

## Translation Techniques:

These translation types are specific **strategies, techniques** and **procedures** for dealing with short **chunks of text** – generally words or phrases.

They're often thought of as techniques for **solving translation problems**.

### 1. Borrowing: الاقتراض

#### **What is it?**

Using a word or phrase from the original text **unchanged** in the translation.

#### **Key features**

With this procedure we don't translate the word or phrase at all – we simply 'borrow' it from the source language.

Borrowing is a very common strategy across languages. Initially, borrowed words seem clearly 'foreign', but as they become more familiar, they can lose that 'foreignness'.

Translators use this technique:

- when it's the **best word** to use – either because it has become the standard, or it's the most precise term, or
- for **stylist effect** – borrowings can add a prestigious or scholarly flavour.

Borrowed words or phrases are often *italicised* in English.

#### **Examples of borrowings in English**

*grand prix, kindergarten, tango, perestroika, barista, sampan, karaoke, tofu*

### 2. Transliteration : النقحرة- النقل الحرفي

#### **What is it?**

Reproducing the **approximate sounds** of a name or term from a language with a different writing system.

#### **Key features**

In English we use the Roman (Latin) alphabet in common with many other languages including almost all European languages.

Other writing systems include Arabic, Cyrillic, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Thai, and the Indian languages.

Transliteration from such systems into the Roman alphabet is also called **romanisation**.

There are accepted systems for how individual letters/sounds should be romanised from most other languages – there are **three common systems for Chinese**, for example.

English borrowings from languages using non-Roman writing systems also require transliteration – *perestroika*, *sampan*, *karaoke*, *tofu* are examples from the above list.

**Examples:** Tsunami تسونامي

Pizza بيتزا

### **3. Calque or Loan Translation: المحاكاة**

#### **What is it?**

A literal translation of a foreign word or phrase to create a new term with the same meaning in the target language.

So a calque is a **borrowing with translation** if you like. The new term may be changed slightly to reflect target language structures.

#### **Examples**

German ‘Kindergarten’ has been calqued as روضة الأطفال in Arabic, literally ‘children garden’ in both languages.

**Science fiction** has been also calqued into الخيال العلمي in Arabic.

English skyscraper is calqued as *gratte-ciel* in French and *rascacielos* in Spanish, literally ‘scratches sky’ in both languages.

### **4. Word-for-word translation: الترجمة الحرفية**

#### **What is it?**

A **literal translation** that is **natural** and **correct** in the target language.

Alternative names are ‘literal translation’ or ‘metaphrase’.

Note: this technique is different to the translation *method* of the same name, which does not produce correct and natural text and has a different purpose.

#### **Key features**

This translation strategy will only work between languages that have very similar grammatical structures, such as Arabic and Hebrew; English and German etc.

And even then, only sometimes.

For example, standard word order in Turkish is Subject-Object-Verb whereas in English it’s Subject-Verb-Object. So a literal translation between these two will seldom work:

– *Yusuf elmayı yedi* is literally ‘Joseph the apple ate’.

When word-for-word translations don’t produce natural and correct text, translators resort to some of the other techniques described below.

## Examples

French ‘Quelle heure est-il?’ works into English as ‘What time is it?’.

## 5. Transposition: الإبدال

### What is it?

Translation with a **change of grammatical structure**.

This technique gives the translation more natural wording and/or makes it grammatically correct.

### Examples

A change in **word order**:

Our Turkish example *Yusuf elmayı yedi* (literally ‘Joseph the apple ate’) → *Joseph ate the apple*.

Spanish *La Casa Blanca* (literally ‘The House White’) → *The White House*

A change in **grammatical category**:

German *Er hört gerne Musik* (literally ‘he listens gladly [to] music’)

= subject pronoun + verb + adverb + noun

becomes Spanish *Le gusta escuchar música* (literally ‘[to] him [it] pleases to listen [to] music’)

= indirect object pronoun + verb + infinitive + noun

and English *He likes listening to music*

= subject pronoun + verb + gerund + noun.

## 6. Modulation : التطويع

### What is it?

Translation with a **change of focus** or point of view in the target language.

This technique makes the translation more idiomatic – how people would normally say it in the language.

### Examples

English talks of the ‘top floor’ of a building, French the *dernier étage* = last floor.

‘Last floor’ would be unnatural in English, so too ‘top floor’ in French.

German uses the term *Lebensgefahr* (literally ‘danger to life’) where in English we’d be more likely to say ‘risk of death’.

In English we’d say ‘I dropped the key’, in Spanish *se me cayó la llave*, literally ‘the key fell from me’. The English perspective is that I did something (dropped the key), whereas in Spanish something happened to me – I’m the recipient of the action.

## 7. Equivalence or Reformulation : التكافؤ

### What is it?

Translating the underlying concept or meaning using a **totally different expression**.

This technique is widely used when translating **idioms** and **proverbs**.

And it's common in titles and **advertising slogans**.

It's a common strategy where a direct translation either wouldn't make sense or wouldn't resonate in the same way.

### Examples

Here are some equivalents of the English saying "Pigs may fly", meaning something will never happen, or "you're being unrealistic"

- Arabic: قد يشيبُ الغُراب – literally, 'Crows may go gray'
- Thai: ซาติหน้าตอนบ่าย ๆ – literally, 'One afternoon in your next reincarnation'
- French: *Quand les poules auront des dents* – literally, 'When hens have teeth'
- Russian, Когда рак на горе свистнет – literally, 'When a lobster whistles on top of a mountain'
- Dutch, *Als de koeien op het ijs dansen* – literally, 'When the cows dance on the ice'
- Chinese: 除非太陽從西邊出來！ – literally, 'Only if the sun rises in the west'

### 8. Adaptation: التصرف

#### What is it?

A translation that substitutes a **culturally-specific reference** with something that's more relevant or meaningful in the target language.

It's also known as cultural substitution or cultural equivalence.

It's a useful technique when a reference wouldn't be understood at all, or the associated nuances or connotations would be lost in the target language.

Note: the translation method of the same name is a similar concept but applied to the text as a whole.

#### Examples

Different cultures celebrate different coming of age birthdays – 21 in many cultures, 20, 15 or 16 in others. A translator might consider changing the age to the target culture custom where the coming of age implications were important in the original text.

Animals have different connotations across languages and cultures. Owls for example are associated with wisdom in English, but are a bad omen to Vietnamese.

A translator might want to remove or amend an animal reference where this would create a different image in the target language.

## 9. Compensation: التعويض

### What is it?

A meaning or nuance that can't be directly translated is **expressed in another way** in the text.

### Example

Many languages have ways of expressing social status (honorifics) encoded into their grammatical structures.

So you can convey different levels of respect, politeness, humility, etc. simply by choosing different forms of words or grammatical elements.

But these nuances will be lost when translating into languages that don't have these structures.

So a translator might use this strategy to express (compensate for) them in another way – perhaps by using a different register (vocabulary that's more formal or informal) or by adding something not in the original.

So there you have it – your comprehensive list of 51 common translation types, methods, techniques and procedures.

تقول Mona Baker في كتابها In other Words إن التعويض في الترجمة إستراتيجية صعبة الشرح لأنها تتطلب حيزاً كبيراً. وهو باختصار لجوء المترجم الى حذف بعض عناصر النص الأصل (كالتعبير الإصطلاحي مثلاً) في مكان حدوثه في النص الأصل وإيراد بديل عنه في مكان آخر في النص المترجم. ولا تقتصر هذه الإستراتيجية على التعبير الإصطلاحي فقط بل يمكن إتباعها عند فقدان المعنى أو القوة العاطفية أو الأثر الأسلوبي الذي لا نستطيع ترجمته مباشرة في لحظة معينة في النص المترجم.

ويورد Ian Mason في كتابه: 1982. The role of translation theory in the translation class. مثالاً على التعويض فذكر أن مترجمي ( Asterix شخصية كارتونية فرنسية) حينما عجزوا عن ترجمة عبارات معينة من التورية وأشكال التلاعب اللفظي (puns) لجأوا الى استخدام عبارات تورية باللغة الإنجليزية في مواضع أخرى من النص المترجم تحدث أثراً مماثلاً على القارئ، عوضاً عن نقل المعنى المكافئ. من هذا يتضح أن التعويض هو استراتيجية لإحداث الأثر المطلوب على قارئ الترجمة عندما يتعذر وجود المكافئ في اللغة المترجم إليها.