When Translation Becomes a Question of Intervention

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Abstract

This article attempts to highlight the social, political, and ethical challenges facing the translator when dealing with religious and philosophical texts. Drawing on our experience in translating books related to these fields from Arabic into French and vice versa, we pinpoint examples of untranslatability of some religious and intellectual concepts due to constraints within the target language. Moreover, the question of the translator as cross-cultural mediator capable of achieving acculturation is addressed. The analysis is conducted following two fundamental concepts in the field of translation studies, namely domestication and foreignization, in addition to another view commonly used by the French philosopher Michel Foucault "authority or power of language" which arises through the discourses that we produce, or that others produce. These ideas will give insights into the translators' choices, decisions, and even hesitations when handling terms or expressions connected with religious or intellectual concepts.

Keywords: domestication, foreignization, ideology, religious concepts, untranslatability

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