakened persuasive effect. In contrast, interpretative theory additionally to strategies such as borrowing, addition, condensation, and cultural substitution, allow translators to maintain semantic accuracy while also preserving the emotional and ideological resonance of the original text. These strategies and theory enhance audience engagement and ensure that the slogans retain their persuasive power, demonstrating that meaning preservation and rhetorical effectiveness are closely tied to the translator's strategic approach.

Moreover, the research highlights how the translator's level of experience influences the balance between fidelity to meaning and literalism. Experienced translators consistently navigate this balance more effectively, using interpretative theory judiciously to preserve both ideological and rhetorical elements of the source text. Less experienced translators, by contrast, tend to rely on literal approaches that prioritize form over function, often at the expense of persuasive and symbolic content. This finding underscores the importance of professional experience in developing nuanced judgment and the ability to mediate complex cultural and ideological dimensions inherent in political discourse.

Interpretative theory provides a guiding framework for achieving both semantic accuracy and audience resonance. By emphasizing the active reconstruction of meaning rather than passive word−for−word transfer, interpretative theory encourages translators to analyze the source text's multiple layers, including cultural, ideological, and rhetorical dimensions, and to render these effectively in the target language. Grounded in this

theory, translators are better equipped to produce translations that preserve the original intent, capture emotional undertones, and resonate with the target audience, ensuring that political messages remain persuasive and contextually meaningful.

Grounded in interpretative theory, this research emphasizes that translation extends far beyond a mere literal linguistic transfer; it involves a complex process of understanding the source text, deconstructing its multiple layers of meaning, and reconstructing it in the target language to achieve both fidelity and communicative effectiveness. Translators must capture not only the semantic content but also the author's intended ideological nuances, rhetorical strategies, and emotional undertones. In practice, this entails multiple interconnected stages, including comprehending the source message, analyzing its cultural, historical, and socio-political context, and producing a target text that conveys the original sense while remaining accessible and persuasive to the intended audience.

Interpretative translation views translators as active cultural and ideological mediators rather than passive conveyors of language. In political contexts, translators strategically balance fidelity to the source text with the expectations and cultural norms of the target audience, ensuring that messages remain persuasive, comprehensible, and culturally sensitive while upholding ethical responsibilities. Since misrepresentation or oversimplification can distort ideological meaning and undermine intercultural understanding, translators must combine linguistic competence, cultural awareness, critical analysis, and professional judgment. Fidelity, in this sense, is not absolute but a dynamic, context-dependent strategy. Political slogans, which often carry dense cultural memory, social values, and historical references, illustrate the complexity of this task. Successful translation therefore requires both technical precision and creative interpretation, highlighting translation as a practice situated at the intersection of language, ideology, and power.

Beyond theoretical implications, the study provides important practical

insights for translator training and professional development. Educational programs should emphasize the integration of interpretative theory and strategies, informed decision−making, ideological awareness, and rhetorical competence into the curriculum. Developing analytical and critical thinking skills, cultural literacy, and ethical judgment is essential for preparing translators to navigate politically and culturally complex texts. Exposure to such texts enables students to apply theoretical principles in practice, bridging the gap between classroom instruction and professional performance. Translators, as this study illustrates, serve as both linguistic intermediaries and cultural mediators, balancing fidelity to meaning with audience engagement, persuasive effectiveness, and cultural sensitivity.

Finally, this study opens new avenues for research by emphasizing the need to explore how translators navigate complex cultural, ideological, and rhetorical factors in politically charged texts. Translators must often balance professional guidelines, ethical considerations, and public expectations when making decisions that could influence interpretation and reception. Additionally, emerging technologies like artificial intelligence have the potential to assist translators by providing context−sensitive suggestions, detecting cultural nuances, and offering strategies for handling politically sensitive content without compromising accuracy or integrity. Two important questions for future research emerge: Who determines the boundaries of a translator's decisions in political texts: the Translators' Union, professional ethics, or societal expectations? How can artificial intelligence assist translators in making appropriate decisions when dealing with politically sensitive texts?

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