Imposition of Terminology in Simultaneous Interpretation in Conflict **Zones: Causes and Consequences**

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Abstract: Terminology plays a pivotal role in Simultaneous Interpretation (SI). This article examines the imposition, during the SI process in conflict zones, of terminology not corresponding to the one in the source language. It emphasizes the interplay between terminology and fidelity as key parameters in the assessment of interpretation quality. The article is based on a semi-structured interview conducted in March 2024 with the former Minister of Social Affairs of Lebanon, centering on the imposition of terminology during the SI of a meeting between the UN and Ministry officials. By employing open-ended questions, the interview sought to identify the motivations behind terminology imposition in SI and its repercussions, and to determine its effects on the fidelity and overall quality of SI. The analysis looks into terminology in the political context, the imposition of terminology, and neologisms, and delves into their political use. The study then addresses the case of interpretation of the term "Refugee" in English into "Displaced" in Arabic, set against the backdrop of the conflicts in Lebanon and Syria. It shows how different political perspectives coexist and looks into awareness-raising processes in the political realm. The analysis reveals that terminology imposition serves as a vehicle to convey political messages, but it also helps avoid provocation and protects specific individuals. Moreover, it highlights the detrimental impact on the legal, economic, and social rights of target populations, and the adverse effect on SI fidelity and quality. Ultimately, this study calls for further research into the implications for diverse audiences and the ethical responsibilities of interpreters.

Keywords: Terminology imposition in simultaneous interpretation

Introduction

Simultaneous interpretation is an essential form of language mediation employed extensively by the United Nations (UN) and governments around the globe, particularly in conflict zones involving foreign actors. In this context, terminology is paramount; in sensitive contexts, the precision of terminology becomes even more critical to prevent diplomatic conflicts or other potential incidents.

For the past ten years, I have worked as an Arabic/English interpreter in Lebanon, facilitating meetings between UN agencies and Lebanese Ministries, particularly the Ministry of Social Affairs. These discussions focused on work paths and progress achieved in the provision of assistance to vulnerable people across populations, including Lebanese and other nationals, such as Palestinians, Syrians, and others.

In one notable meeting, at the request of the Minister of Social Affairs, we interpreters, were instructed to interpret the term "Refugee", as used in English by UN agency representatives, into "Displaced" in Arabic, when referring to Syrians in Lebanon. In fact, over the past decade, Lebanon has witnessed and hosted a massive influx of Syrian nationals fleeing conflicts in Syria, while grappling with its own political upheavals, military conflicts, and war. Since 2019, Lebanon has also been engulfed in an unprecedented and multifaceted economic, financial, social and health crisis 1,

¹ Lebanon Crisis Response Plan. https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/104786

eliminating any prospect of being able to answer the needs of "refugees" from various nationalities on its soil.

In this article, we explore the reasons behind the imposition of specific terminology in SI, and its potential legal, social, and economic consequences. Moreover, as interpreters strive for excellence in their work, we examine how terminology imposition affects fidelity to the original message, and therefore the quality of the interpreted message. It finally offers perspectives of further studies related to the impact on different audiences and ethical implications for interpreters.

Theoretical foundation

On Quality of SI

It was Plato who coined the term "poiótes", rendered in Latin by Cicero into "qualitas", from which the English word "quality"², indicating a property or attribute, encompassing the notion of an internal feature of an offering. In fact, quality is defined as the standard of something as measured against other things of a similar kind³. The concept of quality has developed considerably since; back in medieval Europe, the quality movement was founded when craftsmen started to organize themselves into unions called "guilds" in order to develop rules for product and service quality⁴. Today, Quality Management is a discipline adopted by numerous companies worldwide, whereby they intentionally and consciously oversee all activities and tasks that must be accomplished to maintain a desired level of excellence⁵.

When it comes to interpretation, research on quality assurance of interpreting services dates back to the 1980s (Pöchhacker, 1994a). The concept of quality has been said to be relative, and quality characterized as a social construct, as it depends not only on the person who is performing the quality assessment process of the translation or interpretation, but also on the specific context or given situation (Grbić, 2008). The quality of an interpretation is therefore never inherent in the interpretation itself but attributed to it by somebody who is also bound by time, culture and context (Pradas Macías, 2023). The International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) refers to "quality" as "that elusive something, which everyone recognizes but no one can successfully define" (AIIC. 1982, in Zwischenberger, 2010, p.128); it constitutes more of a subjective, intrinsic characteristic of something. Measuring and assessing an intrinsic feature is tricky and can depend on several factors, including the person who is assessing it, the context, and the standards or benchmarks that have been developed for that matter (Grbić, 2008). In 1986, Austrian translation expert and interpreter Bühler asked AIIC members to rate the importance of various linguistic and extra-linguistic criteria for interpretation; her list of criteria "became something like the backbone of empirical research on quality in conference interpreting" (Pöchhacker & Zwischenberger, 2010, p.1). To assess interpretation quality, professional standards - required or agreed level of quality or attainment⁶, have thus been developed and adopted, aiming to measure the degree of fulfillment of each parameter in a given interpretation task. Interpretation quality can thus be said to be "a subjectively weighted sum" (Gile, 1995, p.151) of those parameters.

⁵ Quality Management. https://www.investopedia.com/terms/q/qualitymanagement.asp#:~:text=Quality%20management%20is%20the%20act,quality%20control%20and%20quality%20improvement Investopedia. Retrieved April 30, 2024

² A Grotesque Word. https://laudatortemporisacti.blogspot.com/2004/06/grotesque-word.html

³ What is quality? https://www.un-ilibrary.org/content/books/9789213614891s009-c001

⁴ The History of Quality. https://asq.org/quality-resources/history-of-quality

⁶ The 8 most used standards and metrics for Translation Quality Evaluation. https://www.taus.net/resources/blog/the-8-mostused-standards-and-metrics-for-translation-quality-evaluation

These parameters have been classified into content-related, form-related, and deliveryrelated criteria (Zwischenberger, 2010), and are the following:

Consistency with the original or Fidelity, Logical Cohesion or Coherence, Completeness or Accuracy, Correct Terminology, Correct Grammar, Appropriate Style, Fluency of Delivery, Lively Intonation, Pleasant Voice, Synchronicity, and Native Accent.

On Fidelity in SI

In translation, "fidelity to the information content of the source text is generally viewed as one of the major determinants of translation quality" (Gile, 2017, p.51). Similarly, Moser (1996) stated that consumers considered fidelity, or consistency with the original, to be the most important parameter in the assessment of a good interpretation. Numerous names have been given to this parameter (Nobs-Federer, Pradas Macías & Collados Aís, 2011): fidelity, message integrity, sense consistency with the original message, faithful image, loyalty to the speaker, exact and faithful reproduction, or fidelity to the source. Fidelity involves using consistent terminology, tone, and style, giving listeners the sense of reliability, of faithfulness or fidelity to the original message. Similarly, "consistency with the original" refers to maintaining uniformity across the rendering of the original statement into the target language (TL). Whatever the denomination chosen, fidelity to the source message is considered one of the major determinants of translation's- and therefore, interpretation's quality, and interpreters are expected to be faithful when rendering the message from the source language (SL) into the target one. This has been written about at length (Gile, 2017; Gile, 1995; Moody, 2011), however, it remains a complex concept.

"Faithfulness/fidelity" in translation means "the quality of being accurate, reliable, and exact" (Guranilk, 1979 in Kolawole & Salawu, 2008). For some researchers, this means rendering a word-for-word translation of the original message into the target language⁷; others believe that fidelity to the source message means transmitting the meaning of the message. The Interpretive Theory of Translation (Seleskovitch & Lederer, 1984) was in fact developed by Danica Seleskovitch, one of the AIIC co-founders, who taught that absolute fidelity could be achieved only through the interpretation of meaning (la théorie du sens, or the Interpretive Theory of Translation, 1976), rather than a mere literal transcoding of words. This theory lies on the essential principle that translation is not a work on language or words, but rather one on the message or the meaning.

What is fidelity in interpretation? "To what, or to whom, are we to be faithful?" (Moody, 2011, p.37). This question of loyalty lies at the base of functionalism in translation (Nord, 1991) and interpreting studies (Pöchhacker, 1994b). In fact, Reiss and Vermeer (1984) developed a theory whose central idea is that the function or "the Skopos of the text determines the translational process" (Pradas Macías, 2023, p.69), with the Skopos theory itself encompassing three rules: (1) The Skopos rule (purpose and intended function of a translational action), (2) The Coherence rule (any target text should make sense), and (3) The Fidelity rule (intertextual coherence between the source and target texts) (Zhang, 2016). Pöchhacker (1994b) supports this theory by developing the multilevel functionalist model, which involves the aim, the purpose, the function and the intention of a source text (Pradas Macías, 2023).

Kolawole and Salawu (2008) state that being loyal or faithful in interpretation means conveying "the message from one language into another by producing the same effect in the other language, in sense and in form", and that faithfulness to the original means

What Bible translation should I use? https://www.ucg.org/learn/bible-questions-and-answers/what-bible-translation-should-iuse

loyalty not only to the words used, but also to the meaning that the (author) is transmitting. The interpreter thus has to understand the sense of the message, and grasp the intent of the speaker that is circulated through this statement. The nuance here, as stated by Moody (2011, p.46), is that "the interpreter is faithful to the goals of each speaker".

Even semantic fidelity [...] is no longer considered a necessary and sufficient condition for fidelity, as both source texts and target texts are viewed as statements with specific objectives, and fidelity to objectives may call for some information addition. (Gile, 2017, p.52).

On Terminology in SI

"Correct Terminology" is another SI quality parameter. A term is a word or expression that has a precise meaning in some uses or is peculiar to a subject⁸, and terminology refers to the technical words or expressions that are used in a particular subject of study or profession. As for "correct", it means "exact" or "precise".

Several terminological theories have been developed, including the general theory of terminology (Wüster, 1979), socio-terminology (Delavigne & Gaudin, 2022), the communicative theory of terminology (Cabré, 1999), socio-cognitive terminology (Temmerman, 2000), and frame-based terminology (Faber, 2022). "The General Theory of Terminology is based on the significance and delineation of concepts from each other" (Packeiser, 2009, p.16). A concept is an element of thinking that comprises the characteristics common to a number of objects, and "specialized languages are characterized in using clearly defined concepts to which preferably unambiguous terms are assigned" (Nedobity, 1983, p.69). Terminologist Wüster considered that terms have only one specific meaning and that they have to be standardized (Will, 2007).

According to León¹⁰, terminology's importance is explained by the fact that it "helps us to fully understand specific topics". In any type of communication, namely simultaneous interpretation, precise terminology:

"Can help people [...] communicate more efficiently. It [...] reduces ambiguity and increases clarity, which makes it an important factor in quality. [...] Terminology management is obviously an essential part of the translation [...] process. Translators, for example, use terminology to make their translations more precise and consistent. [...] Using the approved terminology will ensure that the content is standardized and consistently written, the terms are correctly used and accurately translated, and the documentation is consistent in all languages. [...] Unmanaged terminology can have serious consequences, including delays, inconsistent language/documentation, misunderstandings, high risk of translation errors, [...] and even legal issues. (León¹¹)

Moreover, the use of terminology contributes to the flow of knowledge from one language to another. As stated by Nedobity (1983, p.69): "Terminologies have an influence on scientific, technical and economic progress. Deficient terminologies endanger the information flow."

⁸ Term. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/term Merriam-Webster. Retrieved 19-10-2024.

⁹ Terminology. https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/terminology Longman Dictionary. Retrieved 19-10-2024.

¹⁰ The Importance of Terminology and Terminology Management. https://leontechtrans.com/importance-of-terminology-andterminology-management/

¹¹ The Importance of Terminology and Terminology Management. https://leontechtrans.com/importance-of-terminology-and- terminology-management/

When performing their job, interpreters are often placed between subject-matter experts and asked to enable communication between them. Despite not being themselves experts in all topics, [...] they are nevertheless expected to put together the terminological information needed to do the job (Rodriguez & Schnell, 2009) and be able to render the same level of expertise and technicality from one language into another. Therefore, it is an imperative for interpreters to research terminology ahead of every conference. Terminology preparation occurs at different stages. According to Gile (2002), they consist of: advance preparation; and during the conference preparation. Rodriguez and Schnell (2009) defined them as: ahead of the conference; during the work in the booth; and after the work in the booth, when the interpreter follows up on the terminology work done beforehand. In the same work, they also reference Kutz (2000) who distinguishes between theme-based preparation, linguistic preparation, translation preparation, and interpretation preparation.

In Terminological Competence in Translation, Montero and Faber (2009, p.91) affirmed that "the adequacy of the terminology in a text, as well as its suitability for the level of specialization determines to a great extent the quality of a translation". Indeed, Garcia de Quesada (2007, p.129) stated that the "correct use of terminology is a key indicator of quality interpretation". The importance of terminology in SI has also been addressed by Daniel Gile. In his work on technical terms in SI (Gile, 1985), he explains the incidence of specialized vocabulary of technical conferences on interpretation, and states that the inability of interpreters to capture or restitute information conveyed by specialized terms contributes to the major part of information loss in technical interventions.

Therefore, when it comes to using the correct terminology in a TL interpretation, we understand that it involves the use of precise words that have been approved to be accurately corresponding or equivalent to the ones in the SL. A better and more accurate use of terminology is considered to yield a better SI quality. Using the correct terminology is therefore crucial in interpretation.

Conversely, how does the use of incorrect or inaccurate terminology affect interpretation? Garcia de Quesada (2011) mentioned that the poor management of terminology by the interpreter is directly linked to essential parameters of the quality of interpretation. Moreover, it has been proven that inaccurate interpretations result in poor SI quality and can lead to misunderstandings, lawsuits, problematic international relations, or even catastrophic events. In legal interpretation, for example, Court interpreters must be trained [...] to deliver complete and accurate information [...] so as not to change the meaning or intent of a witness' statement¹². In fact, technical translation and interpretation is where terminology matters most. Here, poor terminological accuracy can have serious consequences. A specialized translation company illustrates this in the following example¹³:

If an instruction manual for industrial machinery has been badly translated, an error in terminology could result in a procedure being performed incorrectly, putting the safety of equipment and workers at risk.

Studies and discussions on the impact of inaccurate terminology, including the Smoktunowicz et al. (2020) study, show that:

Inconsistent terminology results in miscommunication between stakeholders.

¹² Legal Translation & Interpretation Mistakes can be Costly. In Rapport International https://www.rapporttranslations.com/blog/legal-translation-interpretation-mistakes-can-be-costly

¹³ Traducendo Ltd. The Importance of terminological accuracy in translation. https://traducendo.net/en/the-importance-ofterminological-accuracy-in-translation/

- A common glossary is a potential solution to remedy inconsistent terminology issue.
- Terminology errors can negatively affect the quality of the output 14.
- Something poorly translated could lead to putting the interlocutor at risk¹⁵.

This work deals specifically with terminology accuracy in Arabic, prompting a brief overview at the language's origins, which can be traced back to the 8th century B.C.16, and at Arabic specialized terminology. The development of Arabic literary language accelerated between the 8th to the 12th centuries C.E., with the emergence of Islam in the Arabian Peninsula (Abdunabiev, 2023). "During this period, Arabic became the language of Muslim science" (Abdunabiev, 2023, p.286), knowing that "information in scientific and technical texts is conveyed through specialized terms" (Jahonovna & Avazbekovna, 2024, p.279). The foundation of specialized terminology in the classic Arabic began in the 8th century C.E., when Arabic lexicography started with specialized glossaries on topics like men, horses, snakes, weapons, etc. and as scholars found it useful to compile terminological dictionaries for the benefit of their students and the laymen (Mahyub, 2024). However, this has changed with time. Nowadays, like many languages on the receiving end of scientific and technical innovations, Arabic is under growing pressure to create an ever-increasing number of terms (Yousif, 2010). In response, Arabic employs various strategies, including the incorporation or borrowing of new terminology from west European languages 17, or Arabicization - the process of transforming foreign concepts into Written Standard Arabic (Al-Athwary & Ali, 2024). This knowledge is particularly crucial for translators and interpreters, as being aware of these strategies enables them find appropriate term equivalents in Arabic during their assignments.

On Imposed Terminology in SI

Due to several factors such as lack of experience¹⁸, "deficient language skills, memory" (Pratiwi, 2016, p.130), or other factors that are empirically difficult to explain (Gile, 1995), interpreters sometimes use inaccurate terminology. Moreover, interpreting during crisis or war times certainly subjects interpreters to specific factors, including conflict of interest and language benefitting hierarchies (Moreno Bello, 2014, p.69). In such circumstances, terminology not corresponding to the standardized one can be sometimes imposed in the SI process. As Deist (2022) puts it, "language is also subject to [...] impositions from actors seeking to control or shape speech for their benefit, e.g. kings, clerics, government officials, politicians, journalists, or professors."

How does such imposition affect the interpretation process and the interpreted message? In this case, are interpreters considered not to be faithful? Garcia de Quesada (2011) says that, according to a recent study, correct use of terminology [...] versus manipulated terminology, was found to affect the overall quality assessment of simultaneous interpretation. Previous works have tackled terminology and fidelity in SI, especially regarding interpreters having to "remain impartial and objective, [...] providing faithful interpretation, not [...] altering, adding, or omitting the message conveyed by the speaker for whatever purposes (Ren & Yin, 2020, p.201), thus from an interpreter's own neutrality or ethical standing point of view. However, very little has been researched and

¹⁴ Traducendo Ltd. The Importance of terminological accuracy in translation. https://traducendo.net/en/the-importance-ofterminological-accuracy-in-translation/

¹⁵ Traducendo Ltd. The Importance of terminological accuracy in translation. https://traducendo.net/en/the-importance-of- terminological-accuracy-in-translation/

¹⁶ Arabic Language History. https://renaissance-translations.com/arabic-language- history/#:~:text=Arabic%20Language%20Origin&text=Very%20early%20indications%20of%20the,and%20words%20to%20the%20

¹⁷ Arabic Terminology. http://www.jamshid-ibrahim.net/index.php?id=213

¹⁸ Common Mistakes in New Interpreters. https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/common-mistakes-new-interpreters-sao-khuetranslation-vsugc/

explored about the imposition of terminology in SI, specifically in crisis or conflict zones, despite the fact that we know that it exists as a reality on the ground. To the best of our knowledge, this work is one of the first few attempts to research this line so far.

Objectives

This work therefore tackles the case of the imposition of terminology in SI in the language combination English-Arabic, and the issue of terminology accuracy. The objective of this study is to analyze the quality of an interpreted message following the imposition of terminology. From this main objective ensue two specific ones:

- 1. Understand the reasons behind terminology imposition in SI and its potential consequences - legal, social, and economic, on the concerned people.
- 2. Examine the faithfulness of interpretation to the original message, and the quality of the interpreted message when using imposed terminology.

Method

This article is based on a qualitative interview held with the former Minister of Social Affairs in Lebanon's caretaker government, His Excellency Mr. Hector Hajjar, on March 5, 2024; it follows my personal experience as an interpreter in the context of the imposition of interpretation of "Refugee" in English into "Displaced" in Arabic, when speaking of Syrian nationals in Lebanon.

Mr. Hajjar holds a degree in social activism and has worked in the field of social service. He assumed office in September 2021 as the Minister of Social Affairs of Lebanon. Before his political career, he worked as a dentist and founded several organizations to help disadvantaged communities and people with special needs

The interview was semi-structured, with nine pre-determined open-ended questions to find out more about the use of specific terminology in political discourse and to discuss the specific case of term imposition encountered in that context, and with three ad-hoc follow-up questions to follow the natural path of the conversation and keep it moving, and explore particular responses.

The first script of the interview was drafted in English in February 2024 and included a lengthy introduction and nine straightforward questions. The first revision 19 focused on the aim of the interview being part of the assessment of simultaneous interpretation quality line, and made sure the questions were non-biased. A second revision suggested changing the order of some questions, removing possibly suggested answers, and reformulating a few in order to remain diplomatically correct, while making reference to international instruments such as those used by the United Nations. Once the questions were finalized, they were translated into modern standard Arabic and reviewed again to reach the final Arabic version on March 4, 2024.

On March 5, the interview was held in the Lebanese Arabic dialect, guided by the final classical Arabic version of the set of questions, and had a 30-minute duration. Due to the interactive nature of the session, the order of questions was not completely followed. but was adapted to follow the natural course of the conversation and the additional information that His Excellency provided.

¹⁹ I would like to thank my doctoral thesis supervisors, E. Macarena Pradas Macias and Bachir Mahyub, for their valuable inputs in revising and improving the interview script.

On a different note, the issue of ethics was not tackled in this interview, as the goal was to analyze the linguistic aspect around the use of specific terms, rather than discuss the who and legitimacy behind it.

Finally, I am aware of the fact that the methodology used here presents potential limitations, namely as it is based on a single interview, which constitutes in reality a small sample on which I am relying to study terminology imposition in SI. However, given the high-level profile of the person interviewed, the weight of the interview and the importance of the imposition become higher. This interview, despite being held with only one person, does not reflect only one person's perspective, rather that of a whole ministry's, thus a country's national policy, as the minister represents the head of the institution that adopts this policy and perspective toward Syrians in Lebanon.

The aim of this study is not quantitative representativeness per se, but to raise awareness on the issue of terminology imposition by analyzing real examples from a qualitative perspective.

Results

Terminology in the Political Context

To begin, we sought to understand the significance the interviewee places on terminology in the diplomatic sphere. His Excellency stressed that "it is essential to use specific terminology because some terms carry legal dimensions and other ones carry political dimensions". He further noted, "As a political man, I choose my terms with precision, taking into consideration their different dimensions, depending on whom I am addressing."

From this, we concluded that the interviewee is highly conscious of the terms he uses in his speeches and statements. Political leaders, in fact, use various techniques in their discourse to convey their messages, engage their audiences, garner approval and support, and shape public opinion. While employing specific political terminology is a key strategy, it is equally important to use a jargon that the audience understands, hence the importance for politicians to know their audiences; using terms that are inappropriate to an audience could lead to misunderstandings and hinder the achievement of the set objectives.

Imposition of Terminology in SI

As an interpreter, I can attest that our training emphasized the importance of using accurate and equivalent terminology when interpreting from Source Language to Target Language. The more accurate the term translated, especially in technical contexts, the better the rendered interpretation. However, my experience has shown that interpreters often face constraints in their choice of terms, especially in crises and conflict zones. The degree of flexibility available to interpreters in these situations can vary greatly, conditioned by time pressure and the authority granted to them.

Several times throughout my professional career, specific terminology has been imposed on us interpreters; the major case I have encountered is the one discussed in this article and is the following:

The request by the Minister of Social Affairs to interpret the term "Refugee" in English into "Displaced" (نازح - nāzih) in Arabic, when speaking of Syrians on Lebanese territory, instead of the standardized or agreed-upon translation of that word (خجئ lāji'), translating

the divergent points of view between the UN agencies and the Lebanese government, regarding Syrian nationals on Lebanese territory.

During the interview, I found out that by imposing a specific term, the Minister sought to transmit a specific message to his interlocutors and to cause a specific impact on them. The imposition of terminology aligns with the Minister's objectives and translates a fundamental political disagreement with the other interlocutors – the UN representatives - in the discussion. Had there not been a disagreement in opinion, such imposition would likely have been unnecessary. As we will explore further, the term the Minister prefers, in contrast to the one used by the UN, carries different humanitarian, political, social, economic, education, health, local and international implications - commitments and responsibilities. Therefore, these terms cannot be used interchangeably here. As Mr. Hajjar states:

"They understand my message but do not accept it. And they impose on me a message that I do not accept. There is nothing but a political message being sent here, and the consequence of the political message is a humanitarian, social, educational, health, and international commitment, and a commitment toward the country that has hosted the people who sought refuge in it."

Thus, in conflict zones, one technique employed to convey political messages is the imposition of specific terminology in the interpretation processes. This could be controversial, as the imposed terms may diverge significantly from the standardized and conventionally approved terms in the TL, leading to inaccuracies in interpretation. This is contrasted with cases of imposition of terminology that does not deviate much from the terms that interpreters would typically use, as it represents only institutional preferences.

Other cases of terminology imposition that I have encountered in my work as an interpreter, in conflict zones, had the objectives of avoiding to provoke the interlocutor, and of protecting certain people.

Neologisms in Politics

The interviewee further stated that "some terms are rigid, and others change with time". To illustrate this point, he mentioned the terms "Lebanonisation" and "Balkanization", used in political contexts, and their translations into Arabic. "Lebanonisation" 20 was a neologism coined in 1983 by then Israeli President Shimon Peres²¹, which indicates the process of a prosperous, developed, politically stable country descending into a civil war or becoming a failed state, as exemplified by Lebanon. It describes "the process of fragmentation of a state, resulting from the confrontation between diverse denominational/sectarian communities, in allusion to the clashes that Lebanon has experienced in the 1980s"22. The Arabic translation of this term was discussed, going from "adding the Lebanese cachet" (إضفاء الطابع اللبناني - lḍfā' al-ṭābi' al-lubnānī) to "dividing Lebanon" - تقسيم لبنان - Taqsīm Lubnān). The standardized translation of the term is more of a transliteral one: لبننة (Labnana). This term, denoting fragmentation without secession, thus within the borders of one country²³, has currently resurfaced in the political sphere due to the political and military changes in the region.

²⁰ Lebanonization. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lebanonization Last Accessed 12.06.2025

²¹ On Language: ionization. https://www.nytimes.com/1991/04/21/magazine/on-language-izationization.html# Retrieved 19.10.2024

²² Libanisation. https://www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais/libanisation/46955

²³ Lebanonization. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lebanonization Last Accessed 12.06.2025

In the same context, the term Balkanization (البلقنة - Albalgana) was explored. It refers to "the division of a country into several political units, often unfriendly to one another, or the practice of dividing a country into separate independent states - used to show disapproval²⁴".

When first coined, the terms Lebanonisation and Balkanization were considered as neologisms - "new words or expressions in a language", having been created to depict new situations. Regarding the acceptance of new words, Bauer (1983, p.44) stated that "It is well-known that society does not just painlessly absorb a new term". People will actually complain about it and go through a process to incorporate it in their language, but "when a term is actually accepted by society, it becomes assimilated" (Bauer, 1983, p.44). This said, neologisms can also depict assigning "a new meaning to an existing word or expression." Neologisms have been recognized to be created and used, among others, by politicians, in which case they are called political neologisms. Abdul Ameer Hadi and Muhsin Gharabb Al-Majdawi (2019, p.701) showed "the importance of neologisms in political languages" and concluded that "people who work in the political field use neologisms to give a hidden message or to refer to the opposite of what they mean."

The Case of Refugee vs. Displaced: Semantic Neologism

Going back to the case discussed in this work, that of "Refugee" vs "Displaced", and to the legal definitions of those terms. The 1951 Refugee Convention of the UNHCR defines a "Refugee" as any person who:

owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country²⁵.

The expression "outside the country of his nationality" suggests that those people have crossed an international border.

According to the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement²⁶ "Internally Displaced Persons" are:

persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border.

Lebanon is not a signatory of the 1951 UN Convention related to the Status of Refugees²⁷. According to the convention, refugees would be granted various rights, such as "the right to marry, to access courts for free, to work just as other foreign nationals, and the right to self-employment in agriculture, industry, handicrafts, commerce, as other foreign nationals". The convention also underlies that:

²⁴ Balkanization. https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/balkanization

²⁵ Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/conventionrelating-status-refugees

²⁶ Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. https://docs.un.org/en/E/CN.4/1998/53/Add.2

²⁷ State Parties to the 1951 Refugee Convention. https://www.unhcr.org/media/states-parties-including-reservations-anddeclarations-1951-refugee-convention

the host state shall secure refugee settlement²⁸, accord the same treatment for refugees as nationals in case of rationing²⁹, and accord education to refugees as accorded to nationals with respect to elementary education³⁰; it shall also accord to refugees lawfully staying in its territory, the same treatment with respect to public relief and assistance as that of its nationals³¹, and the right to move freely within its territory³². It shall issue identity papers³³ to them. No contracting state of the said convention shall expel or return a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories³⁴, and it shall, as far as possible, facilitate the assimilation and naturalization of refugees³⁵.

Indeed, if Syrians in Lebanon were granted the legal status of "refugees", Lebanon would be obligated to grant them the above-mentioned associated benefits, something that is unsustainable for the Lebanese state, due to the multiple crises it has been going through for several decades, particularly since 2019. Quite far from that, on the Lebanese political scene, several factions advocate for the return to Syria of the Syrians who fled to Lebanon since 2011, with the exception of those at genuine risk of persecution if they had done so before the fall of Al Assaad regime in December 2024. For Mr. Hajjar, the issue of Syrian displacement is one of "temporary displacement", arguing that:

We hosted them when there was war in Syria; they moved here from the war zone, but now, as the situation has changed in their country, they must return there. 36

To clarify, he states that:

"a 'refugee' is a person whose country has gone through a major crisis that has completely changed the situation there or even made this country disappear from the map. In this case, the return of those people to their land is contingent on a political, international, or a United Nations solution, which is not the case for the Syrians in Lebanon. Displacement better characterizes people who have moved in a rather fast way due to a situation of commotion or chaos, and who have settled temporarily - rather than permanently - in settlements, while awaiting to return to their homes once the situation resolves."

Interestingly, we notice here the introduction of a new "temporal dimension", contrasting with the conventional "geographic dimension" typically associated with the definitions of the terms "refugee" and "displaced', which focus on the fact of crossing - or not - an internationally recognized state border. As per the definition of neologism, the new temporal dimension assigned to the word "displaced" constitutes a semantic neologism, as it attributes a new meaning to an existing word. A "displaced" person is therefore viewed as temporarily displaced, regardless of the distance traveled, and is expected to return to their country of origin after a relatively short time. The case is further illustrated with the displacement of the Lebanese from southern Lebanon, since October 2023, due to Israeli bombings: "Those Lebanese are today displaced inside Lebanon, they have moved from one region to another, and their return will happen when the bombing stops, as, once a ceasefire is announced, they should go back to their villages."

Resonating with the words of the Minister about being informed of contextual developments and accompanying the evolution of terms, the Abdul Ameer Hadi and Muhsin Gharabb Al-Majdawi study (2019, p.704) states that neologisms "appear during

²⁸ The 1951 Refugee Convention, Art. 19

²⁹ The 1951 Refugee Convention, Art. 20

³⁰ The 1951 Refugee Convention, Art. 22

³¹ The 1951 Refugee Convention, Art. 23

³² The 1951 Refugee Convention, Art. 26

³³ The 1951 Refugee Convention, Art. 27

³⁴ The 1951 Refugee Convention, Art. 32

³⁵ The 1951 Refugee Convention, Art. 34

³⁶ This statement was made by mid-2024, before the fall of the Syrian regime of Bashar Al Assad.

the actualization of some events and connect with change in economic, political and other areas", and that "There are many neologisms in political language that refer to the new political structures and the international global politics." Indeed, this semantic neologism accurately reflects a new "political and social situation" or new "reality", related to the massive influx or "displacement" of Syrians to Lebanon, due to local, regional and global politics. Moreover, in line with the statement: "The formation of new words, which are known as neologisms in political dictionary, is due to the fact of conversation between government and society" (Abdul Ameer Hadi & Muhsin Gharabb Al-Majdawi, 2019, p.705), the Minister of Social Affairs is therefore trying to communicate with the local and international audience, to transmit a specific message via this neologism, being that Syrians are only temporarily staying in Lebanon.

Various Political Perspectives

Speaking of the Israel-Palestine case, the interlocutor concluded with: "At least, this is what we believe. As for those who believe something different, this is another story", highlighting the divergent perspectives on the Palestinian issue and his awareness of this complexity. Similarly, in the context of Syria, he remarked: "We have come to realize that our perspective differs from the international one. What we once viewed as an internal political dispute has become something far beyond mere internal politics."

The different perspectives on the Palestinian and Syrian cases demonstrate how things are viewed from divergent angles in the political spectrum, leading to the use of different discourses in communication by each party, and therefore different terminology; it also explains the imposition of specific terminology in SI, aligned with one's political perspective.

In the case studied, if and since the Arabic-speakers answer based on the "displaced" (نازح nāziḥ) principle, using "displaced" in Arabic, which would be translated as "displaced" into English, the other - foreign - party should become aware that their interlocutors are using different terms and therefore have a different perspective on the topic.

From their side, the UN representatives, i.e., the international community, are also deliberate in their choice of words and terms to transmit their messages across. The interviewee notes that his interlocutors at the UN agencies are fully aware of the terms they use, which carry their own political perspective; this suggests that they understand the message conveyed to them through the specific terms used by the Minister. In an attempt to explain the UN perspective, an article published by Al Jazeera on May 10, 2024, titled "What hinders the return of the Syrian refugees from Lebanon to their country?" ³⁷ mentions a one-million-euro European grant to Lebanon, to support Lebanon's stability and prevent Syrian boat migration from Lebanon to Europe. This suggests why the international community considers Syrians in Lebanon "Refugees": The Syrian Al Assad regime was not willing to take them back, and Europe does not want them to immigrate from Lebanon to its territories.

We thus see how language, terms, and SI are manipulated for political purposes at the expense of the fidelity and quality of interpretation, thanks to the political power a party enjoys.

³⁷ https://www.aljazeera.net/politics/2024/5/9/%d9%85%d8%a7-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b0%d9%8a-%d9%8a%d8%b9%d9%8a%d9%82-%d8%b9%d9%88%d8%af%d8%a9-%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%84<mark>%d8%a7%d8%ac%d8%a6%d9%8a%d9%86</mark>-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b3%d9%88%d8%b1%d9%8a%d9%8a%d9%86-%d9%85%d9%86

Misunderstandings and Raising Awareness

While the interlocutors with different political perspectives may understand each other's messages, we cannot assume the same for the broader audience. The political messages conveyed through the chosen terminology imposed in interpretation might not be captured by everyone. For instance, if the Arabic-speaking audience is unaware of the imposition, it may be misled into thinking that both parties share the same perspectives, as it only hears the word "Displaced" in Arabic. In this case, if it answers based on the principle of "displaced" (نازح / nāziḥ) without being aware of the different positions, misalignment with its English-speaking interlocutors may occur. On the other hand, those unfamiliar with the core differences in meaning and rights between the relevant terms - here "displaced" and "refugee" - might also fail to grasp the conveyed message and might also erroneously assume that both parties to the discussion are aligned on this issue.

To counter this "lack of awareness" surrounding the meanings of new terminology used, politicians might resort to making available a plethora of information to their audiences, to educate them and shape their opinion. As Abdul Ameer Hadi and Muhsin Gharabb Al-Majdawi (2019, p.705) wrote: "Language users are flattered and commanded by politics to adopt replacements for words" (Abdul Ameer Hadi & Muhsin Gharabb Al-Majdawi, 2019, p.705). Moreover, "politicians are considered the master of producing words that are used through their campaign to skillfully affect the minds of voters". (Abdul Ameer Hadi & Muhsin Gharabb Al-Majdawi, 2019, p.706)

Speaking of the "unaware" audience, the Minister stated:

Of course, it will not get the message, this is why, in my speeches, as a politician, and regarding this topic...what I am trying to do is raise awareness. My speech is equivalent to an awareness-raising process. Awakening the subconscious mind that is dormant among the Lebanese, and I always do that to tell them that there is something that is being pushed through according to the "Boiling Frog Syndrome". Beware, your subconscious should wake up and say "No".

Discussion

In the political realm, terminology is sometimes imposed in the simultaneous interpretation process.

On a first level, this work aimed to identify some underlying reasons behind this phenomenon.

Reasons

By interviewing a high-ranking official, this study established that a major reason behind the imposition of terminology is to convey a political message or perspective. This phenomenon is mainly due to divergence in policies and disagreement between interlocutors, and is possible because of the power or authority enjoyed by the imposing party. For example, when a local party imposes terminology on a foreign counterpart, it reflects the local authorities' narrative that they wish to promote, rather than adhering to the foreign perspective, dictated by international politics.

In other cases of terminology imposition in SI that I have encountered, the reason was to avoid provoking the interlocutor and to maintain a smooth and peaceful conversation flow; in such case, while there may still be diverging perspectives between parties, the

imposing party prioritizes fostering dialogue over expressing its own beliefs. Yet another reason for terminology imposition has been to protect specific individuals, particularly when one party lacks a comprehensive understanding of the other party's context. In such cases, the party may use a term that is technically correct, but whose equivalent translation could potentially put certain individuals at risk. By imposing a more neutral or context-sensitive term in SI, the conversation can proceed without jeopardizing anyone's safety.

Consequences

On a second level, the study also explored the potential consequences of terminology imposition in SI, examining the effects on the groups of people affected by the imposition and the quality of the interpreted message.

Regarding the people affected, legally, a term in the SL could entail asylum and permanent settlement rights, whereas the imposed term in the TL could deny those rights to certain individuals.

Economically, an SL term could legitimate financial aid and public assistance by the host state for a category of people, including cash assistance and material support, potentially creating economic disparities in the host country. In contrast, the imposed TL term would restrict and frame such assistance.

Socially, an SL term might grant certain groups the right to integration and naturalization in a country, potentially leading to demographic shifts, whereas the imposed TL term might aim to mitigate such national changes.

From other cases of terminology imposition in SI, I was able to conclude that an imposed TL term could also present a softened or euphemized view of a reality, and allow to deescalate tension and a smooth communication. Finally, imposed TL terms could also serve to protect certain people from potential risks.

From an interpretation perspective, we know that interpreters use terminology to construct the target message, regardless of whether they are faithful to words, meaning, or intent. As SI quality parameters, fidelity and terminology are closely interconnected, since the terms we use play a crucial role in assessing our faithfulness to the original message. It is essential to examine how these two parameters interact to influence the overall quality of SI performance, as when interpreters use accurate or standardized terminology, they are presumably perceived as being more faithful to the original message³⁸, thereby enhancing the interpretation's effectiveness.

Terminology, Fidelity to SM, Quality of TM

In assessing the quality of the interpreted message, "correct terminology" and "fidelity" were the two key parameters examined. When using imposed inaccurate terminology, fidelity and interpretation quality were impacted.

First, if fidelity results from a word-for-word interpretation, then using imposed inaccurate terms in SI compromises this fidelity. In such cases, we are not accurately translating the original terminology, resulting in a lack of fidelity and therefore a decline in the quality of SI.

³⁸ https://www.cttic.org/interpretation/

Second, if fidelity is defined as adhering to the original meaning, then the meaning in Arabic is different from the original one in English and has totally different implications and rights for the people concerned. This difference in meaning results in a lack of fidelity, leading as well to a poor SI quality.

Third, if fidelity is defined as accurately conveying the speaker's intent, the interpretation into Arabic - the direction of terminology imposition - fails to capture that intent, regardless of the audience's level of awareness, leading to a lack of fidelity to the original speaker's intent. In this scenario, we may be said to be faithful to the minister's assignment and thus hear his intentions in interpretation into Arabic; however, the message fails to reflect those of the original speaker and message (UN agency representatives). Moreover, for Arabic-speaking UN personnel, the translation misrepresents the original message and intention of their English-speaking counterparts. The imposition therefore negatively affects the quality of the interpretation as well, and increases the likelihood of misunderstandings and misalignments, especially for those in the audience who are unaware of it-

Impact on the Various Audiences

The array of consequences of terminology imposition and the SI quality assessment results can vary significantly, depending on the target audience. Further studies on the effects of such imposition could therefore be carried out in this direction, as the impact on the interlocutors unaware of the imposition could vary in degree from confusion, misunderstandings, to diplomatic incidents, depending on their status and the issue at hand.

Conversely, in the case studied, one could argue that avoiding terminology imposition would allow the Arabic-speaking audience to hear "Refugee" (لاجئ - اقإنا), when interpreted from English into Arabic, and "Displaced" (النزح nāziḥ) in Arabic when used by the Minister and his team. This distinction could more effectively convey the divide and disagreement between the parties – nuances that are obscured by the imposition. This could provide the target audience with a more accurate understanding of the exchanged messages and the divergent positions held by each party, ultimately enhancing their awareness of the situation. However, this might undermine the strength of the political message sent by the Minister to the UN representatives.

Interpreter's Ethics

An essential aspect of the imposition of terminology in SI, which could also be explored in further studies, is related to the relevant ethical implications for interpreters. It might seem unethical for interpreters to use imposed, imprecise terminology, and be unfaithful to the source message (Clifford, 2004), as interpreters are expected to be accurate (Montero & Faber 2009), and reflect what was said without any amendments (UNHCR, 2017). Interpreters do face ethical conflicts (UNHCR, 2017), but often have little leeway to change the course of things. However, as seen with the four interpreting ethical approaches (Clifford, 2004), ethics might be weighted according to different norms, and in conflict zone interpreting, ethics might be debatable rather than absolute.

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