Risk Management in Media Translation: Watching America as a Case Study

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Abstract

Objectives: This paper analyzes risk management in a corpus of Arabic newspaper articles translated into English by the American-based news and translation website *Watching America* (WA) with the help of volunteer translators.

Methods: The study conducts a qualitative and quantitative analysis of translational decisions made at multiple (macro and micro or institutional and individual) levels using a risk management framework.

Results: The findings reveal an improved textual clarity and cultural acceptability, suggesting a strong tendency on the translators' part to reduce the risk of not fulfilling the translations' communicative function and losing trusting relationships with the other participants in the translation event (e.g. editors and readers).

Conclusion: This risk-reduction orientation is likely motivated by the moral discourse adopted by WA. WA foregrounds the benefits of the Americans to understand the world and discursively portrays volunteer translation as a social and ethical act that can help Americans engage in intercultural dialogue. This discourse may have motivated volunteer translators to put more weight on clarity, comprehensibility and cultural appropriateness, than translation faithfulness or accuracy. Cooperation and mutual interests seem also to enhance the risk-reduction behavior. Whereas for example WA offers translators a chance to gain experience and build a professional portfolio, translators in turn maintain their credibility by avoiding giving any unclear and or unacceptable translations that do not help WA accomplish its mission toward American readers.

Keywords: Risk analysis; risk management; media translation; watching America; volunteer translation.

إدارة المخاطر في الترجمة الإعلامية: موقع "ووتشنغ امريكا" كدراسة حالة

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ملخّص

الأهداف: يحلل هذا البحث إدارة المخاطر في مجموعة من المقالات الصحفية العربية المترجمة إلى الإنجليزية من قبل موقع الأخبار والترجمة الأمريكي "ووتشنغ امريكا" (Watching America) بمساعدة مترجمين متطوعين.

المنهجية: يجري هذا البحث تحليلاً نوعيًا وكميًا لقرارات الترجمة المتخذة على مستويات متعددة (كلية وجزئية أو مؤسسية وفردية) باستخدام إطار إدارة المخاطر.

النتائج: تكشف النتائج عن تحسن في وضوح النص والقبول الثقافي، مما يشير إلى وجود توجه قوي من جانب المترجمين لتقليل مخاطر عدم القيام بوظيفة الترجمة في توصيل المعنى وفقدان ثقة عناصر آخرين في الترجمة (مثل محررين الترجمة والقراء الأمريكيين).

الخلاصة: يشير البحث بأن الدافع وراء هذا التوجه للحد من هذه المخاطر هو الخطاب الأخلاقي الذي يتبناه الموقع الأمريكي والذي يتبنى مصلحة الجمهور الأمريكي في فهم العالم والذي أيضا ينظر للترجمة التطوعية على أنها عمل اجتماعي وأخلاقي يمكن أن يساعد الأمريكيين على الانخراط في حوار بين الثقافات. وربما يكون هذا الخطاب قد حفز المترجمين المتطوعين على إعطاء أهمية أكثر لدرجة وضوح النص وفهم وملاءمة معانيه الثقافية من الالتزام بمعايير الترجمة ودقتها. ويبدو أن الاهتمام بالتعاون والمصالح المتبادلة قد يعمل أيضًا على تعزيز سلوك المترجمين للحد من مخاطر عدم الفهم، ففي حين أن الموقع الأمريكي على سبيل المثال يوفر للمترجمين فرصة لاكتساب الخبرة وبناء سيرة مهنية، فإن المترجمين بدورهم يحافظون على مصداقيتهم من خلال تجنب تقديم أي ترجمات غير واضحة أو غير مقبولة لا تساعد الموقع على إنجاز مهمته تجاه القراء الأمريكيين.

الكلمات الدالة: تحليل المخاطر، إدارة المخاطر، الترجمة الإعلامية، موقع "وُتجن أمريكا"، الترجمة التطوعية.

1. Introduction

The idea that translation involves *risks* and that translational decisions can be affected by the nature or type of the risk(s) the translator or interpreter tries to *manage* is strongly advocated by Anthony Pym (2004; 2015; 2016; 2020). He (2016, 254) gives an example of risk management in an interpreter-mediated communication in a conflict zone in Afghanistan. During a US patrol in an Afghan village to capture some Taliban fighters, a local interpreter hired by the US forces is asked to interpret what a village elder says. The villager speaks at length, telling a parable about ants eating the village's crops, which means that the people of the village hate Taliban but in the end have to live with them. Instead of giving a full version of the elder's speech, the interpreter omits the parable and only said that the elder says that Taliban are hiding somewhere in the mountains. Although the interpreter's decision to omit the parable seems to break the codes of ethics, it can be looked at as a rational case of risk management in a high-risk environment. It was more important for the interpreter to control higher risks such as giving irrelevant information and losing the trust of the US forces or losing his job than lower risks such as changing the elder's speech and losing the trust of the elder or the villagers. Although not all translations occur in such extreme environments, analyzing the risks associated with a translation task enables to discuss translation as a social relation and can assist text linguistics in understanding the translator's decision-making processes.

With the large number of media translations produced every day in different socio-political contexts, fostered by globalization, it becomes important to adopt the concept of risk management to examine how macro situational considerations can influence translational decisions more than micro-textual issues, most importantly word-for-word equivalence. Although risk management is not a new topic in translation and has been investigated by some researchers (e.g., Gile 1995/2009, 2021; Akbari 2009; Lammers 2011; Hui 2012), it is still underexplored in field of media translation. The studies on risk management in media translation are still very few and represent only a small sample of the existing translations (e.g., Matsushita 2013; Davier 2017; Pym and Matsushita 2018; Matsushita 2019). To expand its application to media translation, the present study uses risk management in the analysis of a collection of Arabic-English translated newspaper articles selected from the American-based news and translation website *Watching America* (WA). Conducting a qualitative and quantitative analysis of translational decisions made at multiple (macro and micro or institutional and individual) levels, the present study seeks to identify both the nature and the conditioning factors of the risk WA translators try to manage in their translations. WA offers English translations of foreign newspaper articles written about the US by foreign writers. As WA states in its website[1], the goal is to reflect "global opinion about the United States" to help Americans "understand what the world thinks of current issues that involve the U.S". For this purpose, WA recruits volunteer translators and editors and in turn offers them recommendation letters which they can use for future paid opportunities. Therefore, the present study offers an analysis of a new socio-political context, hoping to describe more or new conditioning factors of some risk-related decisions. Ultimately, the findings are hoped to provide more insight into the different transformation and manipulation processes involved in the translation of international media texts and into the socio-political environment in which these processes are used.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Risk Management in Translation

Risk management is a process of identifying and controlling the risks involved in a particular activity, ranging from "natural hazards, technological threats, working conditions, ambient health impacts, crime, terrorism, and pollution to leisure activities" (Renn 2008, 50). Although the concept of risk management is not relatively new, it has recently become an important topic and field of research in various disciplines, professions and activities. Pym (2004; 2015; 2016; 2020) is one of the most prominent researchers who applied risk management to translation study and created a link between risk and translation strategies. In his first article introducing his approach, *Text and Risk in Translation* (2004, 28), he defines risk as "the possibility of not fulfilling the translation's purpose", proposing a *negative* view of risk. He (2004, 27-28) argues that the translator normally distributes his/her effort according to the potential risks involved in translating different textual elements. The translator normally invests more effort in translating *high-risk* elements (which are essential for successful communication), like the person's name and birthday on a birth certificate, than in translating *low-risk* elements,

such as the name of the midwife or reporting officer (if any) on a birth certificate. Pym (2020, 447-448) therefore argues that the different traditional translation strategies such as omission, substitution and addition (cf. Nida 1964/2003; Catford 1965; Newmark 1988) are different alternatives for controlling risk, unlike the traditional assumptions that strategies are different alternatives for achieving *fidelity* or *equivalence* (see Gile 2021, 61-62).

2.2. Risk Management Strategies and Reward

Pym (2015, 68-72) also attempted to make a distinction between three types of risks: (i) the *credibility* risk, (ii) the *uncertainty* risk and (iii) the *communicative* risk. The credibility risk has to do with the translator's fear of losing the trust of other people involved in the translational act, such as readers, clients or employers. The uncertainty risk is related to the translator's doubts about the meaning of a source-text element and which stem from a particular ambiguity in the source text. Finally, the communicative risk concerns the probability of mis-rendering or misinterpreting an important source-text element and as a result not fulfilling the translation's desired communicative function. The risk management strategies which the translator may opt for include (i) *risk reduction*, (ii) *risk taking*, (iii), *risk transfer* and (v) *risk mitigation* (Pym 2020, 449-450):

- *Risk reduction* involves "all the preliminary processing, documentation, checking, revision and reviewing that can be done by the translator" to eliminate risk (Pym 2020, 449). During these processes, the translator may for example decide to simplify a complex grammatical structure or delete or explain an unfamiliar metaphor or a cultural reference to reduce the risk of misunderstanding on the part of the target reader. In this sense, *simplification/normalization* processes like the use of "generally unmarked grammar, clichés, and typical, common lexis instead of the unusual or the unique" are considered risk-reduction behaviors (Mauranen 2008: 41).

- *Risk taking* is when "the translator is aware that a decision may involve serious risks but makes the decision anyway" (Pym 2020, 450), such as when the translator relies on guessing when translating an ambiguous expression, taking the risk of making an inaccurate interpretation.

- *Risk transfer* is the process of outsourcing or making a party other than the translator responsible for the translation decision, by for example consulting the client or employer and thereby transferring the risk of communicative failure to them.

- *Risk mitigation* is when the translator incurs one (minor) risk in order to avoid another (major) risk, such as when the translator takes the risk of annoying the reader by giving multiple interpretations (minor risk) in the hope that one may succeed and avoid failing to achieve the essential goal of the translation (major risk). Similar to how a sprinkler system creates some water damage while extinguishing a fire (Pym and Matsushita 2018; Matsushita 2019).

The use of these risk management strategies can in some contexts help translators achieve certain types of "success" (Akbari 2009) or "reward" as Pym (2004; 2015) refers to it. This success or reward can be financial, social or emotional, such as an increase in the salary, self-satisfaction, successful communication, avoidance of misunderstanding and failure and avoidance of loss of trust from employers, clients or readers. According to Gile (2009, 108-109), decisions taken by translators to manage risk in translation are affected by their expectation of certain *gains* or *losses*. Gains involve things such as "increased clarity, more readable and convincing texts, a lower probability of misrepresenting the author's ideas, while loss as "loss of information, lessened credibility because of inappropriate terminology, lower cultural acceptability because the target text says something or says it in a way which is not acceptable" to the target audience (Gile 2009, 108, see Mason 2000).

2.3. Risk Management in Media Translation

Media translation involves translating any media content, such as newspaper articles and news reports, from one language to another. It requires a level of content adaptation, considering linguistic and cultural nuances, to make the text accessible to the intended audience (see Munday 2007; Schäffner 2018; Abualadas 2024a, 2024b). To ensure its success, this translation practice may require identifying and managing the potential risks associated with the translation task and context. The study of risk management in media translation is however still in its early stages of development. A small, but growing, number of studies (e.g., Matsushita 2013; Davier 2017; Pym and Matsushita 2018; Matsushita 2019) indicate the applicability and validity

of risk management as a theoretical framework for analyzing media translators' decision-making processes and emerging media translation practices. With the combined analysis of the above strategies and the various types of risk, it is possible to develop "a fairly rich and varied metalanguage" for analyzing the different ways in which media translators solve certain problems related to translation as a social relationship (credibility), as a specific type of textual product (uncertainty) and as a successful social practice (communication) (Pym 2020, 450). Like any translation practice, media translation is a purposeful act that requires constant and rational decisions that "cannot be made without considering the requirements of the job at hand, the client, the governing law, market, recipients, norms, culture, budget," etc. (Akbari 2009).

Drawing on Bielsa and Bassnett (2009), Lammers (2011) and Davier (2017), Matsushita (2019, 71-73) discusses particular *institutional* risks in media translation. In addition to the time-bound nature of the job, there is for example high moral and political pressure on media institutions and translators as their translations are produced for mass consumption and can at any point of time be publically criticized, and sometimes can be faced with legal charges (e.g., libel, defamation, blasphemy) especially when translating politically or culturally sensitive content. Another issue is that many surveys of media translation activities around the world have shown that news media translations are often carried out by journalists (i.e., journalists who translate) with little or no specialized training in news translation. Unlike professional translators who often have full awareness of the different (linguistic, cultural and ethical) challenges of news media translation, many journalists are not fully aware of these challenges and simply regard translation as part of their daily news reporting. Many of the journalists who responded to the surveys have also indicated that their organizations have no translation guidelines.

Gile (2021, 58-59) describes "proximal" and "distal" factors affecting risk management in translation. *Proximal* factors involve for example the ways source elements are processed and target elements are produced, including the use of different translation strategies and information sources. *Distal* factors involve practices that take place before or after translation process such as client consultations, price negotiations, time limits and delivery options. For instance, the risk of handling inadequately an original element (uncertainty risk) is normally associated with proximal factors, but determining whether or not the concerned parties will regard a translation as adequate depends on distal factors. Since one important goal of media translation is to attract people and affect their attitudes, what might be of more concern is *credibility* risk, which relies not only on the quality of the media translators' (proximal) practices, but also on their organizations' (distal) practices, including professionalism, ethical integrity, public relations, etc.

Very few empirical studies have actually attempted to examine the decision-making process in media translation using risk analysis. In translations of US President Obama's political speeches by some Japanese's newspapers, Matsushita (2013) finds that *omission* is the most frequently used strategy in managing risks in news translation, and that many "unethical or non-standard" cases of omission are better investigated using risk management approach. Pym and Matsushita (2018) analyzes risk *mitigation* in English-Japanese news translations and find that mitigation is used when "the translator is unsure about who will be receiving the translation" and in order to "be sure, in places occasioned by the difficulties of the start text" (18). They give an example that the translators may give multiple translations (as a contingency plan) when they have doubts about audience identity, and may also delete certain words from translated quotes if these words are unknown or ambiguous in order to mitigate the risk of making the translated text difficult to comprehend. Finally, as this review shows, risk management in translation has been proposed and developed by few researchers (Gile 1995/2009, 2021; Pym 2004, 2015; Akbari 2009), and applied to media translation by a small number of studies (e.g., Matsushita 2013; Pym and Matsushita 2018; Matsushita 2019), mostly in English-Japanese news translations. We still need more studies of more media content and genres in various language pairs and different socio-political contexts to theorize the role of risk management in the decision-making process in media translation.

3. Corpus and Methodology

The corpus of the present study consists of 100 Arabic-English translated newspaper articles (opinion articles, feature articles, editorials and commentaries) that appeared on the website of *Watching America* (WA) between 2017 and 2022. WA is an American-based news and translation website[2] which presents global opinions and views about the United States, to help people both in and outside the US to recognize how the world views the US. In his interview[3] with the American

National Public Radio (NPR), the founder of WA, Robin Koerner, confirms that his concern is that "Americans don't necessarily feel the impact of American foreign policy as directly as people living outside the United States do" and that his goal is "to facilitate a dialogue". In its "About Us" page[4], WA states that it has no political agenda or affiliation and that its goal is "to reflect as accurately as possible how others perceive the richest and most powerful country in the world" as well as "to raise level of debate, open minds, and promote understanding among the people of the world." WA argues that it is neutral and does not use any *selective appropriation* strategy, as it does not intend to influence public opinion, but because global opinion is sometimes polarized, its translations may sometimes sound one-sided. Also, WA makes clear in its "About Us" page that it is a *nonprofit* online platform that has no paid staff and it relies only on volunteer translators and editors. It emphasizes that through this volunteering, translators and editors can "build their reputation and translation portfolios" and also get "recommendation letters" for future paid opportunities.

The 100 translated articles constitute a corpus of approximately 86,000 words. The original Arabic articles were published in multiple Arabic newspapers, including *Al-Ghad* (Jordan), *Sot al-Iraq* (Iraq), *Al-Watan* (Saudi Arabia), *Al-Ittihad* (UAE), *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* (UK), *Al Iraq News* (Iraq), *Al-Akhbar* (Lebanon), *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat* (Saudi Arabia), *AL Ahram* (Egypt), *Raialyoum* (Palestine), *Al-Watan* (Syria) and *Al-Rai* (Jordan). At the top of each translated article, WA lists the details of its Arabic source (including a link back to the article itself on the newspaper's website) as well as the names of its translators and editors. This identification of the source text by WA not only helps with the traceability of the source and target texts, but also makes the present study overcome the problem of identifying "the original" from the complicated processes involved in international news production (Bielsa and Bassnett 2009, 16, Matsushita 2019, 82). The translators of the articles are either native speakers of Arabic or non-natives who have professional experience in Arabic. To keep the corpus balanced in terms of the linguistic background of the translators, the articles are equally distributed, 50 per native and 50 per non-native. The majority of the selected articles are edited by Helaine Schweitzer, Gillian Palmer, Daniel Rosen, Eric Stimson, Laurence Bouvard, Michelle Bisson and Rachel Pott, who are all non-native speakers of Arabic who either have little or no experience in Arabic language. This is not actually surprising, as WA itself does not require its volunteer English editors to have "foreign language skills", as their main role is only "making sure translated copy reads properly in American English."[5] It is very important to note that WA gives on its website very little information about the background of its translators and editors. The above information has therefore been gathered through searching personal profiles and autobiographies on the web.

Based on the translation situation, the present study argues that two major types of risk are likely to affect the translators' decision-making. The first is the *communicative* risk of not conveying to Americans how the world perceives their country and consequently not promoting understanding and facilitating dialogue. The second is the *credibility* risk of losing the trust of WA founder/editors/readers by using unclear, incomprehensible or linguistically or culturally inappropriate language. Based on people and elements involved in translation, the risk WA translators may manage can also be either *source-oriented* (e.g., mistranslating a source Arabic item and losing the message of the original author) or *target-oriented* (e.g., causing misunderstanding among American readers). The factors that may affect risk management in WA translations can be *proximal* (e.g., the way WA translators handle the Arabic text's structures and messages, involving micro-textual strategies such as addition, deletion and substitution) and *distal* (e.g., WA institutional policies or translation guidelines and its editors' roles) (see Gile 2021).

The process of analysis will be *bottom-up* (see Pym 2020, 446). The study will first look at proximal factors, how "source-text segments are processed and target texts are produced" (Gile 2021, 58), trying to analyze micro-textual options such as addition, deletion and substitution. The study will then try to identify both the general risk management strategy (risk reduction, risk taking or risk transfer) and the type(s) of risk (i.e., communicative or credibility) involved in these micro-textual options. Finally, the study will try to relate the overall risk-management behaviors to distal/situational factors (e.g., translation purpose, institutional policies, expectations, work condition and personal or social benefits). As this type of examination involves elements that are context-dependent and dynamic in nature, the process of analysis is carried out manually. It is worth noting that, for some limitations in data availability and reliability, the analysis of the influence of individual differences between

translators in risk-management behaviors will be beyond the scope of the present study. WA does not always provide the personal or professional profile of its translators, and even the translators' public profiles on the web do not often provide enough information to form reliable conclusions on their knowledge and experience of translation.

4. Analysis

After reviewing and examining the Arabic original articles and their English translations, the study has found numerous micro-textual choices that can be looked at as different ways of managing risk. These microstrategies can fall under four major categories: *addition*, *deletion*, *substitution* and *literal translation/transliteration*. The first three microstrategies involve an alteration in the formal characteristics of the original, while the last one does not. Addition involves adding new information to the original text. Deletion involves dropping particular information or structures from the original text without compensation. Substitution involves replacing an original structure or expression by another in the translated text. Finally, literal translation and transliteration keep the original structure and information as they are in the original text. The following subsections will provide a more detailed and contextualized description of these microstrategies and the risk management they involve.

4.1 Substitution

The first strategy has involved substituting particular information or structure with another in the target text. The data reveal that there are 191 substitution cases resulting from multiple behaviors. Out of them, 73 cases have resulted from replacing a source idiomatic or metaphorical expression by a non-idiomatic or non-metaphorical expression aiming at conveying the same meaning in the target language (see Examples 1-5 below). 60 cases have resulted from replacing a source idiomatic or metaphorical expression by an idiomatic or metaphorical (functional) equivalent in the target language (Examples 6-10). 41 cases have resulted from substituting a source (culturally/politically) sensitive expression (e.g., negative or offensive sarcasm and obscene or racist words) with a less sensitive or more neutral one in the target language (Examples 11-14). The 17 remaining cases are caused by miscellaneous factors. Substituted elements are all underlined in the examples below. An English gloss of the Arabic utterances is also provided. The brackets [] are inserted in the English gloss to enclose the researcher's additional explanations of the substituted elements. The URLs of WA translations are all provided in the endnotes.

	Original Arabic Utterance with English gloss	**Source**	**English translation**	**Translator**
1	حتى يتضح الخيط الأبيض من الأسود في هذه القصة، فان المؤكد هنا، ان السلطة الوطنية الفلسطينية أصبحت عبئا **Gloss**: until the white thread becomes distinct from the black thread [quoted from the Holly Quran, till the story becomes clearer], what is certain here is that the Palestinian Authority has become a burden	Al-Ghad (Jordan), 2021	Until the full story emerges, what is certain here is that the PA has become a burden…[6]	Erin Lyons
2	وتأثير الدور الأميركي بعد سنوات طويلة من المد والجزر بين عواصم المنطقة **Gloss:** the influence of the U.S role after long years of tides [fluctuation] between the region's governments	Al-Ittihad (UAE), April 2022	the extent of U.S. influence after long years of back and forth between the region's governments…[7]	Dona Timani
3	هذه القطاعات التي صدقت هذه الوعود، بدأت مبكرا بالتهليل **Gloss:** These segments that believed in these promises, started *tahleel* [saying "there is no God but Allah" to acclaim an event] early	Al-Quds Al-Arabi (UK), September 2020	These segments, who count on these promises, started cheering early..[8]	Brandon Roddey

	Original Arabic Utterance with English gloss	Source	English translation	Translator
4	ان تحك جلد الأتحاد الروسي بمخالب اوكرانية **Gloss:** to <u>scratch the skin</u> of the Russian Federation with Ukrainian <u>claws</u> [to provoke Russia through Ukraine]	Sot al-Iraq (Iraq), March 2022	the U.S. <u>provoked</u> the Russian Federation through Ukraine, ..[9]	Naaima Abarouch
5	ما يجعل قوى الإقليم تفكر وتدرك ضرورات <u>تقليع شوكها بيدها</u> **Gloss:** which makes regional powers think and consider the importance of <u>removing their thorns with their hand</u> [solving their problems together]	Al-Ghad (Jordan), September 2020	It would be best for regional powers <u>to set aside their differences</u>[10]	Iman Alzaghari
6	وما يصدر عن الجمهوريين ما هو إلا محاولات لتعقيد المشهد <u>والتمسك بحبال الهواء</u>، ، **Gloss:** What comes from the Republicans is just attempts to complicate the scene and <u>grasp the mountain of the air</u> [try any means]	Al-Rai (Jordan), November 2020	What is coming from the Republicans is little more than an attempt to complicate the situation and <u>grasp at straws</u>, ..[11]	Meaghan DeWaters
7	الميليشيات (...) أصبحت <u>ورقة</u> في الملعب السياسي العراقي **Gloss:** Militias (…) <u>have become a paper</u> [a means employed by politicians] in the Iraqi political playing field	Al-Watan (Saudi Arabia), July 2021	Militias (…) <u>becoming a pawn</u> in the Iraqi political playing field[12]	Devin Stewart
8	بل وهناك من بلغ به <u>عمى الألوان</u> بالدعوة إلى قطع العلاقات الدبلوماسية مع واشنطن **Gloss:** even there those who <u>have such color blindness</u> [are so deluded] that they called for severing diplomatic ties with Washington	Arabi21 (Egypt), August 2022	Some of those supporters <u>have such tunnel vision</u> that they even called for severing diplomatic ties with Washington[13]	Dona Timani
9	فمنتظرو <u>المهدي</u> القادم من البيت الأبيض **Gloss:** Those waiting for <u>the Mahdi</u> [The prophesied savior] to come from the White House	Al-Quds Al-Arabi (UK), July 2020	Those waiting for <u>the Messiah</u> to come from the White House[14]	Brandon Roddey
10	انه لايمكن أبداً للروس ان يقدموا الملف السوري لأمريكا على <u>طبق من ذهب</u> **Gloss:** Russia will never hand the Syrian file to America <u>on a golden platter</u> [easily]	Sot al-Iraq (Iraq), January 2022	Russia will never present Syria to America <u>on a silver platter</u>[15]	Meaghan DeWaters
11	ومن سبقه من رؤساء أمريكا بما فيهم <u>المقبور</u> بوش الأب (...)، وعلى حد وصفه ... أي <u>أبو إيفانكا</u> أنهم ما زالوا في ورطة كبيرة **Gloss:** and his predecessors, among them <u>the buried,</u> Bush the father (…), and as he , <u>the father of Ivank</u> [a mockery of Trump], states, they are still in big trouble	Al Iraq News (Iraq), June 2019	as his predecessors have done, among them <u>the late George H.W. Bush</u> (…), <u>Trump</u>, America is still in big trouble![16]	Alexander Socarras
12	في ظلّ <u>قلق الكيان العبري</u> من تحوّل إيران إلى دولة حافّة نووية **Gloss:** in response <u>the Hebrew entity</u>'s concern that Iran is turning into a country on the nuclear brink	Al-Akhbar (Lebanon), October 2021	in response to <u>Israel's</u> concern that Iran is turning into a country on the nuclear brink[17]	Erin Lyons

	Original Arabic Utterance with English gloss	Source	English translation	Translator
13	ولم بعد المستر بايدن يعرف كيف يخرج من نفق التسرع المراهق في سياساته الخارجية **Gloss:** Al-mister Biden [a mockery of Biden] no longer knows a way out of the tunnel of his hasty foreign policy	Al-Sharq Al-Awsat (Saudi Arabia), June 2022	President Biden no longer sees a way out of his hasty foreign policy decisions[18]	Erin Lyons
14	وواشنطن هي التي ابتلعت مقتل دبلوماسييها في بني غازي الليبية خلال فترة الخريف العربي **Gloss:** and Washington was the one who swallowed the killing of (…) U.S. diplomats in Libya's Benghazi during the Arab Autumn [a mockery of the Arab Spring's outcomes]	Okaz (Saudi Arabia), February 2022	Washington was also the one to suffer the killing of (…) U.S. diplomats in Libya's Benghazi during the so-called Arab Spring[19]	Dona Timani

In Examples (1-5), the translators' choice to replace a metaphorical/idiomatic expression with a non-metaphorical/non-idiomatic equivalent (e.g., "until the white thread becomes distinct from the black thread" with "until the full story emerges", "tides" with "back and forth", and "tahleel" with "cheering") reflects both their concern for the perception of the original expressions by the English reader and their attempts at managing these expressions' uncertainty or ambiguity and maintaining their clarity (see Pápai 2004, p. 144-145). Likewise, in Examples (6-10), substituting the original expressions with functionally-equivalent ones (e.g., "grasp the mountain of the air" with "grasp at straws", and "the Mahdi" with "the Messiah", and "on a golden platter" with "on a silver platter") reflects the translators' efforts to *normalize/naturalize/domesticize* the original expressions to avoid any possible comprehension problems on the reader's part (cf. Venuti 2008; Toury 2012).

In Examples (11-14), the translator has replaced a derogatory or offensive expression with a more polite one (e.g., "the buried" with "the late" and "the Hebrew entity" with "Israel") and a sarcastic expression conveying disrespectful or critical attitudes with a more neutral/natural one (e.g., "the father of Ivank" with "Trump" and "the Arab Autumn" with "the Arab Spring"). Such substitutions, which lead to more euphemistic and neutralized expressions, reflect the translator's efforts at *reducing* the risk of producing a translation that will offend the sensibilities of the target audience. The above three types of substitutions can simply reflect the translators' concern, during the decision-making process, for the *comprehensibility*, *appropriateness*, *acceptability* or *sensitivity* of the original expressions to the target audience. In other words, they can be looked at as textual traces of the translators' efforts at avoiding or reducing any probable ambiguous, incomprehensible, unnatural or sensitive utterances in the target text. The risk-reduction behavior these substitutions suggest can be both *source-oriented* (to avoid mistranslation by selecting ambiguous or inappropriate expressions) and *target oriented* (to avoid incomprehensibility or misunderstanding by the target audience) (see Matsushita 2019, 78-79).

4.2 Deletion

The deletion occurs when a specific part of the original text is dropped from the translation without any compensation. The data indicate there are 138 cases of deletion. These deletions have occurred as a result of four particular behaviors. 54 cases have resulted from omitting a metaphorical or idiomatic expression (see Examples 1-4), 41 cases from dropping particular sensitive information due to self-censorship (Examples 5-7), 18 cases from dropping a source text's discourse (politeness) marker (Examples 8-9) and 13 cases from implicitating particular knowledge already presupposed/shared in the target culture (Example 10). The 12 remaining cases are caused by miscellaneous factors. The omitted content is also underlined in the examples below. The brackets [] are used in the English gloss to enclose the researcher's additional explanations of the omitted elements.

	Original Arabic Utterance with English gloss	Source	English translation	Translator
1	ان رد الفعل على تلك التنازلات جاء عكسياً <u>لان ايران لن تأتي الا بالعين الحمرا</u> **Gloss:** The response to those concessions has been the opposite, because <u>Iran will agree only with the red eye</u> [idiomatically, Iran will agree only by force]	Al Iraq News (Iraq), June 2021	The response to those concessions has been the opposite of what was expected.[20]	Naaima Abarouch
2	وبرغم هجمة الكراهية في هوليوود، يخرج فنانين عالميون <u>من عقر دارها</u> ليدافعوا عن المسلمين والإسلام **Gloss:** Despite the hateful attacks of Hollywood, international artists <u>from its very house</u> [idiomatically, from Hollywood itself] came out to defend Muslims and Islam	AL Ahram (Egypt), April 2021	Despite Hollywood's hateful attacks, its international artists defend Muslims and Islam.[21]	Naaima Abarouch
3	، و"حزب الله" <u>الإيراني</u> في لبنان حيث لا قول للدولة **Gloss:** and the <u>Iranian</u> [metaphorically, allied with Iran] Hezbollah in Lebanon, where the state has no say	Al-Watan (Saudi Arabia), August 2021	The same goes for Hezbollah in Lebanon, where the state has no say…[22]	Erin Lyons
4	ومن يرفض <u>عصى</u> الطاعة يغتال كما حدث مع الرئيس جون كيندي **Gloss:** and those who refuse <u>the stick</u> [idiomatically, enforcement] of obedience are assassinated like President John F. Kennedy was	Raialyoum (Palestine), July 2020	and those who refuse obedience are assassinated like President John F. Kennedy was[23]	Sonja Hart
5	الاعتراف بالسيادة الإسرائيلية على الجولان السوري <u>المحتل</u> **Gloss:** announcing Israeli sovereignty over the <u>occupied</u> Syrian Golan Heights	Al Ghad (Jordan), March 2019	announcing Israeli sovereignty over the Syrian Golan Heights[24]	Randa Khalifeh
6	خوفا من القصف اثناء حرب <u>المجرم</u> جورج بوش على العراق **Gloss:** Fearing the bombing during <u>the criminal</u> George Bush's war on Iraq	Sot al-Iraq (Iraq), July 2021	Fearing the bombing during Bush's war on Iraq[25]	Naaima Abarouch
7	إعلان رئيس وزراء <u>العدو</u> نفتالي بينت، أن إسرائيل لم يَعُد بإمكانها "الانتظار أكثر" **Gloss:** The announcement by <u>the enemy</u> Prime Minister Naftali Bennett that Israel is "not going to wait,"	Al-Akhbar (Lebanon), October 2021	The announcement by Prime Minister Naftali Bennett that Israel is "not going to wait,"[26]	Erin Lyons
8	وتحمَّلنا مذلّة أسلوب تعامل إسرائيل مع الشعب الفلسطيني ومسألة القدس <u>الشريف</u> **Gloss:** we (…) tolerated Israel's undignified treatment of the Palestinian people and the "Al-Quds <u>Al-Sharif</u> [the noble]".	Asas Media (Lebanon), June 2022	we (…) tolerated Israel's undignified treatment of the Palestinian people and the Al-Aqsa Mosque."[27]	Dona Timani

	Original Arabic Utterance with English gloss	**Source**	**English translation**	**Translator**
9	وهذا يذكرنا بمقولة الرئيس العراقي الراحل صدام حسين (رحمه الله).... **Gloss:** This reminds us of a statement by the late Iraqi President Saddam Hussein <u>(May Allah have mercy on him)</u>	Sot al-Iraq (Iraq), September 2021	This reminds us of the late Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's statement …[28]	Naaima Abarouch
10	الصحيفة <u>الدولية اليومية</u> وول ستريت **Gloss:** <u>The international daily</u> journal of Wall Street	Addustour (Jordan), August 2021	The Wall Street Journal[29]	Erin Lyons

Omitting Arabic idioms and metaphors (e.g., "الإيراني") "من عقر داره", "الا بالعين الحمرا" and can to varying degrees help avoid ambiguity in the translated text and keep it clearer, simpler and easier to process. Dropping terms (e.g., "the occupied", the criminal" and "the enemy") that could (relatively) be sensitive and stimulate adverse or stereotyped responses within the Western world can also help the translated text avoid offence to its readers and help keep it more culturally *acceptable*. Dropping discourse (politeness) markers that are more appropriate to the Arabic language and culture such as "الشريف" (the noble) and "رحمه الله" (May Allah have mercy on him) may help keep the discourse more suitable for the Western audience. Deleting information that is commonly shared in the Western cultures such as "international" and "daily" in "The international daily journal of Wall Street" can also help avoid readers processing less important or unnecessary knowledge in the translated text. The above deletions can actually reflect the translators' concerns about the *comprehensibility* and *appropriateness* of the target text and the probability of undesired outcomes such as misunderstanding, communication failure and loss of credibility.

4.3 Addition

The addition strategy has involved inserting into the target text, on the part of the translator, information that is not explicitly stated in the original text. The data indicate there are 130 cases of addition. These additions have most often been used to *specify a referent* by either explicitating a cultural presupposition (in 64 cases, see Examples 1-5 below) or filling out an elliptical expression or phrase (in 51 cases, see Examples 6-9). The 15 remaining cases have occurred due to miscellaneous factors. The original Arabic referents and target English additions are all underlined in the examples below.

	Original Arabic Utterance with English gloss	**Source**	**English translation**	**Translator**
1	تصريح للرئيس <u>الراحل</u> ياسر عرفات <u>باللغة الإنكليزية</u> **Gloss:** A statement by <u>Yasser Arafat</u> in English language	Al-Quds Al-Arabi (UK), Aug 2017	An English statement by Yasser Arafat, the deceased <u>president of the Palestinian Liberation Organization</u>[30]	Nathan Shuler
2	<u>الرئيس</u> عبد الفتاح السيسي <u>والشيخ بن زايد</u> والأمير محمد بن سلمان <u>والملك عبدالله الثاني</u> **Gloss:** The President Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi, Al-sheikh bin Zayed, the Prince bin Salman and King Abdullah II	Asas Media (Lebanon), June 2022	<u>Egyptian President</u> Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi, <u>UAE President</u> bin Zayed, <u>Saudi</u> Crown Prince bin Salman and <u>Jordan's</u> King Abdullah II[31]	Dona Timani

	Original Arabic Utterance with English gloss	**Source**	**English translation**	**Translator**
3	حسن نصر الله **Gloss:** <u>Hassan Nasrallah</u>	Al-Arabi al-Jadid (UK), March 2022	<u>Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah</u>[32]	Dona Timani
4	فوق رأسي القيصر والمرشد **Gloss:** above the heads of the "<u>tsar</u>" and the "<u>murshid</u>"	Al Iraq News (Iraq), June 2019	above the heads of the "tsar" <u>Vladimir Putin</u> and the "murshid" <u>Khamanei</u>[33]	Alexander Socarras
5	ثورة الإخوان **Gloss:** the revolution of <u>the Brotherhood</u>	Al-Sharq Al-Awsat (Saudi Arabia), June 2022	the revolution by the <u>Muslim Brotherhood</u>[34]	Erin Lyons
6	ترمب (...): أريد أن أعرف الذين نساعدهم كم مستعدون للدفع ثمناً لحفظهم من الانقراض الكلي **Gloss:** Trump (…), I just want to know how much <u>those who we are helping</u> willing to pay for our saving from total extinction	Al-Quds Al-Arabi, (UK), July 2017	Trump (…), I just want to know how much is <u>Saudi Arabia and others</u> who we are helping willing to pay for our saving from total extinction[35]	Jacob Leppek
7	هدّد السعودية بسحب الغطاء عنها إذا لم تُخفَض الإنتاج **Gloss:** he threatened Saudi Arabia with withdrawing <u>protection</u> if it did not cut production	Al Akhbar (Lebanon), April 2021	he threatened Saudi Arabia with withdrawing <u>military</u> protection if it did not cut production[36]	Erin Lyons
8	ما يجعل احتمالية تعزيز التواجد والبقاء **Gloss:** maintaining and prolonging <u>the chance of the presence</u>	Al-Mudun (Lebanon), December 2021	maintaining and prolonging the <u>U.S. military</u> presence <u>in Syria</u>[37]	Dona Timani
9	....كررت المساعي مجدداً قبل أيام **Gloss:** renewed <u>efforts</u> were made a few days ago	Al-Watan (Syria), April 2021	renewed efforts <u>to whitewash Jolani</u> were made a few days ago[38]	Jeremy Bullard

The above additions can be seen as attempts on the part of the translator to *disambiguate* the original referents to ensure maximum clarity and communicability of the text. Translating "القيصر" (literally (lit), tsar) into "the tsar Vladimir Putin", "البقاء" (lit, presence) into "the U.S. military presence in Syria" and "المساعي" (lit, efforts) into "efforts to whitewash Jolani" involves adding information inferable from the situational or cognitive context. The added information here helps English readers in recognizing the exact intended referents and in interpreting the intended messages. It in other words proactively resolves any potential ambiguities and hence helps in reducing any possible *communicative risks* such as misinterpreting a source-text element and failing to achieve the communicative goal(s) of the translation (see Pym 2015). The referents that have specified by the additions must have been considered by the translators as *high-risk* elements (Pym 2004, 27-28), essential for successful communication. It sounded to them that an important part of the message may run the risk of being

lost if the reader for example could not identify who "Yasser Arafat" and "Hassan Nasrallah" are and what countries Trump refers to in "who we are helping" or what type of "protection" he also provides to these countries. So, one may argue that one possible *success* or *reward* for the translators for this risk-reduction behavior is the increased clarity of the translated text and lower probability of misinterpreting the translated ideas (cf. Gile 2009).

4.4 Literal translation or transliteration

These last two strategies involve reproducing the ambiguity and uncertainty of the original items in the target text, making the target reader directly responsible for their interpretation and perception. These involve 26 cases in which some cultural references are either literally translated or simply transliterated into English without any explanations. See the following examples.

	Original Arabic Utterance	**Source**	**English translation**	**Translator**
1	ومن أفلام هوليوود المبالغة في تشويه الشخصية العربية فيلم "ليالي عربية"، ويصور فيه <u>هارون الرشيد</u> وحوله مجتمع شهواني متخلف	AL Ahram (Egypt), April 2021	One of the Hollywood films that greatly exaggerated the character of Arabs was "Arabian Nights," which portrayed <u>Harun al-Rashid</u> in a backward, lustful setting[39].	Naaima Abarouch
2	نفس السيناريو تكرر في العراق بعد اسقاط <u>نظام البعث</u> واغراق البلد بالأسلحة	Addustour (Jordan), August 2021	The scenario was repeated in Iraq after the fall of <u>the Ba'ath Party</u>, when the country was flooded with weapons[40]	Erin Lyons

The English expressions "Harun al-Rashid" (a Muslim Abbasid Caliph) and "the Ba'ath Party" (the Arab socialist party that ruled Iraq between 1967 and 2003) are a literal and phonetic rendering of the Arabic items "هارون الرشيد" and "نظام البعث". As these two Arabic items are not self-explanatory nor does any surrounding text explain them, their ambiguity is left to readers to handle. In this case, the risk of misinterpretation is completely *transferred* to the target reader or even to the original text/writer (see Pym 2020, 450); the translator would simply say: It is not my fault – This is what I found in the original. While in substitutions, deletions and additions, the translator does *something* to reduce or avoid risk, in literal translations or transliterations the translator does *nothing* in this regard.

4.5 Main findings

The numerical data indicate that substitution constitutes about 39% of total risk management cases, while omission about 28%, addition about 27% and literal translation and transliteration only 5%. As the previous analysis has shown, unlike literal translation and transliteration, substitution, omission and addition, which together constitute almost 95 % of cases, suggest a less ambiguous, less sensitive, more neutralized or standardized, and hence more *readable* and *comprehensible* text (see Matsushita 2019, 78-80). This orientation suggests that there is a very strong tendency in WA translations to *reduce* the communicative risk of *reader incomprehension* (Pym 2015, 71-72; Matsushita 2019, 66-67). Possible *rewards* (Pym 2004) or *gains* (Gile 2009) of this risk-reduction orientation are an increased clarity, a greater cultural or linguistic appropriateness/acceptability and hence a lower probability of misunderstanding or miscommunication. The substitutions, omissions and additions can reflect WA translators' concern during the decision-making process to achieve an easier and more appropriate understanding of the translated items by the target audience. This in other words means that their risk-management efforts have been more oriented toward the recipients of the translation (*target-oriented risk)* rather than the original writer or audience (*source-oriented risk*) (cf. Matsushita 2019, 164).

In its "About Us" page, WA has set some clear communicative goals for its translations: to reflect "global opinion about the United States" so that Americans can "understand what the world thinks of current issues that involve the U.S.". The risk-reduction orientation in WA translations, which sacrifices *equivalence in form* for explicitness, appropriateness, readability and comprehensibility (cf. Blum-Kulka, 1986/2000), may help guarantee a greater degree of communication success, thereby reducing the probability of failing to achieve the communicative goals of WA translations. As WA's goals

are essentially more oriented toward the perception of the target American than the original Arabic audience, the *higher* risk for WA translators has more likely been the *cooperation* and *trust* of the target audience (Pym 2021), while the lower risk has been those of the original audience. The risk of somebody from the Arabic audience checking the accuracy of the English translations against the Arabic source ones must have been assumed by translators as low. Microstrategies such as substitution, deletion and addition, which largely suggest *localization* or *domestication* (cf. Venuti 2008), can be seen here as tools used by WA translators to reduce the probability of non-cooperation or distrust by target readers, and ultimately to ensure a trusting relationship with them in this communicative act (*credibility risk*). In decision-making process, practices such as explicitating unfamiliar references, omitting/censoring sensitive information or substituting original expressions for clearer or more neutral/normal ones, would basically reflect the translators' concerns for the *favorable* or *expected* options for the target readers (see Gile 2021, 57), so they are first and foremost an act of trust building or distrust avoidance (Pym 2015, 69). Such practices, which may be regarded as "unethical or non-standard" in some other translation contexts (Pym 2016, 247), seem to have sounded to WA translators important to maintain their credibility.

As WA states in its website[41], its multiple teams, including translators and editors, "are all volunteers", and that they engage only volunteers to provide them "invaluable chance to build their reputation and translation portfolios with pieces published on our website", and also offer "recommendation letters to those seeking further academic or professional opportunities." Therefore, the high reward for such volunteer translators, who work with different languages and cultures and for personal interests (e.g., to gain practical experience or even to support WA's cause) (see Hui 2012; Kang and Hong 2020), may more likely be to maintain more long-term *cross-cultural cooperation* and *trust* (Pym 2021, 19). The *high*-risk situation for them may be any negative criticism or feedback from target readers, editors, or the publisher/founder. This suggests that WA volunteer translators are *risk averse* and "tend not to take chances with language" (Pym 2021, 14). But important questions may arise: is this strong orientation toward risk reduction/avoidance completely *voluntary* on the part of the translators or is it possibly influenced by particular WA institutional policies or discourses? Are WA editors aware of it? And if yes, why have not they demanded translators to do otherwise.

WA positions itself as a non-profit platform whose mission is to show Americans how other people or countries perceive the United States to promote greater intercultural understanding. WA discursively represents itself as an *ethical* entity that has a *social* and *moral* responsibility. This is emphasized by the use of some expressions that display moral concern and affect, such as "help to raise level of debate", "open minds", "promote understanding among the people of the world" and "facilitate a dialogue" (see Methodology Section). This can actually create a special discourse in which both translators and editors perceive their volunteer work as "an act of initiating social change, helping others, and community building" (cf. Kang and Hong 2020, 67). Many editors and translators for example describe their volunteer work for WA as an opportunity to both "build skills" and be part of a team whose mission is "to educate Americans" about how the world sees them (https://www.indeed.com/cmp/Watching-America). In this discourse, language may be perceived by translators and editors as a *barrier* and any ambiguous or inappropriate use of language as a potential *risk* that should be removed in order to help WA accomplish its mission toward American readers. In such discourse that foregrounds the importance of establishing intercultural dialogue and understanding, translators and editors may feel that they are morally obligated not to *take* or *transfer* risk to American target readers, or at least they will not be reworded by WA if they do so.

Finally, WA constantly disclaims any responsibility for any inaccurate translation or loss of meaning (see "About Us" and "Disclaimer" page[42]). It states that although it tries to provide accurate translations of foreign articles, it makes "no representations as to their accuracy", and therefore they "cannot be assumed to convey the meanings or intent of their authors." This may construct a context in which WA translators consider inaccuracy or unfaithfulness a *less* risky situation, compared to the more risky situation of incomprehensibility or linguistic/cultural unacceptability (see Matsushita 2019, 144). This context is quite possible and more especially if we look at the linguistic background of the WA editors who assess the linguistic and cultural acceptability of the Arabic-English translated articles. The data indicate that the vast majority of the examined articles are edited by non-native speakers of Arabic who either have very little or no experience in Arabic language, and therefore unlikely to have the ability to check the English translations against their Arabic originals.

This is somehow expected as WA clearly states in its website[43] that the main role of its editors is "making sure translated copy *reads properly in American English*" (emphasis added), and "[a]lthough foreign language skills can be helpful, they are not required." WA translators must have assumed that the editor will not, or may not be able to, check the accuracy of their translations, but will more definitely be able to evaluate their readability and acceptability, so a clearer and more normalized language would be a safer option to them.

6. Conclusion

The present study has analyzed risk management in a corpus of Arabic newspaper articles translated into English by WA with the help of *volunteer* translators and editors. The analysis reveals numerous substitutions, omissions and additions that improve textual clarity and cultural acceptability, suggesting a strong tendency on the part of translators to *reduce* the *communicative* risk of reading incomprehension or cultural unacceptability and the *credibilit*y risk of losing trust of editors and hence readers (*target-oriented risk)*. The study argues that this risk-reduction behavior can be affected by particular overlapping *situational* factors related to WA and its editors and translators. WA adopts a moral discourse that foregrounds the benefits of the Americans to understand the world and engage in intercultural dialogue. This discourse portrays volunteer translation as a social and helping act and is likely to motivate volunteer translators to put more weight on clarity, comprehensibility and cultural appropriateness, than faithfulness or accuracy, to satisfy American readers. Within this discourse, the translators would probably assume that incomprehensibility and linguistic and cultural unacceptability carry *higher risk* than inaccuracy or unfaithfulness. This is a likely situation as the editors are non-native speakers of Arabic and the translators would normally assume that the chance that those editors will check the accuracy of the translations against the Arabic source is very low. The above risk-reduction behavior is also likely to be affected by certain mutual interests between WA and its volunteer translators. While WA provides an opportunity for translators to achieve personal benefits (e.g., to gain experience, build a professional portfolio and get recommendation letters etc.), translators in turn build *trust* and *credibility* by providing clear and appropriate translations that help WA accomplish its mission toward American readers. Finally, the above findings should have provided some dynamic and practical explanations of some media translation practices in a particular socio-political context. However, these findings are still limited and cannot theorize risk management in media translation. More future large-scale research on different media genres and in various linguistic and socio-political contexts is actually still needed to map this uncharted territory.

Endnotes
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