



## Research Article

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# Reframing the Arabic Narratives on *Daesh* in the English Media: The Ideological Impact

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**Abstract:** This paper discusses the dynamic role of translators in possibly promoting certain ideologies and political agendas by presenting stories through the lens of an ideologically laden meta-narrative. It compares the representation of ‘*Daesh*’ in the narratives of Arabic editorials and their English translations published by the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI). MEMRI is a pro-Israeli organization, widely cited by leading Western media outlets, especially in the US. The study adopts the narrative theory-informed analysis of Baker (2006) as its theoretical framework to examine how narrative is used to legitimize, normalize, and justify certain actions to the public. The findings suggest that through translation, MEMRI draws upon the meta-narrative of the War on Terror in furthering its ideologically laden agenda of terrorist Arabs and Muslims by publishing selective and decontextualized excerpts and mistranslation of concepts such as *Daesh* (داعش), *Jihad* (جهاد), and *Jizya* (جزية).

**Keywords:** Ideology, ISIS, media narratives, MEMRI, translation, War on Terror.

## 1 Introduction

Terror attacks and military conflicts have become one of the world’s primary concerns. This is because these attacks and conflicts are no longer localized, potentially affecting every nation. Conflict, which can be political, economic, religious, social, and even academic, has become a norm due to differences in interests among individuals and/or groups. Thus, both poles of a conflict seek to legitimize currently happening events and actions through a narration of stories that represent both point of views and in such a way that both goals are supported (Baker, 2006). Therefore, translation - as a way of communication across the globe where the international arena is concerned - enables both poles of a conflict to achieve their goals using the narration of various stories targeting the international sector.

Translation, in this regard, is an accessible (re)framing device that inserts particular ideological loadings in the (re)construction and (re)negotiation of the source narrative. It is assumed that when one looks at the source text with different intentions, and from different perspectives, different interpretations of the text will arise (Al-Aqad, 2015). Accordingly, different translators produce differently translated texts and different readers of the same translated text suggest different interpretations (Ietcu-Fairclough, 2008). A translator is thus a text producer, albeit one that could produce a text differently from the original based on a set of assumptions and judgments on the cognitive environment of the target text user and culture (Hatim & Mason, 1997). However, such assumptions and judgments, represented in the translator’s systematic linguistic choices, are considered social and ideological settings of the text production and reception.

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The ‘War on Terror’ offers a good example of (inter)national conflict where translation is “central to the ability of all parties to legitimize their version of events” (Baker, 2006, p. 2). In the present day, the narrative of the ‘War on Terror’ is:

Aggressively sustained and promoted through a myriad of channels across the entire world [...] that cuts across geographical and national boundaries and directly impacts the lives of every one of us, in every sector of society (Baker, 2006, p. 45).

Framing the War on Terror narrative led to the imprisonment of Al-Jazeera journalist Taysir Alony for 7 years in Spain for his links with Al-Qaeda. He was first arrested in September 2003 by the Spanish police under the suspicion of being affiliated with Al-Qaeda. This suspicion was based partly on his ability to interview Al-Qaeda’s then leader, Osama Bin Laden, a month after the events of 11 September 2001, and partly on his coverage of both wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. In its attempt to establish connections between Alony and Al-Qaeda, the Spanish police employed decontextualized and ideologically framed excerpts from Alony’s conversations. As Taibi and Martin elaborate:

Alony and his co-defendants’ indictments were based at least partially on tapped conversations, which were inadequately translated [...] were framed in a manner that served the case of the prosecution in the context of the ‘War on Terror’ (2012, p. 78).

Further, the message of the media has a significant influence over the audience such that the audience are now placing much more belief in it than ever (Zhang, 2011). Accordingly, Bielsa and Bassnett argue that, “translation is of the utmost importance in the news agencies and that it is inseparable from other journalistic practices that intervene in the production of news” (2009, p. 56). However, most readers of foreign news on the Internet and printed newspapers are very likely unaware of the major role translation plays in mass media news reporting (Schäffner & Bassnett, 2010). Therefore, the aim of this study is to shed light on the role of translators and translation agencies of international media outlets in possibly inserting their own perspectives and agenda in the target text. More specifically, this study analyzes the narratives of *Daesh* (also known as ISIS, ISIL and IS) in the Arabic editorials and their English translations published by the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI). MEMRI is a Washington-based think tank established in February 1998 by Israelis Yigal Carmon and Meyrav Wurmser aiming mainly at translating Arabic media to US officials in particular and the Western audience in general in regard to the serious issues such as terrorism. It is widely cited by Western including the US leading media outlets. However, MEMRI’s translations were criticized by some prominent journalists and politicians and recommended by others.<sup>1</sup>

## 1.1 Daesh and its representations in the local, regional, and international media

In these contemporary times, the translations and reports of stories on *Daesh* illustrate an interesting example of the various ideological stands of media outlets regarding the so-called ‘reality’. ‘ISIS’ (the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria), or its most preferred original Arabic acronym *Daesh* (داعش) [that disconnects the group from any link to Islam and furthermore, points to the absence of state constituents], is a military group that emerged as an Al-Qaeda affiliate in Iraq in 2004. It was first called Al-Qaeda in Iraq under the leadership of Jordanian Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, aiming to fight the American occupation in Iraq (Welby, 2014). In 2006, resulting from the unity of six military groups, the group changed its name to the Mujahideen Shura Council in Iraq. In the same year, al-Zarqawi was killed and Abu Omar al-Baghdadi was nominated as the leader of the group. The organization then changed its name to the Islamic State of Iraq. In 2010, Abu Omar al-Baghdadi was killed leading to Abu Baker al-Baghdadi assuming leadership of the group. As the Syrian civil war in 2011 erupted, the group extended its activities to cover Syria under the name Al-Nusra Front (جبهة النصرة). In 2013, the group announced the emergence of the Al-Nusra Front resulting in the formation of *al-Dawla al-Islamiya fi al-Iraq wa al-Sham (DAESH)*, which literally means the Islamic

<sup>1</sup> For an exhaustive discussion on MEMRI see Chapter 4 of Hijjo (2018)

State of Iraq and Syria. However, in 2014, the Al-Nusra Front announced its dissociation from the group. In the same year, Abu Baker al-Baghdadi announced the establishment of a caliphate, thus changing the group name to the Islamic State, allowing it to extend its activities worldwide. The international sector and Muslims across the world have criticized the group for its violent attacks and executions (McCabe, 2016). The United Nations, the European Union, and many countries including the United Kingdom, the United States, Saudi Arabia, and Malaysia have designated the organization as a terrorist organization. Among these extreme violent attacks and executions include the group's attacks in Paris in November 2015, resulting in the killing of 130 people (McCabe, 2016) and execution by burning to death Jordanian pilot, Muath al-Kasasbeh, in January 2015.

*Daesh* has been described and reported differently in local, regional, and international media in accordance with the ideology and institutional policy of the media outlets. In a recent study, 56% of the international media reported *Daesh* as a 'state', 45% as a 'terrorist organization', 10% as 'religious fanatics/sectarians', 7% as 'insurgents', 6% as 'a murderer', 5% as 'a global threat', 1% as 'lunatics', and 1% as 'an emanation of true Islam/personification of the 'religion of war'' (Davydov et al., 2016).

## 1.2 The notions of narratives and framing

According to the Oxford Dictionary, narrative is “[a] spoken or written account of connected events; a story”<sup>2</sup>. Generally, scholars agree with this definition, adding that narrative is a story of events that we experience, which changes and develops over time; it has a beginning, plot and an end with temporal and causal sequences (Polkinghorne, 1988; Denzin, 1989; Abbs & Richardson, 1990; Graesser et al., 1991; Champion, 1997; Wennerstrom, 2001). Bruner (1991) emphasizes that narrative is a way of giving meaning to a story. Whitebrook (2001) notes that narrative analysis allows us to understand one's political view, ideology, and identity. Narrative analysis also explains how news stories change people's behavior rather than social factors such as race, color, and gender (Baker, 2006). Narratives, therefore, “play a significant role in constructing and maintaining identities” (Brännlund et al., 2013, p. 74). Bruner (1991) argues that the method of the narrative in conveying a certain 'ideological' message is far from the actual text message. Baker (2007) also debates that, “it is our belief in these stories that guide our actions in the real world” (p. 151).

Beyond the confines of literature and fiction, narrative as an academic investigative tool has been observed to gain wider application over the last century leading up to the current century (Harding, 2012). The notion of narratives—as elaborated within the field of Translation Studies—is built upon the understanding of narratives as the representative and structural make-up of all communications rather than its narrow linguistic concept of “an optional mode of communication” (Baker, 2006, p. 8). The approach of Baker (2006) is built upon the ideas of Somers and Gibson (1994) and Somers (1992, 1994, 1997) in which narrative is posited as a powerful mode of communication representing how people organize their ways of life. Narrative Analysis argues that rather than explaining how texts are constructed, the narrative is the tool of the mind used to construct reality. As applied in all textual genres including technical and scientific texts, narratives enable us to approach and understand the social world and thus, build our social identity; this is because narratives are concerned mainly with justifying and legitimizing actions through the normalization, categorization, and constitution of social reality. A narrative represents an important means of representing, mediating, sustaining, and generating conflict in all aspects of social organizations (Briggs, 1996). In this paper, the concept 'narrative' is used in its broader sense, in that it is not only applicable to public and individual stories, but also corresponds to the 'myths' in Barthes (1972) and the 'discourse' in Foucault ([1980] 1984).

Narratives of conflicts are politically imported, and the political import of narratives appears in the awareness of the public regarding the fact that accepting a narrative means rejecting the *Other* narratives of the given happening or event. Interpreting and translation are powerful tools of realizing the political

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/narrative> [accessed on 18 June 2016]

import of narratives when the concerned conflict is discussed internationally. The translation or retelling of a narrative is eventually embedded with the personal narrative of the translator/reteller and reframed within particular settings.

Translators, ethically, are expected to transmit the encoded ideologies of the source narrative into the target one. However, some translators position themselves so as to challenge and undermine the narrative in question due to several factors including ideology, culture, religious beliefs and institutional policy. In this respect, translators apply various strategies explicitly and implicitly to direct the source narrative to a more desirable path. Framing narratives provides translators with these different strategies to re-encode the source narrative.

Framing is a mass noun referring to “the action of framing something”<sup>3</sup>. It is, as adopted in this study, “an active strategy that implies agency and by means of which we consciously participate in the construction of reality” (Baker, 2006, p. 106). The notion of framing in Baker (2006) is an elaboration of the Frame Analysis in Goffman (1974). Goffman (1974) is one of the pioneer works that consider frames as “conceptual interpretations that determine the way in which individuals construct meaning and make sense of particular events and occurrences” (Al-Sharif, 2009, p. 62). He distinguishes between static frames (framework), which he defines as a ‘belief system’ and active frames, which he defines as ‘schemata of interpretation’ that assist the allocation, perception, identification, and labeling of happenings within one’s own world. He discusses that one’s perception of frames leads him/her to “take action, both verbal and physical, on the basis of these perceptions” (1974, p. 345). However, other scholars provide various definitions of framing and frames, which might overlap, as detailed out in the following sections.

Pan and Kosicki (1993) regard framing as both a device of formulating and operating news discourse, and a property of the discourse itself. However, in Ziegler et al. (2015)<sup>4</sup>, framing refers to the temporal context that represents the rational paradigms set within narratives of violence. It is, to some extent, flexible, situational, internally sequential in reasoning, and repetitive in form. The nature of bi-directional and interactively negotiable framing allows “the strategic rendering of discourse positions: that is to say, for propaganda.” (p. 6). Framing, however, is culturally specific and referential, which represents and constructs world experiences in a narrative form rather than a stereotypical one. Similarly, Butler (2012) discusses that framing aims to advance the public perception toward a given issue and increase the general agreement regarding its ultimate proposed solution. Framing research needs to focus more on the study of framing effects rather than focusing on framing process in order to draw a larger picture of the scene, thus reaching a better understanding of the framing mechanism and significance. Moreover, Butler (2012) also considers frames as an advanced level of schema set for certain interactions, which represent interpretive devices and parameters. According to Norris et al. (2003), frames are, in a wide sense, subtle devices for leaders to simplify and respond to social events, for journalists to brief about the news by recalling similar past experiences from culturally specific reservoirs, and for the public to understand and evaluate emerging events and phenomena. However, news frames, conventionally, do not offer a complete account of all particularities of a terrorist act. Rather, they retain some governing puzzles that trigger the preferred interpretation. Frames, when international affairs are concerned; set the agenda by prioritizing events as an international matter; prime the cognitive aspect by identifying and explaining the threat; and can be used as an evaluative tool through suggesting resolutions. In a journalistic narrative of a terroristic scenario, news frames are shaped largely by three factors: the agreed facts on the terrorist acts; the interpretations of these acts by officials; and the weights of dissident groups (Norris et al., 2003). King and Wells define frames as “central organizing ideas that make sense of relevant events or situations and weave them into a basic narrative or storyline” (2009, p. 6). Wendland (2010) similarly defines frames as a cognitive schema that contains a set of parameters for the public to understand and interpret their experiences. Frames aim to influence public views by providing a manipulated version of ‘reality’ in which judgment for further action(s) is offered.

<sup>3</sup> <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/framing> [accessed on 28 March 2017]

<sup>4</sup> Reviewed in Hijjo (2017)

## 2 Analyzing MEMRI's English Translations of the Arabic Narratives on Daesh

### 2.1 Data collection procedure

This paper employs the narrative theory-informed analysis of Baker (2006) to reveal the possible embedded value-laden framings injected in mass media translations, which tend to affect the public view on the current globalized Middle Eastern conflict. A corpus is developed specifically for this study, which consists of 46 Arabic political editorials on *Daesh* (about 60 pages) and their English translations in 25 articles (about 47 pages), which have been translated by the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI). The difference in the number of source texts and target texts is due to MEMRI's practice where several source texts are combined in translations under the same title: mostly between three to five, but some translations contain more than seven source editorial articles in a single translated article. The English target texts were collected manually from MEMRI's archive<sup>5</sup>. These translated articles are taken from the 'Special Dispatch' section<sup>6</sup> on MEMRI's main webpage, published between 2013 and 2016, covering the period of the establishment of *Daesh* on 8 April 2013 up to the present day i.e. 8 April 2016. Figure 1 below represents the conceptual framework of this research.

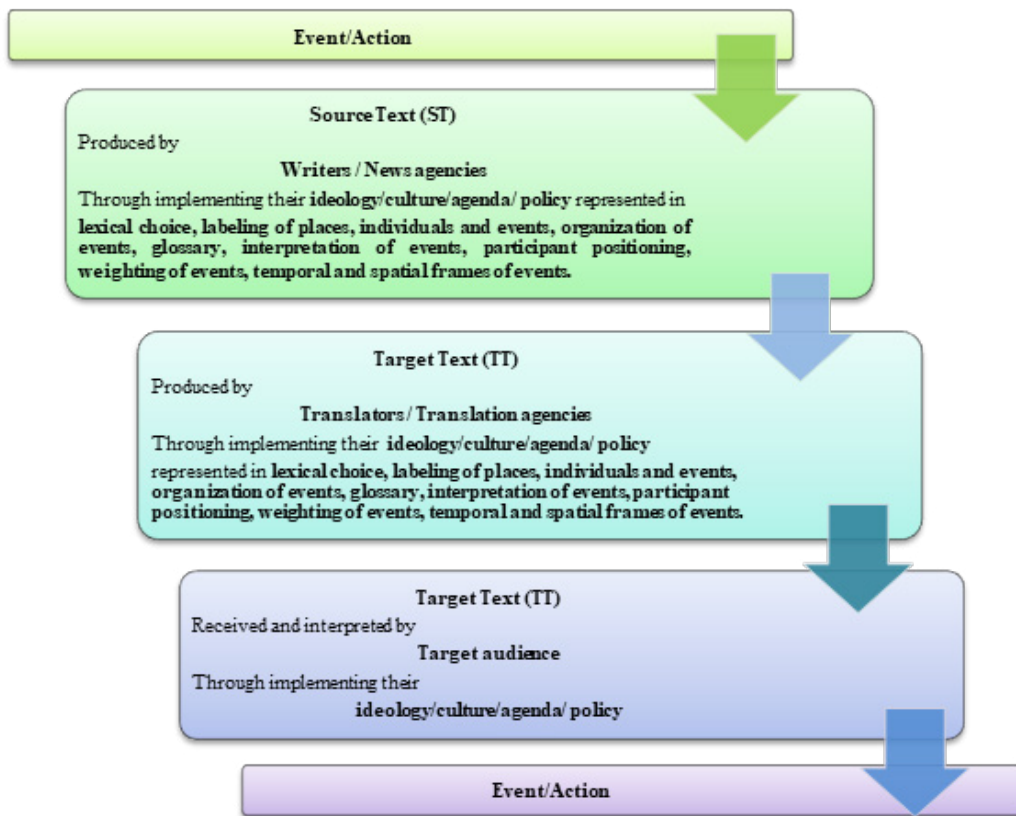


Figure 1. The Research Conceptual Framework

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.memri.org/more\\_reports/en/archive](http://www.memri.org/more_reports/en/archive) [accessed on 23 December 2015]

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.memri.org/categories/special-dispatch> [Where MEMRI publishes original translations of Middle Eastern media and distributes them, free of charge, by fax and email, accessed on 28 March 2017]

Figure 1 outlines the journey of an event/action starting from the moment it takes place up to the moment it is received and interpreted by the target text reader, which passes through three main stages: (1) the production of the source text; (2) the production of the target text; and (3) the reception of the event/action by the target audience. The fact that an event took place is usually indisputable. However, the reception—understanding and interpretation—of that event varies from one to another based on one's past experiences of similar narratives, culture, set of beliefs, ideological agenda and policy in the case of an institution i.e. the Arabic-speaking media in this study. This reception of the event is then ideologically redirected by writers and news agencies to construct the source text represented in the careful choice of vocabularies, labels of places, individuals and events, organization of events, glossary, interpretation of events, participant positioning, weighting of events, and the settings of temporal and spatial frames of events. Similarly, the text is received and interpreted by readers including translators and translation agencies that ideologically (re)construct, (re)frame, and (re)negotiate the source narrative in their translations (the target text). These translations are received and interpreted by the target language readers that usually have no access to the source text due to the language gap<sup>5</sup>, and which translation agencies—MEMRI in the case of this study—voluntarily promise to bridge free of charge. At the end, the journey of the event undergoes the target reader's reception and own interpretation based on his/her past experiences of similar narratives, culture, set of beliefs, ideological agenda and policy, all in the case of an institution i.e. English-speaking media as for the case of this study.

## 2.2 Data analysis procedure

Following Baker (2006), the data analysis of this study covers the primary types of framing, namely: contextual framing, paratextual framing, and textual framing. The analysis of contextual framing contains the analysis of the feature of narrativity: relationality. The analysis of paratextual framing discusses the analysis of titles. The analysis of textual framing involves the analysis of bracketed additions and lexical choice.

## 2.3 Contextual framing<sup>7</sup>

### 2.3.1 Relationality

The relationality feature indicates that isolated events do not make sense in narrativity but they should still be regarded as events in a series, and thus interpreted in the context of other well-established narratives. Relationality has a direct impact on translation since relationality does not allow a straightforward importation of elements of a given narrative when the target narrative does not share certain concepts. Accordingly, both the source and target narratives are unavoidably reconstituted. Relationality works both as a restriction and as a resource for expanding new narratives. In the process of translating a narrative, relationality is used “to inject a target text or discourse with implicit meanings derived from the way a particular item functions in the public or meta-narratives circulating in the target context, thus obscuring or downplaying its relational load in the source environment” (Baker, 2006, p. 66).

For example, the notion of ‘*Jihad*’ presented in the original Arabic narrative titled ‘لا بد من «عنوان آخر» و’ (لا بد من «عنوان آخر» و) للراغبين بالجهاد في سورية ([there] should be ‘another address’ and ‘security’ for those who are willing to **fight** in Syria)<sup>8</sup> differs from MEMRI’s English translation titled ‘*Saudi Journalist: The Notion of Jihad in Syria is not Wrong, but has been Twisted by Al-Qaeda*’<sup>9</sup>. MEMRI adopts the Arabic word ‘*Jihad*’ in its translation as an equivalent suggesting that both the Arabic and the English semantic sense of ‘*Jihad*’ is the same,

7 For an in-depth analysis see Hijjo & Kaur (2017b)

8 <http://www.alhayat.com/Details/574763> [published on 22 November 2013, accessed on 25 December 2015]

9 <http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/7690.htm> [published on 24 November 2013, accessed on 25 December 2015]



are: (1) there is a need to replace the current guide (recruitment group) with another; and (2) the safety of these individuals should be guaranteed. On the other hand, the English title is completely at odds with the original. The author's nationality 'Saudi'—which only appears as a footnote at the end of the Arabic article—is added to the title of the English article. Furthermore, the Arabic title is interpreted in a different way than the one suggested in the source. The English title proposes that the *Saudi journalist*, as a representative of intellectual Arabs, Muslims, and more particularly the elite (Pro-USA), supports the civil war in Syria and encourages individuals to join it, as understood in 'is not wrong'; in addition, it suggests that *Al-Qaeda* is misleading these individuals to its advantage, as understood in 'twisted'. Interestingly, 'Al-Qaeda' does not appear in the Arabic title and is only mentioned five times in a single paragraph of the six-paragraph article. This framing by labeling in the translation of the article's title signals a different narrative than the source, thus leading the target audience to a framed interpretation of the text. Featuring 'Al-Qaeda' in the English title evokes and grants more weight to the meta-narrative of 'Jihad and Terror', to which MEMRI devotes a large fund under "The Jihad and Terrorism Project". MEMRI's narrative invites readers to believe that terrorism is a product, which is solely served and operated by Muslims based on the Islamic teachings and that other beliefs, religions, races or individuality do not correlate to any terrorist behavior and do not equate to acts of terror. To promote this narrative of terrorist Islam and Muslims, the Arabic word 'جهاد' [transliteration: *jihad*, translation: *fight*] is left without being translated in MEMRI's English title. Nevertheless, as Muslims and native speakers of the Arabic language, the authors of this paper argue that the Arabic '*jihad*' in this context refers to 'fighting' since Muslims are fighting each other in Syria, and thus the holy notion of '*jihad*' based upon the theological meaning does not fit in this case. The significance of the usage of '*jihad*' rather than the English neutral word 'fighting' has been discussed in the previous section under 'relationality'. Considering both the relationality of '*jihad*' within the Western context and its lexical and connotational dimensions show the large picture of reframing the Arabic editorials in the English text.

## 2.5 Textual Framing

### 2.5.1 Bracketed additions

In the field of translation, addition is a strategy used to add an essential element, mostly a word within the text, for it to be compatible with the target language in terms of semantic and syntactic structure. Addition is also another tool for framing the source narrative that translators apply to realize certain agendas and effects on the target audience. In its translation under analysis<sup>9</sup>, MEMRI added 33 supplementary information/explanatories within the text. Such intensive use of the pattern of addition achieves the narrativity feature of selective appropriation of textual material that helps the elaboration of particular aspects of the target narrative encoded in the source text. For example, MEMRI's bracketed addition of the phrase [the mujahideen money] in "Some advise him to donate **[the mujahideen money]**, since they do not need more men." supports MEMRI's narrative of 'terrorist Islam and Muslims' as seen in the use of the Islamic Arabic concept (مجاهدين) mujahideen (those who perform '*jihad*' - *fighters*) which in turn evokes and furthers MEMRI's narrative of 'jihad and terror'. The original Arabic narrative states that, "البيعض ينصحه، "بالتبرع لهم فهم ليسوا بحاجة للرجال" (Some [people] advise him to donate **to them** since they are not in need of more men) (emphasis added). In the source text, the type of donation is not specified—it can be in money, goods or other forms—yet MEMRI's bracketed addition specifies this as money. While the source text used the pronoun «لهم» (them) to identify the target receiver of this donation, MEMRI's bracketed addition identifies the receiver as [the mujahideen]. The pronoun 'them' in the Arabic text refers to the suffering Syrian people—the children, elderly, men and women—rather than MEMRI's 'the mujahideen' (the fighters). The following is the Arabic extract that contains the pronoun "هم" (them) and its referred noun phrase, and its English translation published by MEMRI.



**ST Extract:**

قبل الإجابة عن ذلك لتتعرف إلى هؤلاء الجهاديين الجدد. إنهم شباب في أوائل العشرينات وحتى دون ذلك، لا يزالون على مقاعد الدراسة، يعيشون وسط أبوين وإخوة من كل الطبقات الاجتماعية، عاديون، وليس بالضرورة أن يكونوا شديدي التدين، ولا تتم تصرفاتهم عما ينوون فعله، بل هم لم يتوقعوا ما أقدموا عليه، ولكنهم يتعرضون لامتحان قاس منذ عامين ونصف، وهم يشهدون على شاشات القنوات الإخبارية المعروفة، ويسمعون في المجالس، ويتابعون في وسائل الإعلام الاجتماعي، **الفظائع التي ترتكب في سورية ضد شبان مثلهم، وشابات مثل أخواتهم، ونساء ورجال محترمين مثل والديهم**، ثم يتابعون تصريحات المسؤولين العرب والأجانب التي تندد بهذه الجرائم ولكن لا توقفها، والمؤتمرات التي تعقد، والمبعوث الأممي الأخضر الإبراهيمي الذي يصرح هنا وهناك، والرئيس الأميركي أوباما الذي يتخلى عن معاقبة بشار الأسد في آخر لحظة بعدما تجاوز الخط الأحمر الذي رسمه بنفسه، وهو استخدام السلاح الكيماوي، ففعل بشار ذلك، وقتل نحو ألفي سوري كثير منهم أطفال في سن إختهم الصغار، وسمعوا دعاء جداتهم على بشار فقالوا في أنفسهم: «لا بد من أن نفعل شيئاً آخر مع الدعاء».

يتذكرون ما سمعوه من معلمهم عن فضل الجهاد، فيسترجعون الحديث الشريف: «من مات ولم يغز أو يحدث به نفسه، مات على شعبة من شعب النفاق». أحدهم يمد يده إلى جهاز «الآيباد» الذي أهدته إياه والدته قبل أسابيع، ويكتب في صفحة «غوغل»: «أرغب باللاحق في الجهاد في سورية»، فتتملى الصفحة التالية بالإجابات، ويمضي ساعة يقرأ الردود في «إجابات غوغل»، **البعض ينصحه بالتبرع لهم فهم ليسوا بحاجة للرجال**، وآخر يقول له: سافر إلى تركيا ثم توجه نحو إحدى المدن الجنوبية وابدأ بحث عن السوريين هناك فستجد من يدلك.

**TT Extract:**

Before answering this, we must acquaint ourselves with these new jihadis. They are normative young people in their early twenties or even younger, still in high school, from all social classes, who are [still] living with parents and siblings. They are not necessarily devout, and their behavior does not [necessarily] betray their intentions. Moreover, they [themselves] do not expect to do what they do [i.e. set off for jihad in Syria].

“For the last two and a half years they have been undergoing a harsh trial: On news channels, in meetings, and on social networking [sites] they encounter **the horrors being committed in Syria against youths like them, against young women like their sisters, and against honorable men and women like their parents**. They also follow statements by Arab and foreign officials who condemn these crimes but do not stop them. They follow the summits, they follow U.N. envoy Lakhdar Brahimi, who makes statements here and there, and U.S. president Obama, who forewent punishing Bashar Al-Assad at the last minute [even though] the latter crossed the red line that Obama himself had set, namely the use of chemical weapons. Bashar did this and killed some 2,000 Syrians, most of them children at the age of [the new jihadis’] younger siblings. They hear their grandmothers curse Bashar **and say to themselves: ‘We must do something in addition to cursing.’**”

“They remember what they heard from their teachers about the virtues of jihad, and repeat the hadith: ‘He who dies without embarking on jihad or even considering it in his heart dies while in a state of hypocrisy.’ One of them reaches for the iPad that his mother gave him several weeks ago and types into Google: ‘I want to join the jihad in Syria.’ The page fills with responses, and he spends an hour reading them. **Some advise him to donate [the mujahideen money], since they do not need more men**. Someone else says: Go to Turkey and travel to one of the southern cities, [then] find some Syrians there and look for a guide.

The word ‘تبرع’ (donate) supports this finding since ‘donate’ means mainly “Give (money **or goods**) for a **good cause**, for example to a charity.”<sup>15</sup> rather than limiting donation to money and considering fighting and killing as a good cause as suggested in MEMRI’s translation. Further support for this argument is clearly constructed in various Arabic media narratives including Al-Jazeera channel<sup>16</sup>, Okaz newspaper<sup>17</sup>, and Al-Arabiya channel<sup>18</sup> that report on the Saudi people campaign to help the suffering displaced (refugees) Syrian people by donating money and goods. They also state that the donations include food, medicine, mobile hospitals and refugee camps.

15 <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/donate> [accessed on 8 June 2017]

16 <http://www.aljazeera.net/news/arabic/2016/12/30/74> [accessed on 8 June 2017]

17 <http://okaz.com.sa/article/1517612> [accessed on 8 June 2017]

18 <http://www.alarabiya.net/ar/saudi-today/2016/12/30> [accessed on 8 June 2017]

### 2.5.2 Lexical choice

Lexical choice in translation grants more weight to the narrative elaborated by the translator and leads to a different structure of the narrativity feature causal emplotment (the explanation of why an event took place illustrating the moral sense to interpret events on light of related events), which in turn guides the audience to a shaped understanding. In the translation under analysis, for example, in SD “*Jordanian Press Criticizes Extremism in Syria*”<sup>19</sup> MEMRI used parentheses to provide a translation of the Arabic Islamic term ‘*Jizya*’ as (poll tax). Lexically, the Arabic term of ‘جزية’ (*Jizya*) is a singular noun of the plural ‘جزيات’ *Jizyat*, ‘جزى’ *Jiza*, ‘جزاء’ *Jaza*’ and ‘جزى’ *Jizy* of the meaning: what is used to be taken from the people of the *Dhimma* (non-Muslim citizens of an Islamic state) in return for their protection (Omar, 2008). According to the Islamic teachings, the term ‘جزية’ (*Jizya*) refers to a sum of money imposed by an Islamic state on *some* non-Muslims who live and enjoy the Islamic state citizenship rights, facilities, and protection against any external attack (Sabiq, 1994). Moreover, *Jizya* is to be taken from free rich mature males of *Dhimmi*, excluding women, children, elders, slaves, mentally disordered persons, the disabled, the poor, hermits, monks, the ill, and the non-Muslims who are not residents in an Islamic state (Sabiq, 1994). However, according to the Oxford Dictionary, ‘poll tax’ means “a tax levied on every adult, *without* reference to their income or resources”<sup>20</sup> (emphasis added). Poll tax is a tax imposed on *every head* regardless of the ability to pay and inclusive all genders and ages. In translating the meanings of the Holy Qur’an to English, Shakir encodes *Jizya* as ‘tax’, Arberry and Pickthall render it as ‘tribute’ while Yusuf Ali transliterates it as ‘*jizyah*’. Therefore, translating the Islamic Arabic term of ‘*Jizya*’ to the English ‘poll tax’ is ideologically motivated since it recalls the meta-narrative of the failed Western ‘taxation systems’ and associates it with inhumanity (Abdel Haleem, 2012). *Jizya* within its Islamic context is understood as a means of tolerance and humanity on non-Muslims who live in an Islamic state. Poll tax within its western context is understood as a strategy of savage governments to get more money through all means. MEMRI throughout its translation in question has attempted to normalize its use of ‘poll tax’ as a translation of ‘*Jizya*’ by translating ‘*Jizya*’ as ‘*jizya*’, ‘the *jizya*’, ‘*jizya tax*’, ‘*jizya [tax]* in addition to ‘poll tax’ invoking the idea that these translations are interchangeable and have the same meaning. In this example, two narrativity features are employed largely to achieve the goal behind translation. The first narrativity feature is relationality, in which the nexus between the humanitarian *Jizya* with the inhumane poll-tax creates a misinterpretation of the Islamic principles as an injustice system. The second narrativity feature, causal emplotment, then functions to justify the inhumane acts performed by *Daesh* as motivated by Islam and its principles. Consequently, attacks against Muslims (offenders) and Islam (injustice) are legalized under this claim.

## 3 Conclusion

The eight narrativity features introduced to Translation Studies in Baker (2006); temporality, relationality, causal emplotment, selective appropriation, particularity, genericness, normativeness, and narrative accrual are significant tools in reconstructing reality through translation. In translation, the eight features are framed to inject the translated text with ideologically loaded elements that in turn guide the target audience to a different set of interpretations than the one intended in the source. The translations provided free of charge by MEMRI at the first glance would appear a fine objective piece considering that MEMRI provides translations of original articles on serious topics mainly the *War on Terror* that attracts the attention of the media and the public worldwide. The embedded framing of narrativity features in translation has no frame. One cannot identify the framing without a clear theoretical framework. The theoretical framework of Baker (2006) is considered a pioneer work in adapting social theory in the field of Translation Studies. Translation Studies lack such theories in revealing the constituted ideologically loaded elements in translation that reconstruct, reframe, and renegotiate reality to the target audience and guide our future. The work of Baker (2006) significantly informed this study mainly on the notion of narrative and how it serves as an instrument

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/7945.htm> [published on 22 April 2014, accessed on 24 December 2015]

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/poll-tax?q=poll+tax> [accessed on 11 March 2016]

of the mind especially where ideology is the chief player—the War on Terror (*Daesh*) in this case—in which a huge conflict of interests arises among the ‘war’ participants. It provides the current analysis with the necessary terminologies and steps that expose the hidden agenda and ideologies embedded in MEMRI’s English translations. It also allows the study to make sense of independent instances as well as a series of narratives and the narrative of a given event in its political, social, cultural as well as linguistic settings. It also guides the analysis to look beyond the narrow boundaries of a narrative enabling the study to gather and analyze MEMRI’s narratives that are constructed from various verbal and non-verbal sources.

The current research findings agree with Tan (2016) that clearly demonstrates the crucial role of the media in portraying a negative image of Muslims by different means. In this regard, the findings of this study reveal that MEMRI-translated titles are a complete reframe to the original. MEMRI prefaces its translations generally with one or two paragraphs but it can also be of six and eight paragraphs as per its translations of the Arabic editorials in Special Dispatch No. 5969 and Special Dispatch No. 6124, respectively, so as to introduce the translation to come. MEMRI applies misleading concepts and labels such as ‘*Jihad*’ rather than ‘fight’, ‘ISIS’ rather than ‘*Daesh*’, and ‘poll tax’ rather than ‘*Jizya*’. MEMRI<sup>21</sup> offers its own ideologically laden definitions of items and terms in question without relying on any reliable source. MEMRI also uses bracketed addition extensively. MEMRI compiles translations of excerpts of selective sentences and paragraphs of different Arabic editorial articles. MEMRI makes several ideologically motivated lexical choice decisions. The findings clearly illustrate how translation agencies of international media outlets employ narrativity features to insert their perspectives and agenda in the target text. They also explain how narrativity features are used by MEMRI as devices of (re)constructing, (re)framing, and (re)negotiating the Arabic source narrative in favor of the meta-narratives ‘terrorist Islam and Muslims’ and ‘the War on Terror’.

To further elaborate, the English reader’s opinion is shaped based on the readings of the English translations which sounds justified without considering the readings of the original Arabic texts. Considering the original Arabic texts and its contextual and cultural spheres, the reader is to notice the different messages intended by the original writer and the translator.

The aim of this paper is to correct the existing stereotype on Islam and Muslims in the West, mainly in Western media. In this paper, the main argument is that the usage of the Islamic Arabic concepts rather than their neutral English translations within the context of the War on Terror and Islamophobia is ideologically motivated since the reasonings of these concepts in the West differ to those of the originals. In other words, within the context of the War on Terror and Islamophobia, the understanding and interpretation of concepts such as *jihad*, *jizya* and *mujahedeen* differ according to the different cultures, ideologies and beliefs between the East and the West.

Further discussion on ‘*Jihad*’, ‘*Mujahedeen*’ and ‘*Jizya*’ is as follows: *Jihad* can simply be translated into fight, its English neutral correspondence, or to crusade, its Christian English equivalence. *Mujahedeen* [money] indicates terrorism funding while the ST author is busy thinking about the Syrian refugees’ crisis and suffering. *Jizya* as an Islamic value shows the humanitarian Islamic system. In contrary, poll tax shows the unhumanitarian Western taxation system.

The values suggested in the MEMRI’s English translations of the Islamic Arabic ST terms are therefore in difference to those suggested in the original terms. This difference seems to mislead the English audience and affect their official and public opinion on serious issues such as the War on Terror which in turn affect millions of people’s lives. Moreover, MEMRI extensively uses the Islamic and Arabic terms as is, without translation, which falsely suggests that English lexicon suffers from the lack of having a good vocabulary reservoir.

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<sup>21</sup> It is worth noting that MEMRI does not provide the names, numbers and backgrounds of its translators nor the procedures and methods applied in translation. The authors have sent MEMRI an email of enquiry in this regard on 3 August 2016 but with no reply until this moment.

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