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**Translational Criticism of the Critical Term in the Work  
of Saïd Boutadgine**

النقد التّرجمي للمصطلح النقدي عند السعيد بوتاجين

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## Abstract:

In *Translation and Terminology*, Saïd Boutadgine sketches the boundaries of translational criticism by tackling the thorny question of how to render newly minted critical terms. Demonstrating notable finesse, he interrogates the Arab terminological landscape and, through meticulous etymological probing, pursues the most precise and context-appropriate equivalents. Consequently, the present study delves into the depths of Boutadgine's translational criticism and gauges the seriousness and originality of his endeavor.

**Keywords:** translational criticism, critical terms, Boutadgine's translational criticism.

المخلص:

رسم الناقد السعيد بوطاجين معالم النقد الترجمي في مؤلفه الترجمة والمصطلح؛ في إشكالية ترجمة المصطلح النقدي الجديد، وأدى براءة في مساءلة الواقع الاصطلاحي العربي والبحث في سبيل تخير المقابلات الأدق والأنسب عن طريق التأصيل.

تتغيا الدراسة سبر أغوار النقد الترجمي عند الناقد المترجم السعيد بوطاجين في مؤلفه وتبيان مدى جدية وأصالة هذا العمل.

الكلمات المفتاحية: النقد الترجمي، المصطلح النقدي، الناقد المترجم السعيد بوطاجين.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

A term is, in concentrated form, the hinge between intellect and language. Because terminology unlocks disciplinary knowledge, every field can be recognized through its technical lexicon. Terms thus become the bedrock on which understanding is erected; ideas consolidate precisely through them. Hence, since antiquity, scholars have pursued and transmitted knowledge by focusing—first and foremost—on its core vocabulary.

Building on this premise, the paper specifies the conditions that govern terminological coinage and identifies the main criteria by practitioners of a single field to express the scientific concepts belonging to that field.<sup>3</sup>

Mahmoud Fahmy Hegazy refines matters further, insisting on clarity and one-to-one reference: a term is “a name that can be explicitly defined within a homogeneous system, serving as an exclusive designation for a single referent and aligning, without ambiguity, with a specific idea or concept<sup>4</sup>.”

Upon closer examination, these perspectives converge on a single principle: terminological coinage hinges on reaching an unambiguous consensus, whereby

which translations of such terms can be assessed. Specifically, it clarifies the notion of the *term* itself, then that of the *critical term*, before turning to *translation* and, ultimately, *translation criticism*.

## 2. Conceptual Framework

### 2.1. The Term

**Al-Jāhiz** observes, “They selected those lexemes for those meanings, coined from Arabic speech the proper designations, and agreed upon names for concepts to which no antecedent appellation existed; in doing so, they became a model for every successor and a guide for every follower.

<sup>1</sup>” The passage underscores the indispensable role of collective agreement and the careful choice of the most fitting item in the Arabic lexicon.

Likewise, **Al-Jurjānī** defines a term as “an agreement among a group to place a given word in correspondence with a given meaning; some say a term is a particular word shared among a particular community.<sup>2</sup>” **Rafaa al-Tahtāwī**, introducing a nuance of disciplinary specialization, maintains that terms are “the words whose use is mutually agreed on by

linguistic code<sup>7</sup>—the critic must proceed with heightened vigilance when relocating such methodologies, always mindful of the receiving environment's specificities. Achieving this task with precision and scholarly diligence requires that translated works be scrutinized, studied, and sifted—not to expose deficiencies, but to refine accuracy and detail in the cross-lingual transmission of knowledge. This evaluative practice constitutes *translation criticism*: the study, interpretation, analysis, and systematic comparison of translated texts with their counterparts<sup>8</sup>.

### 3. Critique of Saïd Boutadgine's Translation of Critical Terminology

At various points, numerous Arab scholars—among them **Youssef Oughlesi, Abd-Allah Boukhalkhal, Ahmed Bouhsin, Mohamed Ezzat Gad, Mahmoud Fahmy Hegazy, Samir Saïd Hegazy, Ali Al-Qasimi, and Saïd Boutadgine**—have interrogated the Arabic transfer of modern critical terminology. Each, in distinctive fashion, has sought to establish a unified terminological vision and to temper the growing disorder that has shadowed the burgeoning Arabic critical scene. Put differently, their collective endeavor reflects the accelerating cross-fertilization of knowledges and cultures and the Arab reader's widening exposure to external intellectual horizons.

Building on that context, the present paper isolates the translational-critical practice of the writer-scholar-translator **Saïd Boutadgine** as articulated in his volume *Translation and Terminology: On the Problem of Translating the New Critical Term* (Editions Ikhtilaf / Arab Scientific Publishers, Algiers-Beirut, 2009). He is chosen, first, because he is a rigorously trained academic critic conversant with modernism, post-modernism, and the attendant critical surge, and, second, because his record of published translations attests to professional, not amateur, engagement. By way of illustration :

signifier and signified coincide within a well-defined epistemic domain.

#### 2.2. Critical Term

Examining the singular nature of critical terminology first requires clarifying its essence. In this context, a critical term may be understood as a linguistic sign—single or compound—characterized by univocal reference yet partially displaced from its initial dictionary sense. It designates a clear, delimited concept upon which specialists in the field have already agreed, or are expected to agree<sup>5</sup>. Consequently, shifting a term from its general lexical meaning to its specialized critical meaning obliges scrupulous attention to the epistemic contours of the target discipline. Historically, Arabic scholarship has employed several pathways to coin such terms: derivation, figurative extension, lexical blending, Arabization, and, most relevant here, translation.

#### 2.3. Translation

Translation is the conveyance of ideas from one language into another—a process that remains incomplete until the translator rigorously revisits the rendered text. Serving as the principal neural artery of epistemic exchange, translation sustains civilizational development and operates as the primary vehicle through which intellectual discourse attains universality—both among social communities and across disciplinary boundaries. Indeed, scientific progress might stall were this conduit interrupted<sup>6</sup>. Translation, therefore, constitutes a second-order discourse: the translator must carefully gauge the conceptual milieu and semantic load of terms in both languages. Hence, it is anything but a trivial undertaking.

#### 2.4. Translational Criticism

Over recent decades, the Arab critical sphere has encountered a spectrum of Western epistemic orientations that generated diverse analytical methods, rendering their transfer to the Arabic researcher imperative. Because translation is a polysemous endeavor—at once an intellectual activity and a technical operation of rendering meaning through another

Saudi Bank of Scientific Terms, among others.

3. “**Concepts, Methodologies, and the Terminology Question**” (pp. 115-156) – modernity and terminology; English-language approaches; stylistics (style, rhetoric, stylistics); pragmatics and terminology.
4. “**Term Translation and the Problem of Discrepancy**” (pp. 159-207) – a twin focus on conceptual impasses and terminological impasses.

**Boutadgine** appends a succinct glossary collating every term examined, as it appears in extant Arabic translations—an explicit bid for collective terminological coherence. By foregrounding the first three sections—devoted to academies, agencies, and conceptual frameworks—**Boutadgine** signals that terminological disorder is ultimately symptomatic of inadequate planning. Translation, he argues, must shoulder the dual burden of transmitting contemporary scholarship while simultaneously forging an Arabic conceptual apparatus that preserves linguistic identity and the imported term’s intellectual freight. Divergence, in his view, springs from divergent epistemic backgrounds, institutional inertia, and an all-too-frequent reliance on solitary effort. His analysis thus dovetails with the theoretical premise advanced at the beginning of this study: sound knowledge depends upon sound term transfer.

### 3.1.2. Boutadgine’s Practice of *Translatin Criticism*

In the second movement of his book, **Boutadgine** sketches a practical model of translational critique. One encounters, page after page, clusters of critical terms that he first describes, then anatomizes, ultimately weighing rival Arabic renderings before selecting the one he deems least misleading. A few instructive samples clarify both his method and his underlying principles.

**Communication** → تواصل (*tawāṣul*)

**Boutadgine** notes that *tawāṣul* derives from *waṣl* (union) and *wiṣāl* (interconnection). Precisely because the root conveys inclusive

- *Le Dernier Impression* → *Al-Intibā‘ al-‘Akhir* (Malek Haddad); Editions Ikhtilaf / Arab Scientific Publishers.
- *Nedjma* → *Najmah* (Kateb Yacine); Editions Ikhtilaf.
- *Cueille, le Jour avant la Nuit* → *Ish Yawmaka Qabla Laylika* (Hamid Grine); Éditions Alpha.

### 3.1. Overview of *Translation and Terminology*

**Boutadgine’s** book belongs squarely to the domain of translational critique. From the outset, he tracks the specific fortunes of modern Arabic critical terminology—especially that linked to (post-)modernity—while searching for remedies to a terminological chaos marked by:

- multiple Arabic equivalents for a single foreign term,
- a single Arabic term forced to cover several foreign concepts.

To choose the most fitting equivalent, he follows a term’s lexical genealogy across disparate knowledge-fields, noting that “no sharply defined discipline remains untouched by concepts borrowed from neighboring domains<sup>9</sup>.” In short, he demonstrates acute awareness of terminological interpenetration and of the necessity to anchor critical terms within their proper disciplinary niche.

#### 3.1.1 Bibliographic Skeleton

The volume runs 224 pages and unfolds in four uneven sections:

1. “**Dictionaries, Academies, and the Terminology Question**” (pp. 15-45) – a panoramic review of five institutional poles central to terminological planning: the Iraqi Academy of Sciences, the Cairo Arabic Language Academy, the Damascus Arabic Language Academy, and, finally, the Algerian Academy of Arabic.
2. “**Institutions, Individuals, and the Terminology Question**” (pp. 51-93) – covering the Union of Arab Language Academies, the Arabisation Coordination Bureau, the Arab Organisation for Standardisation and Metrology, Egypt’s National Institute for Standards, and the

and, for the sake of terminological precision, records several rival Arabic renderings:

- الرموز فكّ (fekku l-rumūz, “symbol-unpacking”)—*al-Muʿjam al-Muwahḥad li-Muṣṭalahāt al-Lisāniyyāt (Unified Lexicon of Linguistic Terms, al-Manhal)*;
- تحليل (taḥlīl, “analysis”) and فهم (fahm, “comprehension”)—cited in *al-Binyawiyyah fī al-Lisāniyyāt (Structuralism in Linguistics)*.

Moreover, he repeatedly pairs **Codage** / **Décodage** to preserve the reciprocal symmetry of the encoding–decoding cycle; separating the dyad, he argues, would blur the communicative logic on which the model rests.

### Denotation

**Boutadgine** begins by stating that there is, in his view, no compelling reason to adopt an Arabic rendering such as تقرير (taqrīr, “assertion”)—a term proposed in *linguistic principles*. Evidently, that choice leans toward the stylistic axis of Direct / Indirect expression and seems to refer to overt manifestation rather than latent sense, to borrow the phrasing of classical rhetoricians and philosophers. Conversely, the alternatives recorded in *al-Manhal* intersect with the broader concept of the *signifier*: تأثير علامة (taʿthīr ʿalāma, “sign impact”), إشارة (ishāra, “signal”), any of which would apply to a sign regardless of its actual nature.

Yet—and this is **Boutadgine’s** central point—**Denotation** must remain conceptually yoked to its antonym **Connotation**, just as **Codage** (*coding*) stands opposite **Décodage** (*decoding*). Severing such binary pairs, he warns, only amplifies terminological error<sup>17</sup>.

Accordingly, he designates المعنى المباشر (al-maʿnā nā al-mubāshir, “direct meaning”) as the principal Arabic equivalent, logging it in **Table 17, p. 193**. Nevertheless, he also lists rival translations—الدلالة الذاتية (al-dalāla al-dhātīyya, “intrinsic denotation”), تعيين (taʿyīn, “designation”), and إشارة (ishāra, “sign”)—citing, for instance, Samīr Marzouki and Jamīl Shākir’s *Nazariyyat al-Qiṣṣa (Theory of the Story)*. Further corroboration appears

linkage, he argues that *tawāṣul* embraces a wider semantic field than *tablīgh* (mere transmission) and therefore suits the foreign term better<sup>10</sup>. In Table 18 (p. 197) he logs ten Arabic equivalents culled from major dictionaries and textbooks—*ittiṣāl (Introduction to Linguistics)*, *tablīgh (Reception Theory)*, *tawāṣul (Dictionary of Psychology)*—

while also citing the Latin etymon. To ground his choice, he consults Magdi Wahba’s *Dictionary of Literary Terms* (1974), ʿAliyyah ʿIzzat’s *Lexicon of Linguistic and Literary Terms* (1994), and *Larousse*, thereby modelling the philological triangulation recommended by Antoine Berman and Ṭāhā ʿAbd-al-Raḥmān.

### Connotation → إحاء (ihāʿ)

**Boutadgine** points out that the notion of *ihāʿ* is hardly foreign to classical Arabic poetics; hence exotic neologisms only thicken the semantic fog<sup>11</sup>. His three-page discussion (cf. Table 14, p. 184) surveys rival solutions—*tadmīn* (تضمين, “inclusion”), *ihāʿ*—citing ʿAbd Salām al-Masaddī’s *Dictionary of Linguistics* (1984, p. 234) and the 1989 *Unified Lexicon of Linguistic Terms* (p. 30). He then follows the term’s Indo-European trail—*connector*, *connesciō*—and shows why pairing *Connotation* with *Denotation* (rather than with disparate notions such as “direct” versus “indirect” meaning)<sup>12</sup> is conceptually indispensable. Definitions from *Larousse*<sup>13</sup> and Arabic lexica are juxtaposed, including the familiar gloss “the implicit meaning evoked by a word beyond its denotative sense<sup>14</sup>.” Moreover, other proposed Arabic renderings include دلالة حافة (*dalāla ḥāffa*, “peripheral meaning”<sup>15</sup>).

### Décodage → تفكيك (tafkīk, “decoding”)

Contrary to *Codage* (*coding*) and *Encodage* (*encoding*), the speaker—or researcher—constructs the sign-complex, whereas the hearer performs *tafkīk*, that is, decodes the configuration by dismantling the sign structure in line with the very conventional rules that generated it<sup>16</sup>. **Boutadgine** foregrounds this entry in Table 21 (p. 137)

## 5. Bibliography List :

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in the *Qāmūs al-Lisāniyyāt (Dictionary of Linguistics)*, pp. 55–56).

Finally, **Boutadgine** attributes the persistent variation in usage to several overlapping factors: general scholarly literacy, specific terminological competence, familiarity with philological thought, and the degree of disciplinary specialization.

**deviation / departure (stylistic shift) → عدول (‘udūl)**

**Boutadgine** questions the popularity of *inziyāḥ* (deviation), noting that neither philosophical pedigree nor operational clarity has been adduced to justify it<sup>18</sup>. He prefers *‘udūl*, which, he contends, is semantically tighter, phonologically leaner, and historically attested. Competing choices—*inhirāf*, *iʿrāb*, *inziyāḥ*—are laid out, yet he ultimately supports his decision with stylistic authorities such as Leo Spitzer and Charles Bally, after tracing the term through its stylistic roots.

### 4. Conclusion

Ultimately, the foregoing analysis underscores the dexterity of the critic-translator **Saïd Boutadgine** in forging a collective terminological critical perspective. Indeed, by interweaving his own inquiries with the glossaries, dictionaries, and critical monographs of other scholars, he succeeded in pinpointing the ontological core of several key terms. Moreover, he strove to select the most precise and context-proximate Arabic equivalents, rigorously rechecking each term in its original linguistic and epistemic strata. Engaging in sustained dialogue with a broad corpus of Arabic references, he thus reaffirmed his conviction that terminography is, by nature, a collaborative enterprise: on the one hand, the creation of any new term hinges on scholarly consensus, and, on the other, its legitimacy rests on a philological rooting within the intellectual heritage of the discipline.

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- <sup>9</sup> **Sa'id Boutagine**. *Translation and Terminology: On the Problem of Translating the New Critical Term*. Algiers – Beirut: Ikhtilaf Publications / Arab Scientific Publishers, 2009, p. 115.
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid., 199.
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid., 187.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid., 186.
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid., 219.
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid., 84.
- <sup>15</sup> Ibid., 219.
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid., 137.
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid., 196.
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid., 15.