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English Translations in Parallel Texts on Panels of Archaeological Exhibitions in Museums in Israel:  
Multilingualism as a Symbolic and Functional Resource  
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## **English Abstract**

This study set out to research the translations from Hebrew to English on bilingual parallel texts of three leading archaeological exhibitions in three museums in Israel: The Israel Museum, Jerusalem; Eretz-Israel Museum, Tel Aviv; and Hecht Museum, Haifa. All three museums operate under the guidelines of the Israeli Law of Museums (1978); they are sponsored by the State of Israel and are obligated by law to produce a translation. All the translations studied in this research appear on panels of permanent exhibitions, as opposed to temporary ones, and as such, they bear witness to authorized governing norms. The translations were produced between the years 2000 and 2010, and thus, they reflect the norms of a limited time interval.

The main goal of this study is to formulate the characteristics of the English translations in the Israeli museums, taking into consideration the well-established characteristics of Museum Language in English as a source text (Ravelli, 2006), vis-a-vis the objectives of archaeological exhibitions in national museums. The examination of the documented translation process from the Israel Museum and the translations on the panels of the three museums revealed a unique work process, in which the translator operates as part of a team comprising curators, editors and designers—all of which influenced the final bilingual product, i.e., the parallel texts. The research also relates to the function of the English translation as a means to mediate the displayed ancient Israeli culture to an international target audience, the English language serving as a “language for communication” (House, 2003).

The study is based on researches from the field of museology, serving as a point of departure for analyzing the translation process and translations in the museums, e.g., concerning the goals of museum texts and their linguistic characteristics (in English source texts). It also considers their status in relation to the artifacts and other visual and textual elements on display. In the realm of translation studies, the research focuses on four general topics, forming a frame for the analysis of the museum translations:

(1) the status of the translation and its function within the parallel texts; (2) the goal of the translation and its presumed target audience; (3) translation norms; and (4) translation in a composite multimodal environment.

The norm in Israel is to present English translations on panels accompanying permanent museums exhibitions alongside the Hebrew source in parallel text format (as opposed to translations offered in audio guides or in brochures). This norm entailed the involvement of several entities in the creation of the translation: the commissioner of the translation (the museum); the source text writers and the ones responsible for the final bilingual product (curators), translators, editors and designers. The lengthy, costly and composite translation process in the museum is thus connected directly with the choice to present the translations in parallel texts. Therefore, it is suggested in this study that the bilingual product is a goal in its own.

Symbolically, the parallel texts form a “linguistic landscape” (Shohamy and Gorter, 2009) that presents the museum as multicultural; an institution that views its various audiences as equals. The equal status of both languages displayed on the panels (sometimes three, when an Arabic translation is offered) is visualized by the equal space allocated for each, the balance between their lengths and the choice of font styles and size for both languages. Functionally, it was found that the translation process of the parallel texts in the museum enables translators and curators to aspire for a balance also between the delivered contents in source text and target text, as both are open to changes until the bilingual product is finalized. It is stressed that both target and source texts do not have a separate existence, and therefore, throughout the creation process of the parallel text, source and target texts are edited simultaneously in relation to one another. This situation allows translators and curators (source text writers) to examine the meanings embedded in each of the texts and to revise them in accordance to the presumed expectations of each of their audiences. It is further suggested in this study that the parallel texts in the museum serve another function in relation to source text and target text audiences, i.e., to offer another educational channel through the physical co-presence of both languages (Kaufmann, 2002).

According to the ICOM Statutes, museum exhibitions and texts are produced “for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment.” (ICOM, 2004), and this statement is mirrored in the Israeli Law of Museums (1978). Museum texts of archaeological

exhibitions are created according to a negotiated historical narrative in relation to the educational goals concerning the original (local) audience, for whom the exhibitions were assembled in the first place. The research of the translations in the Israeli museums revealed that the educational role of the source texts is mirrored in the English translations as well, in accordance with the prevalent norm of museum texts written in English as source texts. According to Vermeer's Skopos Theory (Vermeer, 2000), even when source text and target text share the same goal, its realization in the target text might be different considering the expectations of the target-text readers and the situation in which the translation is to function. In this study it was found that the English translators in the museums are aware of the different needs and expectations of the target-text audience, and therefore, the means for achieving the educational goal in the target texts sometimes deviate from those employed in the source text.

It was also found during this research that the English translations in the Israeli museums imbibe from the well-established English academic writing in the field of archaeology of the Holy Land. Archaeological publications of excavations in the Holy Land in English are available since the nineteenth century and are a rich source of information; including descriptions of finds, terminology, translations of ancient inscriptions and quotations from religious and classical sources. The curators' expertise in the field of archaeology, as well as their acquaintance with the English academic publications, posit them as an authority to make translation decisions regarding professional issues. The responsibility of the curators to provide the translators with customary translations in the field of archaeology is clearly seen in the proof pages of the texts from the Israel Museum, and is further supported by the evidence compiled from the interviews with the curators and translators at all three museums. This situation in the museum is unique, where the curators play an active part in the translation process (co-drafters; see Šarčević, 2000), even when the translator him/herself is an expert in the field.

The English translations in the Israeli museums are a communication tool that enables the exposure of the displayed historical-national narrative to a divergent audience of tourists who seek to learn the history of the local culture. In contrast to other translation products, which aim at a specific target audience that shares the same set of values and expectations, the target audience of the museum translations comprises several cultural

groups, who share the use of English as a global language (ELF = English as a Lingua Franca; House, 2003). This is a challenge to museums, when opting for a communion with their target-text audiences (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969) as a starting point for transmitting their ideas and values. The establishment of the communion can be achieved by two main channels of communication, viz., the objective-formal and the subjective-emotional, both of which are accepted forms of communication in museum language. In this study it was found that the curators and translators in the museums attempt to balance between these two linguistic styles, in consideration with the different expectations of the source-text and target-text audiences.

The communication in the museum operates on several levels, the museum texts being only one of them. Except for the texts, the exhibitions comprise visual elements, such as drawings, photographs and reconstructions, which assist the interpretation of the artifacts and support the historical narrative. All information levels relate to the overall organization of the exhibition, determining the order of presentation of the various components and their hierarchy (Ravelli, 2006). The texts on the panels are presented according to a pre-determined hierarchy, and the museum message is rendered in several levels of content, visualized in the internal organization of the paragraphs, font size and graphic layout. The translator in the museum is expected to mediate not only the content of the source text, but also its relative position in the given hierarchy, and in consideration with the various elements comprising the multimodal environment. Museum texts act as the institution's nonhuman agents, which have the power to channel the behavior of visitors (Cooren, 2004), e.g., by directing the visitors to look at certain artifacts or to notice specific values thereof. It was found that the English translations relate to the artifacts and to the other visual and linguistic elements in the studied exhibitions through the “eyes” of the source text. The English translations in the Israeli museums do not seek to engage directly with the artifacts or the other visuals on display, i.e., it has no intention to convey a message different from that of the source text. This contrasts with the findings in translation studies in other museums, where translators make direct use of the multimodal environment (e.g., Neather, 2008; Carlucci and Seibel, 2014).

The Archaeological exhibitions under discussion pose a challenge for translators for several reasons: the cultural context is rooted in the source culture; the abundance of

professional and culture-specific terminology; the presupposed gaps in the target-text readers' background knowledge; and the diverse perceptions regarding the presented historical narrative. Some of these challenges were previously addressed in the limited number of researches dealing with translations in museums (e.g., Gill, 1994; Neather, 2008; Guillot, 2014). These issues were debated in this study in light of the prevailing conflict in the genre between the need to introduce professional terminology (in accordance with the educational role of the museum), on the one hand, and the space limitations that do not allow the addition of learned explanations or comments, on the other. It was found that for the most part, the English translation and the Hebrew source text use the same linguistic means provided by the genre. However, in some cases, it was found that the English translation deviated from the source text when terms were culture-specific or when the interpretation of the artifacts required background knowledge that was presumed absent from the target-text readers. Such deviations were interpreted in accordance with Blum-Kulka's (1986) Explicitation Theory, as part of the translation act, characterized by a tendency to turn the implicit to explicit; alternatively, these deviations were explained as solutions for lacunae (Weitzman, 2001 [in Hebrew]).

In accordance with the norms of archaeological academic research, quotations from historical and religious sources prevail in museum texts accompanying archaeological exhibitions. Quotations are a clear rhetoric tool (Ben-Porat, 1985[in Hebrew]), used to trigger an emotional reaction. The quotations cited in the exhibition texts serve as a historic-cultural frame for the artifacts and lend support to the proposed interpretation. Sometimes, the quotations themselves gain reinforcement from the artifacts on display. All the quotations in the museums were translated into English (except for those in the exhibition in the Eretz-Israel Museum). For them to function as rhetorical means for target-text readers, the translator is expected to reconstruct the inter-textual relationships between the explanation offered on the panel and the given quotation, for example, by using a similar vocabulary. This is accomplished in consideration with the essence of the artifact. It was found that translation decisions were influenced by the linguistic choices made in previous English translations of the quotations (provided by the curators, based on academic publications) and by the rhetorical value of the quotations regarding the target-text readers.

The museum texts are dotted with many proper nouns, dominated by names of (mainly historical) figures and geographical places inhabiting the historical narrative and anchoring the story in place and time. The English translation of the proper names in these texts shows a high tendency toward the use of official equivalents, as they allow the target-text readers to identify the person or place without effort. In rendering the names of the historical periods that create the chronological frame of the exhibition, the various accepted names for each period are mentioned, in accordance with the overall educational goal of the museum.

In summary, the parallel texts dominate the linguistic landscape of the museums in Israel and they allow a visual presentation of both languages, Hebrew source text and English target text, as equal. The aspiration to achieve a balance between the two languages is complemented also by the adequate translational approach, which is achieved by the unique creation process of source and target texts in the parallel texts. The fact that the Hebrew and English languages share a historic-cultural tradition of writing in the field of archaeology of the Holy Land further aids the curators and translators to address both their audiences in similar ways accepted as characteristic of the genre. Although both source and target texts share the same overall educational goal, it is achieved differently considering the perceptions and expectations of each of the recipients. The English translation in the Israeli museums is no doubt a significant communication tool, whose strength rises from the authoritative-hegemonic status of the museum as an official promoter of cultural agendas, as well as from the status of the English language as a global language for communication (House, 2003). The vast investment of the Israeli museums, both time-wise and money-wise, in the creation of such complex bilingual texts is an indication of the institutions' awareness of the importance of these translations for international cultural communication.