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## Bias in translation

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**Abstract**---Translation is the process of rendering a text from a source language into a target language. It usually reflects, through the medium of language, the translator's level of knowledge of the source language and the target language, attitudes, reactions, orientation including bias, prejudice, ideology, etc. Bias is the act of either taking sides or opposing an individual, a group of people and a phenomenon that are either in the immediate context or outside it. On this basis, the current study aims at presenting the concept of bias in terms of its definition, nature and characteristics, types, reasons behind bias and the measures or steps to minimize bias in translation. In other words, it sets of the point that bias in translation is the translator's act of violating the principle of truth or sincerity and hence presenting the translated material in a new form that is either beautified/ positive or distorted/ negative. It has further revealed the fact that such a behaviour on the part of the translator has triggered scholars' interest to probe the reasons behind it and specify the reasons and/or factors, namely personal, ideological, social, political, etc. that are closely related to the translator and hence make them come out with translation products that are characterized by varied types of biases, the most paramount among which are positive bias and negative bias. The study ends by suggesting a number of measures and steps that are believed to minimize bias in translation.

**Keywords**---translation, bias, positive bias, negative bias.

### Introduction

Translation is closely pertinent to its surrounding context since the translator is a person who belongs to a particular social group with shared history, values, cultural and religious beliefs and sentiments. The translator, in doing the job of

translation, takes either an in-between position and duly becomes unbiased or sides by or opposing the already shared elements, hence becoming biased. It can be deduced from the preceding lines that translators are supposed to be aware of what is going on around them at any time as there are conditions, some of which may be quite demanding, that impose themselves on people, including translators. Any attempt by translators to ignore the outside forces and conditions will definitely culminate in failure. They, i.e. translators, may be in a position to ignore, forget about and/or get away, yet that lasts for a short time. They will definitely undergo the state of partiality in case they like or dislike it. The problem of partiality reflects that of being either objective or subjective in translating or interpreting based on the various and diversified aspects of the texts and situations that require translators to identify, assimilate and provide the appropriate effective solution (Ghazala, 2002:147-148). This research aims at shedding light on the concept of bias in terms of its definition, nature and characteristics, types and occurrence in translation which has been enlarged upon by demonstrating the reasons behind bias in translation and the measures and steps to minimize it.

### **The Concept of Bias**

Bias is usually concomitant with the readiness to positively consider one's viewpoint on one hand, and reluctance, i.e. negative consideration of the positive aspects of others' viewpoints. This is evident from people's strong tendency to either accept or refuse other people or groups.

### **Historical Background**

Tracing back the history of the introduction of the concept "bias" into the literature demands the attendance to other concepts especially "prejudice". The latter, represented by its various types, has been studied by cognitive science researchers for more than four decades. Accordingly, it can be deduced that bias has a long date of existence as a natural human tendency especially in terms of decision making and that the application of a cognitive bias entails that reality will behave in a given manner based on certain cognitive likely or unlikely accurate priors. Additionally, since prejudice always results in unreasonable conclusions, bias has also referred to as prejudice, partiality, bias, and partisanship in the past. This is supported by the fact that over a hundred different types of cognitive biases have been identified, including social, behavioural, memory-related, and a wide range of others.

### **Bias: Definition**

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, bias refers to the action of supporting or opposing a particular person or thing in an unfair way as personal opinions are permitted to influence your judgment. Steinbock (1978: 247) defines bias as "a disproportionate weight in favour of or against an idea or thing, usually in a way that is closed-minded, prejudicial, or unfair. Biases can be innate or learned". The same author adds that when news organizations and journalists choose which events and stories to report and how to cover them, this is known as media bias. Rather than the viewpoint of a single journalist or article, the phrase "media bias"

suggests a systemic or widespread bias that violates the rules of journalism (Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia).

Bias is a predisposed preference for or opposition to a concept, something, a person, or a group. It is frequently acquired through learning and greatly influenced by factors such as a person's financial situation, race, ethnicity, educational background, etc. Bias can have a negative effect on a person's interpersonal and professional interactions; in society, it can result in an unfair group's persecution (Http, 1). Finally, bias is defined as a strong preference or aversion to a certain group of people or a particular point of view, which is not always based on an accurate judgment (Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary).

### **Bias: Nature and Characteristics**

Understanding bias in its accurate intended meaning and real nature is not that easy task. Fuller (2019) states that many people believe that bias is a politically loaded term. They nearly solely link it to gender and race. Furthermore, bias can occur around practically anything and is often perceived as accusatory, even if it is undoubtedly present in the areas of race and gender and presents a challenge in businesses. A person who is perceived as biased is typically seen as a nasty person with a propensity for prejudice and discrimination. However, bias is not always harmful; rather, it is a normal aspect of the human condition that is derived from survival instincts and strengthened by experiences. It is a preference that can be held by an individual, organization, or institution for or against a specific person, location, or item. Additionally, although they are largely unintentional, biases have an impact on the results. As a result, reflecting on and investigating our own identities can frequently reveal biases that we were previously unaware of them (Http, 2).

The subjectivity and emotion study have linked bias to lexical and grammatical cues. One instance of framing bias is the employment of metaphors and words that support the author's viewpoint on a contentious subject. Editorials, unlike product reviews and discussion pieces, less frequently use subjective language. Consequently, biases may manifest themselves in less evident ways, such as subliminal framing, presuppositions, and implication, which are less common in other writing genres. The linguistic analysis identifies these minor bias indicators, which include factive verbs, implicatives and other entailments, hedges, and subjective intensifiers. By first recognizing biased sentences, then identifying the word that introduces the prejudice, and then correcting the bias, employing these signals, for instance, might help detect and remedy instances of bias (Recasens et al., 2013: 1650-1659).

### **Bias: Types**

Bias can be broad or local and can be based on a number of variables, including race, age, gender, or ethnicity. People with biases do not care about the facts since they believe their assumptions about other people are true. When one individual or group of people assumes anything negative about another person or group of people before having the opportunity to learn more about them, this is called bias. Additionally, truth does not matter to biased individuals. They believe

their biases against other people are justified. As a result, bias happens when one individual or group of people assumes negative things about another person or group of people before giving them the opportunity to provide more information.

Based on this, biases fall into two broad categories. The first kind of bias, known as framing bias, is characterized by the use of words or phrases that are associated to a certain viewpoint. It is more overt because it happens when biased or one-sided language is employed to express the author's side of a certain argument. In the second category, referred to as epistemic or epistemological bias, the plausibility of a claim is prioritized. The bias in this latter type is bidirectional. It happens when an idea that is generally believed to be true is questioned, or when an idea that is generally believed to be untrue is implied or presupposed (Recasens et al., 2013:1653).

Framing bias has been investigated in research on attitude recognition and argument subjectivity. This research has focused on a two-sided debate like the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the majority of studies have framed the problem as a two-way categorization of documents or words into "for/positive" vs. "anti-negative." These models make use of discourse links, distributional similarity, unigram and bigram counts, subjectivity and emotion lexicons, and more.

Researchers may use traits from the subjectivity literature to recognize assumptions and entailments in order to spot framing bias, but it is possible that other qualities are required to spot epistemic prejudice. The first of these traits is stereotyping; the idea that someone else has specific traits because of their nationality, ethnicity, or gender. As a result, stereotyping ascribes particular characteristics to a person based on their affiliation with a particular group. As a result, it resembles an ontology in that classification rules are used (so that certain characteristics, such as ignorance, frailty, or criminal behaviour, are presumptively assumed) simply because a person has a particular value for a particular characteristic (she has a female gender value for a gender property, or he has an African ethnicity value) (Garrido-Munoz et al., 2021:3).

A further type of bias is known as cultural bias. Researchers have defined culture in a variety of ways. Broadly speaking, culture is viewed as a unique meaning and information system, shared among individuals, that enables the community to achieve their fundamental requirements of survival, seek pleasure and well-being and draw meaning from existence (Matsumoto and Juang, 2013:15). However, additional research has spotted cultural bias experienced by learners from varied racial and cultural backgrounds during their time in school. In other words, cultural bias and cultural discontinuity are daily challenges for learners from varied racial and cultural origins in the classroom. It is worthy to note that cultural bias is evidenced in the curriculum and standardized tests used in public schools, as well as the teaching strategies promoted and put into practice by school staff members.

Outside the educational or/and academic setting, many people harbour prejudices against people from various cultures. To put it another way, it is the mental process of assessing changes in light of cultural standards. A wide range of prejudices exist with regard to taboo topics such positioning of body parts,

acceptance of evidence, beliefs of fairness, and linguistic conventions in large measure because of cultural ambiguity.

The two types of bias that occur most frequently in translation are negative bias and positive bias, according to Ghazala (2002:154–158). The term "negative bias" refers to any unwarranted intrusion or trespass on the source language (SL) text, which may cause a harmful or significant loss of meaning, caused by changing, adding, or omitting something for personal reasons of impressiveness, snobbery, or hypocrisy; lack of accuracy, ignorance, negligence, excessive adherence to the original, even to blunders and historical mistakes; national or racial discrimination or prejudicial motive. This is on one hand. On the other hand, positive bias refer to translators' righteous propensity to treat readers with respect, prevent insults, explain uncertain language, exalt or euphemize for social reasons, rectify typos and printing problems, and eliminate extraneous or forbidden terminology.

According to Mazzoleni (2002), there is an inadvertent bias in which journalists are unaware of their own ingrained propensity to present a skewed or manufactured reality, namely media bias. Because of the media's inability to present viewers with objective reality, it has been theorized that they might even choose to purposefully present a particular constructed or subjective political reality and it in a way that is consistent with the political stances or worldviews of certain influential groups.

Similarly, journalists may have their own political preferences and be affiliated with a certain party or administration; as a result, they produce writings that reflect these sympathies or have the linguistic effects of these affiliations. This has been suggested as a possible source of intentional bias (Blumler and Gurevitch 1990: 275). According to Mazzoleni (2002) personal political bias refers to journalists' personal political sympathies that manifest as bias in their written work. The target materials of translators could also reflect a personal political bias. Added to that, journalists and translators frequently express their own political ideas in their work products where professional norms and standards demanded by journalism in general and/or by a specific media for which a particular journalist works also play a significant role in the appearance of bias in news articles. This demonstrates the fact that some media outlets, as decided by their professional norms and standards, publish news items that have a left- or right-wing political bias, are divisive or sensational in nature, or are prejudiced in some other way.

Finally, based on the preceding thoughts, two more types of bias come into existence, namely intentional bias and inadvertent bias. In intentional Bias, an ideological goal is served by presenting a manufactured or subjective reality. In reality, manipulation is the outcome of the media's bias and one-sidedness in conveying messages that support one or more political parties (Mazzoleni 2002:27), which is a blatant example of deliberate prejudice. Inadvertent bias occurs when journalists offer subjective or manufactured reality without being aware of it. As a result, it is expected that the author's conscious preferences, including the likely application of bias, will be reflected in the writing process. As

such, it is a goal to utilize objective terminology in textbooks and other reference works like encyclopaedias.

### **Fidelity and Bias in Translation**

As long as translation has existed anywhere on the planet, the debate concerning its equivalent and accuracy has dominated practice and academia. Arguments about the advantages and disadvantages of "word-for-word" translations and "sense-for-sense" or "free" translations have been common in professional and academic circles (Bayani, 2016:37). Likewise, the comparison of the source text (ST) and the target text (TT) has historically been the main focus of translation theory discussions, with "fidelity" as the main criterion. Current Translation Studies are no longer concerned with how "faithful" a translation is to its source text. In contrast, the focus is on the external politics of translation, its cultural and ideological significance, as well as its cultural and ideological worth as a tool for communication. The intricacy of translation is becoming increasingly recognized; say Bassnett and Schaffner (2010:12), which has led to a greater emphasis on social causality, human activity, and results as opposed to internal structures.

The majority of modern translators concur that equivalence is best attained when translating full texts and is best achieved when comparing larger chunks as opposed to individual words. A translator's choice of language is based on the kind of text or the communicative environment in which it is being utilized, claims Ruzaitė (2006:258). Based on the function of the texts, it divides them into four categories: Spreading knowledge is the primary goal of an informative text; form and aesthetics are the emphasis of expressive texts; reader appeal is the primary goal of operative texts; and visual and aural imagery are added to the aforementioned goals in audio media texts.

Four functions that Jakobson (1960:1-23) identified are strikingly comparable to those mentioned above:

- Reference function, which includes the sub-functions of informative and teaching.
- The expressive function can be used to convey one's emotions (sub-functions: emotional and evaluation).
- Sub-functions like persuasion, advertising, etc. that try to evoke an emotional reaction from the recipient.
- The phlebotomy, which includes the receiver's emotional reaction as well as the salutation function and small-talk.

The world of today depends greatly on translation because it is essential to modern international communication. Its function in the media includes essential factors like knowledge and social-cultural exchange. As a result of globalization, media translation is more important than ever in order to deliver vast amounts of information quickly. The examination of how translations and translation products show various sorts of power relations is of great interest to translators and translation studies. The choices made by translators in the socio-political contexts in which translational activities are taking place reflect how information

is distributed and power relations are transmitted. Many translation specialists believe that based on additional textual restrictions, different translation decisions made by different translators may indicate differing worthwhile conclusions (e.g., Munday 2012a:2; Toury 2012: 195). Despite the fact that Lefevere (1992b:11–25) links ideologies, power dynamics, and manipulation to translation judgments, word selections that are connected to the values represented by translators from different publishing organizations may also lead to translation distortions in the media translation field. These distortions demonstrate the interaction between ascendancy and resistance to narratives in the source texts by being defined in terms of ideological mediations in translation.

Trosborg (1997: 14) claims that in order to attain the desired results when translating, it is crucial to keep in mind the text's intended audience. The author of the source text's communication goal must always be compared to the readers, clients, customers' interests. Also, the target audience must be taken into account while translating a particular sort of writing, such as an advertising (in this case, a persuasive effect) and that the main objective of translation is to create a target text that the target audience can understand (Munday 2001:77). This calls for the translated (or target) text's shape and language to be artistically and functionally appropriate. Both the source text and the target text must have adequate data and persuasiveness. It is crucial to consider the source text's intended effect in order to prevent misconceptions, which can result in errors (Trosborg 1997:18).

When translators fail to acknowledge the illocutionary power of a single utterance and the superordinate communicative intent of the text act, it can be challenging to determine the goals of discourse. This can lead to faulty rendering. The intended meaning of the source text and the expectations of the target audience must be clearly expressed by translators. Only by considering the context of the text can one discern both the reader's expectations and the author's intentions. According to Nord (1997:49), translators should not anticipate that the text function would be automatically kept during the translation because they cannot assume that it is a fundamental or constant aspect of a text.

When choosing a text type, it is vital to take the text's purpose or goal into account. Swales (1990) asserts that text and discourse kinds are determined by their purposes, while Hymes' SPEAKING model from 1974 recognizes aims as a significant speech component. Due to the fact that different speaking groups have various communicative goals, which Swales (1990:9) refers to as socio-rhetorical networks, it is feasible to distinguish between different discourse communities. They follow distinctive traditions and patterns for structuring discourse, thinking, simulating reality, and perceiving things that are particular to their discourse community. A group of professionals can therefore be thought of as a distinct community having distinct cognitive traits and, at the same time, distinct language qualities, or communal lexicons. It is common knowledge that a text's intended audience has a significant impact on how it is structured and the kinds of aesthetic and grammatical decisions it makes. When the purpose of the conversation changes, speakers will alter their linguistic tactics. When translating, it is crucial to keep the TT's intended readership in mind. For instance, menu translations serve as a powerful tool in the tourism business by

representing and advertising restaurants to their target market, which are primarily foreigners.

### **Reasons behind Bias in Translation**

A translation that is not biased is the only thing that can be expected in the face of such infinite, always evolving, and growing complexity. When thinking on bias in translation, there are three things to keep in mind: what, how, and why the translators' bias and prejudice are evident in their translations. The translator's own mental and psychological activity is highlighted rather than the translation itself, which could provide some justifications or pretexts for his partiality. It is intriguing and completely compelling how language shapes how people see the world and how they perceive reality. Whatever the aetiology, each discussion of ideology carries emotional undertones.

Shehab et al. (2014:186) contend that as euphemism is typically connected with the emotive overtones. A speaker may consciously choose to use emotive euphemistic idioms in order to underline the desired meaning to be communicated through language. It is fair to conclude at this point that there are two different philosophies that influence how meaning in context is approached. First, denotation describes the cognitive and conceptual meaning that speakers of a particular language have for words that allow them to use them correctly. Second, connotation is a step up from the emotional connotations that a term conjures up and can vary from person to person depending on personal experiences and ideological gymnastics. In this instance, a definition of emotionality is important. According to Stevenson (1963:21-2), if a word has an immediate aura of feeling that hangs around it, emotiveness is that immediate aura of feeling. Thawabteh (2014:240-243) lists the following as potential causes of emotion: The emotional connotations of the word may be aided or hampered by the word's phonetic structure. These include lexical techniques, personification, metaphors, hyperbole, and synecdoche.

The goal of editors and writers is to write without prejudice. Wikipedia promotes a neutral point of view (NPOV), where articles must incorporate all significant viewpoints that have been published by reliable sources "fairly, proportionally, and as far as practical without prejudice" (Recasens et.al., 2013:1650-1659). The style manual for Wikipedia states that authors should not offer uncontroversial facts as mere opinion and should not present views or disputed claims as facts. Additionally, they ought to avoid passing judgment and note the relative importance of opposing points of view.

Understanding bias's effects on language is useful for both computational linguistics and linguistic theory. In every instance, the researcher suggests using a potent tool: edits to Wikipedia that aim to get rid of prejudice. We can compare the text in its prejudiced (before) and unbiased (after) forms due to the modifications which help us better understand how prejudice manifests itself in language (Recasens et.al., 2013: 1650-1659).

### **Minimizing Bias in Translation**

Perhaps the receptor and his response are a better way to characterize the translation process. The translator must take the equivalence of the two languages into account in order to eliminate subjectivity in translation. In addition to being fluent in the target language, a translator must have a solid comprehension of the syntax, semantics, style, and pragmatics of the original text.

Bell (1991:13) defines translation as the process of translating a source text into a target language while maintaining semantic and stylistic equivalences. Translation serves two purposes since it is a way to convey and maintain meaning in many contexts. For many nations, translation has been essential in the transfer of knowledge from one culture to another. Translation is a two-edged sword that can either properly and plainly lay out the source text or portray it in a way that the final target text contains political manipulation or does not.

Unbiased translation is regarded as a lofty ideal because it may not always be required or desired. This implies that prejudice is unavoidable and inevitable. By accusing the translator of changing, removing, or euphemizing anything in the source text, he is typically accused of being dishonest and/or parasitic in his translation (Ghazala, 2002:154). This accusation is damaging when the translator intrudes inane, carelessly, unnecessarily, and/or prematurely. The intrusions must be acceptable, coherent, required, and for good reasons; otherwise, it is unfair.

Munday (2016:8–10) asserts that translation can refer to a range of distinct things. Depending on how you define "translation" in your context, it may be a process, a product, or all three at once. An original source text's language code is changed during translation to that of another target text's language, it is claimed that the source and target texts have distinct characteristics that can be found by contrasting the two (Schjoldager 2008:18).

A prime query that can be posed in this respect is: How can bias in translation be avoided or minimized? The answer to this query requires in the first place identification of the elements that are related to the process of translation in one way or another, name the translator (the source of translation), the content to be translated, the means or medium (the language), the readers or (the target of translation), and finally the group/party that sponsors the whole process. It is this latter element whose ideology, viewpoint, stand, attitude and beliefs is imposed on the translators either directly or indirectly and makes the translator assume that they should reflect them either because they personally belong to the same group or because they are awarded by that group and hence they should do and perform what reflects the group's standpoint.

Setting from the preceding lines, it is evident that bias takes place by the translator in a personal attempt to reflect their ideologies or beliefs or to stick to the ideology, belief, attitude, etc. of the group/party they belong to. In both cases, it is the translator who makes bias come into existence and hence the translation loses objectivity to some certain extent. Accordingly, the query posed at the

beginning of this section should be reiterated but reformulated as follows: How can a translator become objective and hence minimize bias in their rendering of texts from the source text language into the target language?

According to Recasens et al. (2013: 1650–1659), language translation advocates the neutral point of view (NPOV) principle, which states that publications should portray all major perspectives that have been published by reliable sources fairly, proportionally, and as far as is humanly possible without bias. Conflicting ideas should be acknowledged by highlighting their relative importance, and facts should not be portrayed as merely personal opinions. Additionally, editors are urged not to present opinions or contested claims as truths. The study of linguistics requires an awareness of how prejudice appears in language, and the capacity to recognize these prejudices is equally important. Both of these problems are addressed, and a useful method for eliminating prejudice from the English language is provided. We can compare the text in its biased (before) and unbiased (after) forms based on the adjustments connected with NPOV tags, which makes it easier for us to see how prejudice manifests itself linguistically in the text.

The translator must take great care to avoid using any words that could be considered insulting, vulgar, or dangerous to the reader's sensitivities. This is not about changing the original, but about enhancing and beautifying it. Another crucial trespass is to purge the translation of poor words and phrases that harm the source as well as the translator and readers. In most cases, we can say that eliminating offensive words from a piece of literature has no impact on the meaning of the material. In the improbable chance that it does, it will not matter and will therefore be disregarded. It is grossly exaggerated that eliminating or changing unfavourable expressions could change how the beliefs, personality traits, socioeconomic status, and level of education of the person employing those expressions are perceived. A person's true character cannot be inferred from one or two tangentially unfavourable words. How much will the meaning change if words like "bloody," "piss off," "bastard," and "crap," for instance, are eliminated or euphemized? Only good effects can be observed and recorded. Only if precise correctness is required for whatever reason should such sentences be represented entirely, as in some political statements, historical, religious, social, cultural, academic or other accounts where a high level of precision and literalness is required.

## **Conclusion**

In translation; the process of rendering a source text into a target text, bias forms a paramount phenomenon that is thought of to be present in one way or another. Bias is the tendency to view persons, things and phenomena, etc., either positively or negatively. Positive bias means viewing or presenting a person or a thing as having good traits and qualities, while negative bias means attributing unaccepted or bad qualities to that person or thing. On this basis, bias appears to be determined, and duly categorized, by the context in which it exists and/or the reason that has brought it into such existence. Bias falls in different forms and types based on the contexts and the reasons it has been set for. To avoid bias in translation, its opposed counterpart, namely fidelity should be committed to in

order to minimize bias and make the rendered material more acceptable by the readers who will have trust in it as a reliable and true source of information.

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