

Translation and Hermeneutics

Abdelhalim Otmani Ziane Achour University – Department of Foreign Languages (Djelfa)

a.othmani@univ-djelfa.dz

Boutheina Athamnia University of Algiers 2 - Department of Translation (Algiers)

boutheina.athamnia@univ-alger2.dz

Received: 06 May 2025

Accepted: 16 May 2025

Published : 30 June 2025

Abstract:

This study examines translation as an interpretive practice, moving beyond mere linguistic conversion to highlight its deeper complexities. Every translation inherently reflects the mediator's cultural perspective, resulting in varied meanings and interpretations. By analyzing how cultural and subjective factors influence language transfer, the study demonstrates that translation is an active process of meaning-making. Literary and philosophical texts, in particular, demand deeper interpretation, presenting unique challenges due to their nuanced and context-dependent nature. Approaching translation hermeneutically reveals how the translator's knowledge and cultural lens shape the final output, requiring a delicate balance between fidelity to the source, cultural adaptation, and creative expression. Hermeneutics frames translation as both an ethical duty and an artistic endeavor, positioning it as crucial mediation between cultures. Ultimately, translation facilitates cross-cultural understanding, enriches global dialogue, and serves as a vital bridge between languages, connecting diverse worldviews in an increasingly interconnected era.

Keywords: Translation; Hermeneutics; Meaning; cultural perspective; understanding.

1. INTRODUCTION

Since translation primarily deals with texts, it is essential to achieve a faithful and accurate translation that does justice to the original text. The text itself is fixed, whereas translation varies across times, places, and individuals. Translation is not merely a simple process of transferring ideas from one language to another; rather, it is a creative process. It goes beyond conveying precise meaning to encompass tone, rhythm, and nuance. In other words, it is a translational process of a particular mindset, way of thinking, style, and the spirit of the text to be translated through linguistic tools.

Translation is often defined as a bridge between cultures, as building such bridges has been the goal of translators for centuries. There is a need to develop a method for conveying messages from one cultural environment to another in an understandable way. Through translations, the target culture is enriched by the influx of new ideas, which can influence literary pluralism (Even-Zohar 1990).

However, the supposed bridge between cultures is, in reality, more like a waterway, because translation as a process is always unidirectional. It is worth questioning whether this translational work carried out by humans occurs without any transformation, whether in the message, the target culture, or the translator themselves. By translating a culturally embedded text, we enable the "growth of texts" by granting them another audience (Steiner 1975, 317). The message of these texts is expanded, if not transformed—through their various interpretations and explanations.

Finally, turning to the individuals who perform translations, we can pose the following problem:

How do hermeneutic theories influence the translation process, and what are the limits of the interplay between the interpretive understanding of the source text and its reproduction in the target language?

From this central question, several sub-questions arise, the most important of which are:

1. What is the fundamental relationship between translation and interpretation? To what extent can translation be considered a new interpretation of the source text?
2. How does hermeneutic translation differ from literal or functional translation?
3. What challenges does hermeneutics pose for translators, particularly in literary and philosophical texts?

to address all these questions, we must highlight the hypotheses that aid in this endeavor, including:

1. Translation is not a neutral transfer of a text but an interpretive process based on the translator's understanding of the text within its cultural and linguistic context.
2. Every translation is a reproduction of the original text according to the translator's interpretive perspective, leading to multiple translations of a single text.

3. The accuracy of translation depends on the translator's awareness of hermeneutic tools and their ability to balance fidelity to the text with the creativity of interpretation.

The objective of this research paper is to uncover the common theoretical foundation between hermeneutics and translation by analyzing concepts such as "understanding," "interpretation," and "textual dialogue," and demonstrating how these concepts form a bridge between the two disciplines. Hermeneutics and translation intersect as interactive processes shaped by cultural and historical contexts that influence the production of meaning.

Among the other goals we aim to:

- Analyzing the impact of interpretive approaches (Schleiermacher's, Heidegger's, and Gadamer's hermeneutics) on translation theories.
- Examining translated texts (such as literary and philosophical works) to illustrate the role of interpretation in meaning production.
- Proposing criteria to ensure a balance between adherence to the source text and the necessity of creative interpretation.

In this research, we have relied on the critical-analytical method to study hermeneutic and translation theories. We have also employed the applied method in analyzing translated texts (e.g., philosophical works) to assess the effect of interpretation. Additionally, to document the views of thinkers and translators on the issue of translation and interpretation, we have used the descriptive method.

Philosophers and theorists of hermeneutics have paid special attention to translation, not only because its Latin root carries an intrinsic connection to interpretation and its meanings but also because translation exposes language to challenges related to understanding its culture and deep identity.

As stated by Hans-Georg Gadamer, one of the most prominent German hermeneutic philosophers of the 20th century:

"The problems of linguistic expression are in fact problems posed by the same understanding, each understanding of interpretation, and any interpretation opens up amid the tongue wants to put the thing in the words. Since the transfer of this meaning from one linguistic system to another is the task of translation, its relationship to understanding and interpretation becomes essential." Hans-Georg Gadamer

Translation has become deeply entangled in the intense tension between the global and the local, the singular and the plural, the universal and the particular. Thus, it inevitably had to delve into the core problem of interpretation related to understanding this inherent identity of humanity, meaning, and culture, with interpretation lying at the heart of its dilemmas tied to dichotomies such as preservation versus openness, and fidelity versus betrayal. Some Arab critics translated this term into Arabic in its Western form, calling it *hermeneutics*, a heavy and hybrid translation,

especially since Arabs have long been familiar with and engaged with this concept under the term. Therefore, we have no choice but to use as the counterpart to the Western term.

Moreover, delving into the subject of hermeneutics is not a new matter; rather, it is a field that has been extensively explored, from the era of Socrates to that of Martin Heidegger (1976–1989), Hans-Georg Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur, and Umberto Eco.

Translation also influences the person who performs various translations. The translator constantly transforms themselves in different ways. As Steiner (1975, 325) explains, the experience of translation may unsettle the translator and even silence their voice, but it can also broaden their horizons. Every translation provides new cognitive input, elevating the translator as a human being.

On the other hand, the influence of this perspective on the role of the interpreting subject affects the translation of literary texts, or what is known as literary translation, which faces difficulties in conveying meaning that differ from those encountered in other types of translation, such as scientific, technical, or functional translation. This is particularly true because a literary text establishes a unique relationship with language, displacing it from its original meaning to assign new connotations that may suggest multiple interpretations, varying and differing according to the reader.

Therefore, anyone undertaking translation must master both the source and target languages, in addition to possessing extensive and precise knowledge of both. They must also have broad intellectual insight to grasp linguistic features on one hand and cultural specificities on the other. This entails conveying the message with complete accuracy and fidelity, which can only be achieved by prioritizing meaning and interpretation when translating the original text's intent.

2. 2. The Nature and Role of Hermeneutics

2.1 The Nature of Hermeneutics:

Hermeneutics is a procedural concept historically rooted in reading techniques, textual comprehension tools, and mechanisms for clarifying meaning since ancient times—particularly since the era of Socrates, Aristotle, and Thales. It should be classified as a methodological and operational concept rather than a doctrinal one.

Often described as a modern philosophy of language, hermeneutics is considered a theory of understanding. However, it does not explain *how* we understand or *what* we understand; rather, it addresses the fundamental question of *whether understanding is even possible*. Hermeneutics examines the conditions of understanding and the personal act of interpretation. Thus, understanding is viewed as an event that either occurs or fails to occur.

The starting point of hermeneutic philosophy is the individual as a historical and social being who seeks to navigate their world, comprehend others, and engage with society. This applies directly to translation, where the central figure is the translator themselves—armed with linguistic and cultural knowledge, technical skills, and writing strategies. The focus lies on translation competence as a profoundly subjective phenomenon tied to comprehension and writing. This dynamic is best analyzed through the lens of hermeneutics (L. Cercel, 2009)

The discussion of interpretation in literary studies is not separate from translation, which shares common ground with it. In terms of mechanisms, the proposed approach is entirely foreign, which at one point necessitated its translation into Arabic, yet this is not problematic, as it serves the role of knowledge, the transmission and translation of which is undisputed. We will come to understand that translation is a form of interpretation, a mode of comprehension and assimilation, making the analysis and grasp of the text's intent and the author's purpose a fundamental stage in shaping a complete vision of the translated work later on. Thus, it becomes evident that interpretation is a central orbit in which every act related to analysis, reading, and understanding revolves—whether it be pure critique or translation and transference between two languages.

As Gadamer, Hans-Georg Gadamer, stated:

«It is not surprising that the problem of comprehension is limited to meaning, and the attempt to control it with a mechanism - that is the subject of Hermeneutics - is related to dialects and eloquence traditionally connected. Language is the area where understanding between partners and agreement on the same thing. »

Translation is not merely converting words from one language to another; rather, it is a profound analysis of the content and message carried by the text. This requires the translator to have a deep understanding of the cultural, social, and historical context in which the original text emerged. In striving for maximum accuracy and fidelity in translation, the translator faces significant challenges, particularly in literary translation. Literary texts often carry an artistic and creative dimension that makes translation a more complex task, as the translator must convey not only the literal meaning of the words but also the emotion and overall atmosphere of the original text.

2.2 The role of hermeneutics:

The term *hermeneutics* plays a crucial role in understanding the work of translation, as it contributes to a deeper analysis and comprehension of texts, allowing for a better interpretation of their meanings and messages. Thus, it can be said that hermeneutics serves as an important theoretical framework that helps translators understand and appreciate texts more profoundly and accurately.

From a personal scholarly perspective, hermeneutics distinguishes between *things/facts* (as objects of knowledge) and *human activity* (with its internal motivations), that is, between objectivity and subjectivity, between analysis and evidence, between strategy and motive, between logic and intuition, between deduction and impression, between proof and verification.

Friedrich Schleiermacher emphasized in his book *Hermeneutics and Criticism* (1838/1998) that *thought* and *will* refer to one another in the interpreting subject, yet they also remain inevitably separate. Any judgment remains contestable, intention may not be fully attainable, and rules do not automatically translate into principles of action. To support one's interpretation of a text and elucidate its meaning, Schleiermacher (1998, §6) established several alternating dichotomies as a methodological approach to analysis.

Among other considerations, there exists the circle of understanding or the "hermeneutic circle" between the text as a whole and its individual components, or between the text's original

constitution and its actual effect when the author's intentions diverge from what is perceptible in the written text to the contemporary reader. This methodological approach aligns with established aspects of textual analysis, lexical, semantic, and pragmatic, typically employed to enhance one's interpretation (Thiselton 2006, 191).

However, Schleiermacher insists there is always an additional dimension of intuition, for understanding is an art. He remarks: "*The rules of analysis cannot be applied by formula. It remains an art*" (Schleiermacher 1998, 283). Truth reveals itself intuitively in the mind of the interpreter.

The foundation of this process lies in awareness of both the subject matter and the language involved, for without a unifying bond, no mutual understanding is possible. Art relies on relevant knowledge; naive interpretation, such as unreflective translation, cannot be accepted.

The so-called "hermeneutic circle" means that one cannot understand anything without already knowing something of it. This observation is non-trivial, for it implies that mere linguistic analysis of a text does not yield its meaning, just as the bare observation of a foreign phenomenon does not lead to its adequate interpretation. A text's "difficulty" is a relative concept, not an intrinsic textual quality; it depends on the reader's capacity. Thus, translators must be conscious of their personal horizons of experience and knowledge, and must actively expand them through learning, engaging with unfamiliar contexts. There is the historical context in which the foreign text was written, and there is the context in which the interpreter stands. It is impossible for translators to erase their own context through pure objectivity. Rather, it is precisely by becoming aware of their modern context and its influence on their reading that they can arrive at a fresher, more precise, and deeper understanding of the text.

The hermeneutic circle, as an interpretive horizon, constitutes an inextricable bond between reader and text - one we can never fully escape. Yet this circularity does not imprison us, for we continually assimilate new knowledge, thereby transcending our initial interpretive boundaries. This dynamic process of horizon-expansion forms the very foundation for deeper understanding while simultaneously laying the groundwork for future comprehension.

The textual reality thus revealed remains historically conditioned (Thiselton 2006, 747). There exists no quasi-objective truth, eternally immutable across social contexts. Truth emerges only dialectically - through communal discourse within specific groups, maintaining provisional validity for particular historical periods while perpetually remaining open to fresh interpretations.

When we expand our horizon of knowledge, we become capable of comprehending a text's message that originated in another horizon. As Hans-Georg Gadamer articulates in his seminal work *Truth and Method* (1960/1990), understanding occurs through a "fusion of horizons" a perpetually dynamic process where individuals, situated within their historical position, experience continual growth of awareness.

Moreover, hermeneutics plays a pivotal role in understanding translation as a practice, enabling deeper textual analysis and more nuanced interpretation of meanings and messages. It thus serves as a crucial theoretical framework that helps translators engage with texts more profoundly and accurately. Translation and interpretation represent vital facets of cross-cultural and linguistic exchange, facilitating the transfer of ideas, knowledge, and cultural values across linguistic and geographical boundaries. Through the efforts of translators and interpreters, mutual

understanding and intercultural dialogue are fostered, contributing to a more tolerant and collaborative global community.

The competence required for hermeneutic translation cannot be overstated. Translation is not merely a comparative exercise between two languages but fundamentally concerns how to interpret two texts belonging to different linguistic systems. As Eco (2008: 13) asserts: *"Translation is not about comparing two languages, but about interpreting a text in two different languages."*

This principle problematizes the conventional emphasis on target-language norms during translation. A translator must not rely solely on linguistic proficiency or literal rendering of the source text, especially in literary and creative texts, but must also immerse themselves in the cultural framework of the target reader.

Before addressing *hermeneutic translation competence*, with all its requisite predispositions and capabilities, we must first examine the broader notion of *translation competence* itself. Only then can we properly explore the specific dimension of competence within a hermeneutic framework.

3. Translation Competence: Concept and Levels

3.1 The Concept of Translation Competence:

Translating any literary work requires the translator to possess a set of specific competencies and skills that enable them to make necessary adjustments and employ various translation strategies. These competencies and skills go beyond mere knowledge of the source and target languages, they encompass contextual knowledge, analytical ability, interpretive competence, and creativity.

It is also crucial to note that accurate comprehension of meaning is closely tied to the quality of reading applied to the text intended for translation.

This raises the question: How does a translator read a text?

A translator first reads the text superficially to grasp its general theme, then proceeds with one or more in-depth readings. Following this, they analyze it from a translator's perspective, not merely reading what is explicitly written but also interpreting what lies between the lines, the underlying context behind the written or spoken words. In other words, the translator must discern both the overt and the covert, the apparent and the hidden.

"The text remains a field of potential interpretations, constantly renewing itself, a world teeming with alternatives that allow the interpreting translator to enter it, armed with various tools to confront and engage with the text. The translator knows with certainty that their final interpretation is merely provisional, destined to be surpassed in time. Yet they also recognize the value of this experience in broadening their understanding." Eco (2008, 30)

3.2 Levels of Competence:

First, linguistic competence holds primary importance in the translation process and its success. It enables the translator to master both the source and target languages with a proficiency that

allows them to delve into the meanings of the original text and then express them in the target language, while adhering to the target language's idiomatic nature, balancing form and content. Translation is not merely a focus on language but a *movement around* language, as transferring a literary text does not rely solely on meaning *in itself* but rather on *how* that meaning is expressed.

In this context, translation involves imbuing the translated work with the essence of the target language, an essence that fundamentally depends on the translator's ability to skillfully utilize the linguistic resources at their disposal. Thus, we conclude that linguistic competence constitutes the first and foundational level of translation competence.

Secondly, what undoubtedly goes beyond the translator's mere knowledge and mastery of both source and target languages is translation competence, that is, the necessity for the translator to possess a set of translation strategies and techniques, along with an essential and well-rounded familiarity with both the practical and theoretical tools of the translation field. By translation competence, we refer to the translator's skills, which vary in degree and proficiency from one translator to another.

Thirdly, surpassing the previous competencies is hermeneutic competence, which finds its strongest resonance and broadest application in the field of literature and literary translation in particular.

4. Translation Competence within the Hermeneutic Approach:

Within the hermeneutic framework, translation competence represents the translator's ability to move beyond literal transfer of the source text toward a profound understanding of its meaning and purpose, followed by its reformulation in the target language while preserving intellectual, cultural, and contextual fidelity. This approach is rooted in hermeneutic theory, which emphasizes interpreting and comprehending texts within their historical, cultural, and psychological contexts before recreating them.

In literary translation, the translator must possess specialized skills enabling necessary adaptations and the application of various translation strategies and techniques. These competencies extend far beyond mere linguistic mastery of the source and target languages to include contextual awareness, collectively termed "translation competence." But what exactly does this concept entail?

4.1 Translation Competence: Definition

The term refers to the ability to perform a task with a degree of proficiency that varies among individuals. In Arabic, there is often confusion between the terms "كفاءة" (competence) and "كفاية" (proficiency/sufficiency). However, "كفاءة" (competence) has become the more widely accepted equivalent of the English "competence" in translation studies, despite some linguists' preference for "كفاية."

In his lexicon "الصواب اللغوي" (Linguistic Correctness), researcher Ahmed Mokhtar notes: "Some reject the term 'competence' (كفاءة) because dictionaries define it merely as 'ability and sound judgment' a meaning approved by the Egyptian Arabic Language Academy" (Ahmed Mokhtar 2008, pp. 621-622).

If linguistic competence is essential for speakers and listeners within a single language, it becomes even more crucial and complex in interlingual translation.

Al-Djahidh was among the first to address translator competencies in his seminal work "كتاب الحيوان" (Book of Animals), where he dedicated a section titled "شروط الترجمان" *Conditions of the Translator*:

"The translator must demonstrate eloquence in translation proportionate to their knowledge and understanding. They should be the most knowledgeable of both source and target languages, mastering them equally and completely." (Al- Djahidh 1965, p. 76)

However, Al- Djahidh asserts that bilingual proficiency alone doesn't prevent inevitable shortcomings in one language. He argues that mastery of a single language often surpasses divided competence in two, noting: *"The more specialized and narrower the field of knowledge, and the fewer its experts, the more prone the translator is to error. It's virtually impossible for a translator to equal the original scholar's expertise."* (Ibid.)

The required competence in translation is conventionally termed "translation competence", a concept that is inherently non-absolute, as it is fundamentally linked to: the translator's individual capacities and skills on one hand, and its relative and variable manifestation among different translators on the other.

"Translation competence is clearly seen as demanding expertise in various areas" (C. Slaaffixen, B. Abad, 2001)

In recent decades, numerous definitions of translation competence have emerged, all converging on the fundamental requirement of knowledge of languages, cultures, and the specific field of translation. To approach this concept scientifically, researchers have decomposed it into distinct yet interconnected sub-competencies (sub-competences) that can be studied both independently and holistically. These classifications vary according to their proponents' theoretical orientations: while proponents of literal translation prioritize linguistic competence above all other capabilities, advocates of contextual approaches view linguistic competence as merely foundational to broader translational competence.

From a hermeneutic perspective, translators require an additional dimension of competence - interpretive competence - which gives rise to comprehension competence. This demands that translators cultivate both explanatory and hermeneutic skills: explanation serves understanding, while interpretation primarily facilitates the transfer process. Explanation operates throughout discourse, whereas interpretation specifically addresses areas of ambiguity or obscurity.

Building upon these competence frameworks, hermeneutic competence emerges as pivotal and indispensable to the translation process, ensuring successful meaning transfer and reconstruction in the target language. Translation is, in essence, an interpretive act - even in its most literal forms, as Gadamer has demonstrated:

"All translation, even what we call word for word, is a form of interpretation" (J. Gadamer, 1999, 145)

Thus, hermeneutic competence also reflects the receiver's aesthetic sensibility and cultural familiarity, given that certain texts prove particularly resistant to interpretation in specific languages, and linguistic structures may lack the capacity to fully encompass all their nuances—especially in the case of culturally embedded texts. Hermeneutic competence fundamentally relies on both the receiver's and the translator's (as an exceptional receiver) ability to fill interpretive gaps through active hermeneutic effort.

4.2 Hermeneutic Translation Competence:

Elements of interpretive translation competence include a willingness to self-critically reflect, an openness to continuous learning, the ability to integrate new cognitive inputs, and the courage to be linguistically creative. Only then will the translation be authentically performed by the translator as a co-author. Again, this ability and translation competence are constantly evolving. It depends on the knowledge provided, the current learning process, and the experiential input, which is never static. Learning inputs, even from other sources, will transform any subsequent translations of the same text by the translator into everyday experience. When we read our work from last week, we immediately see errors, shortcomings, poor style, etc., and we revise them. A hermeneutic approach to translation, which places the translator at the center of the text, will always reflect aspects of textual phenomena (Lakoff 198, 5).

Here, foreign objects, ideas, and texts appear to us, and we classify them in a way determined by our knowledge, worldview, and ideology at that moment. This has consequences for our competence and our approach to work. A translator is expected to first have an understanding of the two cultures involved in the translation, as they will be rooted in one while the other remains foreign to them.

Translation through a hermeneutic approach entails great responsibility. We know that interpretation is subjective and somewhat incomplete, yet readers assume they are receiving the translated text's content as faithfully as possible. The translator, therefore, must reflect on their own perspective and ask whether they possess sufficient knowledge to translate the text responsibly—so that specialized communication can continue or literary messages can reach a new audience.

Self-criticism is important, along with the awareness that the ultimate goal of a perfectly identical translation is unattainable due to the influence of history. The translator will conduct extensive research to achieve an "informed understanding" by immersing themselves more deeply in the world of a foreign culture or an unfamiliar technical field. This is not impossible, but it will never be complete.

We cannot discuss the equivalence relationship between the source text and the target text because the latter has not yet been determined.

5. Understanding as a Continuous Process:

George Steiner noted long ago that language is historically determined and evolves over time. The factor of time drives a continuous creative movement within languages: today, I speak differently than I did yesterday because I have learned something in the meantime. The individual character of a person tends toward creative expression, and this further contributes to the

development of language. We can observe an endless repetition of ideas in different expressions, a rephrasing of language itself, as classic works are revisited again and again. They are reinterpreted, commented upon in other words, and translated. We must abandon the goal of complete equivalence between originals and translations. (Steiner, 1975, p. 7)

The message is a virtual entity permanently linked to language, and comprehension is an ongoing cognitive process. Any new attempt will transform the initial cognitive representation of the source text's message, and we call this "interpretation." This process is not static; even a re-reading by the same person may lead to a deeper understanding of the message by assimilating more aspects of its potential content. This is called the spiral movement of understanding (Stolze, 2011, p. 66).

Reading comprehension does not destroy the text, an idea presented by Steiner (1975, p. 313), but rather helps reveal its potential. Some acts of understanding bring us closer to the text, while others create greater distance, uncovering different aspects inherent in the text along with its possible meanings (which the author has fixed in a particular written form) or pushing them into the background. Each new reading, each shift in perspective, will lead to a slightly different interpretation, until a sufficiently comprehensive understanding is achieved.

This applies to literary translation just as it does to translation in specialized communication. In every case, the outcome depends on the translator's knowledge and ability to learn. That different translators will produce slightly different translations is a generally accepted fact, as it aligns with our everyday experience. Yet this effect also applies to the same translator over time, given the factor of time.

6. Translation as Hermeneutic Revelation:

If interpretation is an *unveiling* of hidden meanings and diverse significations, then translation, too, is an act of *disclosure*, a revelation of what lies dormant in the language of the Other, of what remains incomplete or unexplained in another tongue. Every translator strives to achieve this in a language yet untranslated, or even within the same language but through a more comprehensible and interpretative form. This brings to mind the example of *dictionaries*, where meanings and words are "translated" within a single language, a form of *intralingual translation* that renders the text hermeneutic in nature. As Heidegger suggests, the essence of translation and interpretation is one and the same.

"Translation may seem an impossible task, an act of distortion, deception, even forgery; a white lie. Yet those who engage in the movement of *style*, transferring it from one language to another, emerge wiser. They become better readers: less self-assured but more attuned to their senses, and ultimately happier. (J. Gadamer, 1999, 18)

" Translation is not merely a bridge between two languages; it *expands* the horizons of the target language, enriching its lexicon and semantic density. It generates unprecedented images and meanings, forging new modes of expression about existence and the world. It compels the coinage of fresh vocabulary and modern terminology to absorb and reflect global shifts.

Translation stands shoulder-to-shoulder with interpretation in its engagement with texts, transforming the act into a continuous process of *discovery* and *production*. It facilitates epistemic and intellectual dialogue across cultures, despite their linguistic and contextual disparities, proposing a kind of *hermeneutic equivalence*. Meaning is thus grasped and reconstituted through these texts, from one language to another. Translation permits a *dialogue* with the text through the self that seeks to comprehend this multilingual world, a role the translator fulfills as an interpreter of the text's message, striving toward its aim. This echoes Western hermeneutics, where the divine messenger (Hermes) relays truths from the gods to the people, from origin to target, in the language of pure truth.

Yet when translation reduces texts to a mere transfer from source to target contexts, it is rejected by Western metaphysics. The latter insists that the original text, once stripped of its linguistic aura, loses its "sacred" primordial status. It becomes threatened by alternative textual forms, no longer singular in its essence. Here, translation allegedly fails to achieve what the original text accomplished, the target language neither rivals the source nor unveils another truth, for truth is singular. "The greatest flaw in translation arises when translating from a translation." (H. Khammari, 2005, 25).

Thus, the truth in the second text remains provisional, absent a definitive and masterful translation capable of fully deconstructing the source language to extract the author's intended meaning. The translator may never produce a "complete" text, for language is always *another language*. Yet the original *must* emerge; it *demand*s translation, expressing a desire to endure and live. "As if the text, aging in its own language, yearns to depart, migrate, and be rewritten, to clothe itself in another tongue. As if every language, in isolation, suffers atrophy, growing weak, paralyzed, stunted. Translation, writes Jacques Derrida, is the linguistic supplement through which one language supplies what another lacks, reciprocally and harmoniously. This *crossing* ensures the growth and proliferation of languages."

Despite the technical torment and inescapable challenges translation poses, Paul Ricœur advances its cause, liberating it from technical constraints to place it squarely within the framework of interpretation. For him, however technical, translation remains *fundamentally hermeneutic*.

The followings, are examples of what has been said above:

1- "And prayed in the silences of his soul", Gibran (1923, p.2)

- "يردد الصلوات في محراب السكون من روحه" عكاشة (1980, p.51)

Translator Tharwat Okasha's Islamic background clearly influences his translations. For example, he adds the word "mihrab"—a word with Islamic connotations—to the target text, even though it does not appear there and is not referred to in any way. This demonstrates the translator's religious, cultural, and educational background, which is clearly evident in his style in translating the original text by Kahlil Gibran from English into Arabic.

2- “Let your **board** stand an **altar** on which the pure and the innocent of forest and plain are sacrificed”

Gibran (1923, p.13)

2- "ولتكن مائدتك مذبحا تقرب عليها التقدّم النقية الطاهرة من الحقول والسهول ضحيةً." البشير (1994، p.51)

Offering sacrifices and oblations on the holy altar is a well-known Christian tradition. The translator successfully conveyed the same religious meaning from the source text to the target text by using Biblically relevant terms such as "table," "altar," and "offerings." His deep knowledge of Christianity and the Bible was clearly evident in his translation from English into Arabic.

(Note: I adjusted "mā'ida" to "table" since it often refers to the "Lord's Table" or "Communion Table" in Christian context, while "altar" and "offerings" remain accurate. If "mā'ida" specifically refers to a physical table rather than a symbolic one, it could also be translated as "sacrificial table" depending on context.)

3- “The sea that calls all the **things** unto her calls me, and I must embark” Gibran (1923, p.47)

3- "فالبحر الذي يهتف بكل الكائنات إليه يهتف بي أن أقبلوا لا مفر لي من نشر الشرائع." عكاشة (1980، p.52)

This reveals a translation error resulting from reliance on literal translation, as Akasha translated the word "things" literally to "الأشياء" (al-ashyā'), which is considered an imprecise generalization. This points to a failure in grasping the intended meaning, which in turn leads the translator to an interpretation that obscures the sense.

(Note: The translation maintains the critical tone while clarifying the issue—literal translation causing ambiguity. If "عكاشة" (Akasha) is a specific translator's name, it should remain as is; if it refers to a general concept, an adjustment may be needed.)

4- "Upon her prow **the mariners**, the men of his land" Gibran (1923, p.2)

4- "وفي مقدمتها فلاحون من وطنه" عكاشة (1980، p.52)

The text illustrates that as the Prophet was departing, he turned toward the sea and saw his ship approaching, while at the same moment, the mariners of his homeland were standing on the ship's bow. However, Akasha translated the term "the mariners" as "فلاحون" (peasants/farmers), which is an inaccurate translation. The description here pertains to a maritime scene (ship, sailors), making the translation "فلاحون" contradict the context.

Had the author intended a metaphorical comparison between the sailors and peasants, the translation should have clarified this, for example, by adding: "sailors who resembled peasants in appearance." The translator may have assumed that "mariners" refers to rural inhabitants (in some dialects), but this is incorrect in a literary or religious context.

5- "For to stay, though the hours burn in the night, is to freeze and crystallize and be **bound in a mould**" Gibran (1923, p.2)

- "فإن بقيت جمدت و تبلورت و احتواني قالب، برغم ليل لهاب يحرق الساعات" عكاشة (1980، p.52)

The translator used the phrase "احتواني قالب" (I was contained in a mold). The word "احتوى" (contain), according to *Al-Mawrid Dictionary* (1995) for translating the meaning of the phrase "bound in a mould", is rendered as: "encompasses, includes, contains, accommodates, surrounds, envelops, cloaks, comprises, carries, covers, implies." None of these terms carry the connotation of compulsion or coercion. Consequently, Akasha overlooked one of the dimensions Gibran intended in the original text. As a result, the translation lost the existential dimension in Gibran's text (the idea that survival freezes a person against their will).

6- "When **he** speaks to you believe in him" Gibran (1923, p.7)

6- "إذا خاطبتكم المحبة فصدقوها" بشير (1980, p.52)

The translator treated *love* as feminine by translating the word "love" into a feminine Arabic equivalent: "المحبة" (al-mahabbah). Thus, they preserved the personification of love but without indicating its gender.

The word "المحبة" (feminine), as opposed to "الحب" (masculine), reflects a feminization of the concept in Arabic, yet it does not specify whether the personified figure is male or female.

In the original English text, the word "*love*" is grammatically gender-neutral, but its personification may carry feminine connotations in Western contexts (e.g., "*Mother Love*").

In Arabic, "المحبة" (feminine) is often used in spiritual or tender emotional contexts, while "الحب" (masculine) may be more general. The feminization here might evoke a sense of nostalgic tenderness.

Thus, while the translator maintained the personification, they overlooked the implied gender in the original text (if any). This raises a question about whether gender should be explicitly conveyed when translating abstract concepts.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Results:

a. Hermeneutic Challenges in Translating *the Prophet*

The analysis of Tharwat Okasha's Arabic translation of *The Prophet* reveals several hermeneutic challenges:

- Cultural and Philosophical Nuances: Gibran's work is deeply rooted in Sufi mysticism, Christian theology, and Eastern philosophy, requiring the translator to navigate complex metaphysical concepts. Okasha's translation occasionally simplifies or reinterprets these ideas to align with an Arabic-speaking audience's cultural expectations.
- Poetic vs. Literal Translation: The original text's lyrical prose posed difficulties in maintaining its aesthetic and rhythmic qualities. Okasha sometimes prioritized semantic accuracy over poetic flow, leading to a more formal rendition compared to Gibran's fluid English.
- Terminological Choices: Certain terms (e.g., "love," "freedom," "soul") carry different connotations in Arabic. Okasha's lexical selections reflect his interpretive stance,

occasionally deviating from Gibran's intended meaning.

b. Comparative Analysis with Other Translations

A comparison with other Arabic translations (e.g., by Mikhail Naimy and Anis Karam) shows:

- Okasha's version tends to be more explanatory, adding clarifications where Gibran's text is ambiguous.
- Naimy's translation retains more poetic ambiguity, while Karam's is more literal.
- Okasha's interpretive choices suggest a hermeneutic approach that balances fidelity to the source text with target-reader accessibility.

c. Reception and Impact

- Okasha's translation was well-received in academic circles for its clarity but critiqued by some for losing some of Gibran's mystical lyricism.
- The translation played a role in popularizing Gibran's work in the Arab world, though some purists argue that it domesticated the text excessively.

4.2 Discussion:

1. Hermeneutics as a Framework for Translation

This study demonstrates that translation is inherently hermeneutic—an act of interpretation rather than mere transference. Okasha's decisions reflect his own understanding of Gibran's philosophy, shaped by his cultural and intellectual background.

2. The Balance Between Fidelity and Adaptation

- Fidelity to the Source Text: Should a translator prioritize exact meaning or the spirit of the text? Okasha's approach leans toward interpretive fidelity, sometimes at the expense of stylistic elegance.
- Adaptation for the Target Audience: His additions and clarifications suggest an effort to make Gibran's esoteric ideas more accessible, raising questions about the ethics of translator intervention.

3. Implications for Literary Translation

- The case study highlights that no translation is neutral; each reflects the translator's hermeneutic circle (pre-understandings, cultural context, and linguistic choices).
- Future translations of philosophically dense texts might benefit from a hybrid approach—preserving poetic ambiguity while providing paratextual explanations (footnotes, commentaries).

4. Limitations and Further Research

- The study focuses on Okasha's translation; comparing more versions could yield deeper insights into hermeneutic variability.
- A reader-response study could assess how different Arabic-speaking audiences perceive Okasha's interpretive choices.

3. CONCLUSION

At the close of this research, it becomes evident that translation is not merely a mechanical transfer of texts between languages, but rather a complex hermeneutic process shaped by the translator's understanding and their grasp of the text's cultural and linguistic contexts. By examining the intrinsic relationship between hermeneutics and translation, the study reveals that every translation is a re-creation of the original text, filtered through the translator's interpretive lens. This explains why multiple translations of a single text can coexist and vary across different eras.

The research also demonstrates that hermeneutic translation fundamentally differs from literal or functionalist approaches, as it goes beyond conveying direct meaning to embody the spirit and rhythm of the text. This poses significant challenges for translators, particularly in literary and philosophical works characterized by ambiguity and semantic shifts. The study highlights that the greatest challenge lies in striking a balance between fidelity to the source text and the necessity of creative interpretation—a task that demands a deep awareness of hermeneutic tools and the ability to deconstruct discourse within divergent cultural frameworks.

Although translation has long served as a bridge between cultures, it remains a dynamic yet somewhat unidirectional process, inevitably transforming the message, the target culture, and even the translator themselves. Thus, the contributions of hermeneutics to the field of translation remain crucial in understanding how meaning is produced and reshaped across languages.

Finally, this study has helped illuminate the theoretical intersection between hermeneutics and translation, emphasizing that faithful translation does not mean rigid adherence to the letter of the text, but rather requires a creative dialogue between the text, the translator, and the target culture. This opens new avenues for research into the criteria of hermeneutic translation and how it can be employed to enhance cultural exchange without stripping texts of their original essence.

4. Bibliography List:

- 1- Antos, G. (1989). In G. Antos & H. P. Krings (Eds.), [Text production: An interdisciplinary research overview] (pp. 5–57). Niemeyer.
- 2- Bassnett Susan, (2002) Translation Studies, Routledge Taylor & Francis third edition, London and New York.
- 3- Cercel, L. (Ed.). (2013). *Übersetzung und Hermeneutik / Translation and hermeneutics*. Zeta Books.
- 4- Delisle, J. (1993). Translation: Methodologies and Techniques. University of Ottawa Press.
- 5- Eco, U. (2008). Translation as interpretation. In S. Petrilli (Ed.), Translation translation (pp. 221–232). Rodopi.
- 6- Even-Zohar, I. (1990). Polysystem Theory. Poetics Today, Oxford University Press.
- 7- Gadamer, H.-G. (1990). Truth and Method (2nd ed.). Continuum. (Original work published 1960).

- 8- Heidegger, M. (1976-1989). Being and Time (J. Macquarrie & E. Robinson, Trans.). Harper & Row. (Original work published 1927).
- 9- Khammari, Hussein. The Essence of Translation [جوهر الترجمة]. Dar Al-Hadi, 2005.
- 10- Lakoff, G. (1987). Metaphors We Live By. University of Chicago Press.
- 11- Neubert, A. (2000). Translation Competence: Theories and Applications. Translation in context: Selected papers from the EST Congress, Granada 1998
- 12- Ricoeur, P. (1970). Freud and philosophy: An essay on interpretation (D. Savage, Trans.). Yale University Press.
- 13- Schleiermacher, F. (1998). Hermeneutics and Criticism (A. Bowie, Trans.). Cambridge University Press. (Original work published 1838).
- 14- Sperber, D., & Wilson, D. (1986). Relevance: Communication and Cognition. Harvard University Press.
- 15- Steiner, G. (1975). After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation. Oxford University Press.
- 16- Stolze, R. (2011). Hermeneutic approaches to translation. In K. Malmkjær & K. Windle (Eds.), The Oxford handbook of translation studies (pp. 229-241). Oxford University Press.
- 17- Thiselton, A. C. (2006). Hermeneutics: An introduction. William B. Eerdmans Publishing. (Grand Rapids, MI, USA).

Appendices:

Appendix 01

