

BRIDGING LANGUAGES AND CULTURES: THE TRANSLATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS INTO ARABIC

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Abstract: *The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) introduced by the United Nations (UN) in 2015 were meant to be universal and applicable to all developing and developed countries, establishing a global framework and a common ground for all people worldwide. Despite their global significance, limited scholarly attention has been paid to the translation of the SDGs into Arabic and the implications of such translations for meaning. The current study carefully examines the translation methods and procedures through which a selection of SDGs, along with their statements, were translated from English into Arabic. It explores how linguistic and cultural differences influence the interpretation of global sustainability agendas in Arab-speaking countries. The study employed the descriptive-analytical method to systematically analyze the translated Arabic texts. Following Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995) translation model, two strategies and seven particular procedures applied in transferring the English SDGs into their Arabic counterparts were investigated. The findings demonstrated that the Arabic translation of the SDGs mainly employed direct translation procedures, including literal translation and borrowing to convey the intended meaning as accurately as possible. However, indirect translation procedures such as transposition, modulation, and equivalence were also used to ensure cultural appropriateness and natural rendering. These findings contribute to a better understanding of how global policy discourse is linguistically and culturally adapted in Arabic, highlighting key challenges in translating international policy texts. This combination of translation methods contributed to conveying the underlying meaning effectively and addressing the problematic linguistic and cultural elements appropriately.*

Keywords: Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Arabic-English Translation, Translation Strategies, Translation Procedures, Literal Translation

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Introduction

Following the Millennium Development Goals, all United Nations (UN) members adopted new development goals known as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that extend from 2015 up to 2030. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development focuses on the sustainability dimension across all seventeen goals (United Nations, 2015). The agenda also includes ambitious goals that would promote the socio-economic and environmental aspects of life by 2030. The goals represent a future-focused vision of global sustainable development and constitute one of the most comprehensive and transformative agendas for reframing the international political economy since the establishment of the UN (Pope et al., 2020).

The goals were meant to be universal and applicable to all developing and developed countries by establishing a global framework and a common ground for all people worldwide. To avoid any linguistic barriers and ensure widespread dissemination across diverse linguistic and cultural contexts, the UN's Department of Economic and Social Affairs has translated the SDGs into five official languages, including Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian, and Spanish. However, the UN needs to exert more effort toward the linguistic dimensions in its policy due to the distinct linguistic structures and cultural differences of the other nations by providing translations into more languages. McEntee-Atalianis (2017) emphasizes the need for the UN to adopt a more linguistically diverse and inclusive approach for effective dissemination and implementation of the SDGs. This would help in achieving the principle of "leaving no one behind" effectively. Arguably, within the framework of the SDGs, language issues were not adequately recognized as a significant dimension of socioeconomic development (Fettes, 2023).

Despite the growing body of literature on Translation Studies, there is a notable gap in research addressing the translation of development discourse as a type of institutional translation, especially in the context of Arabic translation. Thus, studies that explore the linguistic dimension of the SDGs with regard to the act of translation are limited. Tesseur and Crack (2020) contend that understanding the role of translation and interpreting practices across development discourse remains limited. The present study, therefore, aims to fill this gap by examining how the globally shared SDGs were translated into one of the UN's formal languages: Arabic. As a communication medium for over 400 million native speakers across the Arab world, Arabic enjoys an important role in disseminating global discourses.

By analyzing the linguistic choices and cultural elements made in the Arabic translation of the SDGs, this study addresses a relatively underexplored area in the translation of global policy discourse into Arabic and sheds light on the linguistic and cultural challenges involved in translating such texts. Specifically, it examines the translation strategies and procedures employed in the translation

process. The findings can contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of institutional translation in mediating global policy discourse, particularly in the context of translating the SDGs into Arabic, where linguistic and cultural considerations shape the target meaning. Most importantly, this investigation seeks to bridge the gap in both translation and development studies, paving the way for further research in the global development discourse. The analysis attempts to answer the following research questions:

- 1) How are the SDGs translated from English into Arabic, and what strategies and procedures were employed in the translation process?
- 2) To what extent are linguistic accuracy and cultural appropriateness maintained in the Arabic translation of the SDGs?

Literature Review

Due to the unsatisfactory literature as far as the translation of SDGs into Arabic is concerned, offering a broad overview of the relevant literature seems to be inevitable. This section explores institutional translation, research on the translation of SDGs, and some strategies and procedures that were proposed by major translation scholars. The section ends by providing the theoretical foundation upon which the Arabic translation of the SDGs is analyzed in this study.

Institutional Translation

Institutional translation has been examined in Translation Studies as a specific form of translation practice shaped by the communicative and ideological demands of institutions. Since translation conveys the institution's voice, it not only requires careful selection of the texts but also thoughtful consideration of the translators and editors assigned to the translation process (Choi, 2020). This kind of translation operates on various types of documents, ranging from official documents, legal texts, reports, brochures, and any communication released on the institution's website. Such institution-based documents have specific features that distinguish them from other types of documents. First, institutional documents use formal language, where no slang or conversational phrases are included. They further tend to contain specialized jargon and terminology. As for the style, they use specific structures and formats, including headings and subheadings. Most importantly, institutional texts convey the institution's voice and ideology. This may be achieved through the writing tone, linguistic choices, and the content itself. The institutional discourse of international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), for example, may promote the humanitarian industry, whereas the private companies' discourse may convey issues related to profit or innovation.

Understanding these features is of high importance for translators during the process of meaning transfer. Translators need to pay close attention not only to the content of the institutional documents but also to other factors, including style, tone, and structure. Besides, great attention is needed when the source institutional texts convey specific ideological and cultural items. Here, translators are required to consider the underlying ideology so that it is accurately rendered into the target text and hence to the target audience. They also need to be aware of the cultural differences between the source and target languages so that they can decide to either domesticate or foreignize the target text. This matter of adhering to the source meaning has been seen as an ongoing subject of debate, which influences the translators' decision regarding their faithfulness to the source text from which they are translating. In this vein, Mossop (1990), one of the earlier scholars in Translation Studies, indicated that translation needs to maintain meaning within the limitations of institutional objectives.

The current landscape of research reveals that translation practices within multilingual institutions' contexts have gained little attention from scholars (Tesseur, 2014; Tesseur & Crack, 2020). This might be attributed to many factors that are mainly related to the complexity of these institutions, where multiple languages are involved with their unique linguistic, cultural, and ideological variations. Additionally, the concept itself relates to two complex notions, 'institution' and 'translation', which are defined differently (Kang, 2020). Another factor that plays a potential role is the matter of specialization. Investigating translation within multilingual institutions requires specialized knowledge in the institution's domain as well as in Translation Studies. Such a specialty may limit the number of scholars and researchers conducting research in such a context. Another challenging aspect may relate to prioritization. It could be argued that current Translation Studies scholars, researchers, and academics are more interested in exploring topics such as cultural and ideological translation, machine translation, audiovisual translation, corpus-based translation, and, most recently, AI-enhanced translation. Hence, it is essential to conduct further empirical research on the various purposes for which institutional translation has been put forward (Kang, 2020).

Arguably, in today's contemporary world, the role of institutional translation is becoming more important than ever. Modern communication is now characterized as being multilingual and multicultural due to globalization, where institutions communicate with diverse audiences worldwide. International humanitarian organizations, for instance, operate in many countries with different languages and cultures. Similarly, corporations are doing business across borders where they engage with customers from multiple linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Therefore, there is a great need for translation to be conducted for the sake of such institutions to facilitate communication, enhance international cooperation, and share knowledge and ideas. In this vein, Kang

(2020) attributes the increasing research attention in institutional translation to two developments that influenced this field and the broader Translation Studies. The first reason is connected to the growth of translation activities within the European Union, which is the largest employer of translators in Europe. Another important advancement is related to increased attention to the sociological dimension of translation, leading to a shift in research emphasis “from languages, texts, and cultures to individual and collective agents whose actions are embedded in a constellation of relations and structures” (Kang, 2020, p. 258).

The Translation of SDGs

English is considered the main language in the multilingual international organization, including the UN’s agencies, due to its universality. Drawing on Rist’s (2010) argument, Footitt (2019) argues that the international development discourse has been historically dominated by English. In the context of the SDGs, translating this discourse is essential for effectively communicating development goals and ensuring their successful implementation at the national level at the national level. Applying this to the sustainable development discourse, accurate local translation helps maintain the intended meaning beyond the surface wording of the SDGs. Any shift in wording could influence this meaning and ultimately the intended ideology of development and sustainability. This makes the process of translating the SDGs into any language not a purely technical task but rather a discursive practice with internationally important policy implications.

When it comes to empirical studies conducted on the translation of SDGs, it could be argued that the current existing research remains relatively limited despite the global significance of sustainable discourse. This gap highlights the need to conduct further research into how SDGs are translated and further interpreted across different contexts. Despite these limitations, the available studies offer important insights into how SDGs translation operates across different linguistic and cultural settings. To highlight the significance of translation into indigenous languages, Lwara and Ndalama (2020), for example, argued that the SDGs’ unpopularity among the majority of Malawians is due to a language barrier. That said, the SDGs have been translated into Chichewa. The study found that the strategies employed in the translation are both linguistic and non-linguistic communication-oriented, but in the final analysis, they fall short of effective communication, and the translated Chichewa version of the SDGs remains inaccessible to the Malawians.

Moving beyond the local linguistic dimension, some studies have also examined SDGs translation at the institutional level. Underscoring the importance of institutional translation, Alhanaya (2024), for instance, carefully examined the translation of SDGs at the organizational level, namely at higher education institutions. The study investigated the process through which the SDGs were

translated within these institutions as well as the ideology underpinning such a translation. The study showed that although the SDGs are initially designed for implementation at the national level, their effective realization requires extension beyond this level to organizational actors. In this regard, the SDGs are not only adapted to national contexts (e.g., cultural, social, political, economic, and environmental contexts), but are also reinterpreted within organizational settings, where they are aligned with institutional practices.

Besides, other investigations have shifted attention toward the cognitive and interpretive dimensions of SDGs translation, especially in the Arabic context. For example, Ali et al. (2025) took the translation of SDGs a step further, focusing on the cognitive processes deeply involved in the Arabic translation of the SDGs, and on how the ensuing interpretation of ecological concepts is forged in the translation. The study showed that the SDGs discourse in Arabic manifests itself cognitively around participants, place, time, and sensory dimensions. The study further showed that the dimensions were conducive to global policymaking and individuals' cognitive engagement with sustainability in the Arabic-speaking world. Badah et al. (2026) examined the translation of the United Nations' SDGs discourse into Arabic, focusing on the fact that Arabic translation has served as a means of recontextualization of the global development discourse to fit into local cultures and ideological narratives.

Translation Strategies and Procedures

Translation scholars and theoreticians have introduced a wide range of translation strategies and procedures. The existing body of literature reveals that translation methods are usually categorized into two main domains: source-oriented and target-oriented. In the first domain, the translator maintains loyalty to the original text, following literal translation methods. In the target-oriented domain, on the other hand, the translator prioritizes the target text, treating translation as an end product. In the latter domain, translators adapt a translation that is more suitable for the target language and culture. Within these two domains, multiple methods, techniques, and strategies have emerged, with each having its implications and considerations. Arguably, the choice of one method or strategy over another is a decision that is taken by the translator after careful consideration of several contextual factors, related to text genre, tone, culture-specific terms, and ideological considerations.

It is worthwhile to consider technical terms such as 'methods', 'strategies', 'techniques', and 'procedures', which are regarded as crucial when discussing the translation process. Such terms involve several aspects of the translation endeavors and outline principal philosophies, approaches, certain tools, and even step-by-step actions. However, it is important to realize that distinctions do exist within such terms referring to the translation process. According to Molina and Hurtado

Albir (2002), for instance, the translation method “refers to the way a particular translation process is carried out in terms of the translator’s objective” (p. 507). One example of a translation method includes deciding between a literal and a free translation. As for translation strategies, they refer to an overall orientation of the translation. Finally, translation techniques are seen as “procedures to analyze and classify how translation equivalence works” (Molina & Hurtado Albir, 2002, p. 509). The authors argue that translation techniques can affect the translation result as well as the micro-units of the text. In addition, they are characterized by being discursive, contextual, and functional. Translation techniques involve adaptation, borrowing, description, and compensation (Molina & Hurtado Albir, 2002). As for translation procedures, Newmark (1988) argues that they are employed for sentences and smaller units in contrast to translation methods, which are mainly related to the text as a whole.

To establish an informed and comprehensive understanding of the major translation methods, strategies, and procedures within the broader field of Translation Studies, one of the major and influential works in the existing body of literature is Vinay and Darbelnet’s translation model (1995). The various translation methods, strategies, and procedures introduced by these scholars have been used widely across the field of Translation Studies, introducing comprehensive insights into the exploration of the translation process through these approaches.

Although it has been revisited multiple times over the decades to reflect ongoing developments in the field, Vinay and Darbelnet’s translation model was considered influential in the field of Translation Studies in the late 1950s. The model analyzes translation as a linguistic process, paving the way for strategies and procedures. In this vein, Molina and Hurtado Albir (2002) argue that Vinay and Darbelnet’s work was the first systematic categorization of translation techniques with a clear methodological goal. Vinay and Darbelnet pointed out that translators take four steps before choosing their translation strategies. They need to identify the translation units, analyze the source text, reconstruct the surrounding situation that promoted the message, and assess the stylistic effects. Vinay and Darbelnet identified two major strategies of translation through which a translator can operate, i.e., direct and oblique or indirect translation. These two overarching strategies include seven fundamental procedures that function on three levels: lexis, syntactic structure, and message. The first three procedures are regarded as straight strategies, while the other four are classified as oblique strategies. The seven procedures are summarized below as introduced by Vinay and Darbelnet (1995, pp. 30-39):

- **Borrowing:** A word or expression is taken directly from the source language and used in the target language without translating it. This might include a new technical process, an unknown concept. The decision to borrow such elements is stylistic and, therefore, influences the overall message.

- **Calque:** It is a specific type of borrowing in which a language takes the expression from another language and translates it word-for-word.
- **Literal translation:** Also known as word-for-word, it involves rendering the source text directly into a target language text that is grammatically correct and idiomatic. In this procedure, the translators' main task is to ensure adherence to the linguistic norms of the target language. This procedure is especially common when translating between languages of the same family, and it becomes more common when the two languages share the same culture too.
- **Transposition:** This procedure includes replacing the grammatical category of a word without affecting the original meaning.
- **Modulation:** It is an alteration of the form of a message by shifting the perspective or point of view. This modification can be acceptable when a literal or transposed translation is grammatically correct but sounds inappropriate or unidiomatic in the target language.
- **Equivalence:** A translation procedure in which the same situation can be expressed in two texts using completely distinct stylistic and structural methods.
- **Adaptation:** It is employed in cases where the nature of the situation referred to by the source language message is unfamiliar in the target language culture. In such cases, the translator must construct a new situation that can be equivalent to the original. In this sense adaptation can be regarded as a form of situational equivalence.

Theoretical Framework

The current study employs Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995) model of translation as its theoretical framework to inform the analysis of the Arabic translation of the global SDGs. This model is one of the most influential frameworks in Translation Studies and offers a systematic approach to understanding translation strategies and procedures. Historically, the model was pioneering in the late 1950s, providing one of the first comprehensive accounts of translation. It has since been revisited and refined to address new linguistic and cultural insights. The framework is particularly relevant to this study since it provides a systematic categorization of translation with cultural and linguistic dimensions. This makes the model especially useful for analyzing global texts such as the SDGs, where both semantic precision and cultural sensitivity are critical. Such a classification is suitable for analyzing both the linguistic choices and the cultural adaptability of the SDGs discourse. Moreover, the model allows for the identification of specific translation procedures, which can clearly reveal how meaning is negotiated between languages. By applying it, the current study can

systematically evaluate the strategies and procedures used in the Arabic SDG translation and assess the extent to which the translation preserves the original intent and ideological assumptions of global discourse.

Methodology

Research Design

The current study employed a qualitative descriptive-analytical research design to examine the translation of the SDGs discourse from English into Arabic. The research that is conducted on discourse is fundamentally qualitative in nature as it relies on interpretative analysis of texts (Davies & Elder, 2004). The design is essentially text-based and comparative in nature, which focuses on the source texts (English SDGs) and their corresponding target texts (Arabic translations). It aims to identify and categorize the translation methods and procedures used, following Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995) model. It was chosen for this study since it is appropriate for exploring linguistic choices and translation procedures within their textual and cultural contexts. The model not only allowed an in-depth analysis of how meaning is transferred between the two languages, but also enabled a systematic classification of translation strategies, providing insights into both direct and indirect translation techniques. It also helped to establish how certain terms and phrases are framed and articulated within the context of sustainable development discourse in the target Arabic culture. The descriptive-analytical method is commonly used in qualitative research to examine textual data in the Social Sciences and Humanities, as it permits the researchers to systematically identify, describe, and analyze the data.

Data Collection

The data consisted of the English and Arabic versions of 10 SDGs along with their statements as presented on the website of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. By focusing on the titles and descriptions of the SDGs, the study aims to reveal primary insights into the translation process without investigating the goal texts. Furthermore, the titles and descriptions of the goals include keywords that are prevalent across the whole discourse of the SDGs. This allows for a focused examination of how linguistic choices and cultural adaptations are manifested at the level of goal names and their brief description, offering an understanding of the translation dynamics.

Data Selection Criteria

The data consisted of 10 SDGs and their statements as they appear on the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs website. They were selected based on certain criteria including their foundational significance to the overall

SDGs framework, their universal relevance across diverse contexts, and their thematic representation of key dimensions of sustainable development (social, economic, and environmental). Other goals were excluded due to their more specialized or context-specific focus. Specifically, the current study included the first six SDGs: Goal 1: No Poverty; Goal 2: Zero Hunger; Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being; Goal 4: Quality Education; Goal 5: Gender Equality; and Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation, since they address fundamental human needs and social development priorities. In addition, Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) was selected to represent the economic dimension of the global development agenda. Goals 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and 13 (Climate Action), on the other hand, reflect key environmental sustainability concerns. Goal 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) was also included due to its cross-cutting role in promoting governance, social stability, and institutional effectiveness. Other SDGs were excluded because they tend to focus on more specialized sectors, making them less central to the foundational scope of this analysis. Additionally, the researchers aimed to ensure balance and avoid redundancy, as several goals overlap conceptually with the already selected ones. It is worth noting that the 10 goals selected illustrate key patterns in translation, while other goals demonstrate similar strategies, making a focused analysis manageable and sufficient to capture the broader trends.

Data Analysis

The data of the study were analyzed using a structured approach that was designed to align with the objectives of the study. The analysis included reading the collected data carefully to ensure familiarity and to gain an overall understanding of the discourse in question. The researchers then conducted an initial coding phase where relevant segments of data were identified and labeled according to emerging patterns related to the translation methods. Following Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995) model, the data were later analyzed based on the translation strategies and procedures to facilitate comparison and interpretation. The data were presented in a table showing both the English and Arabic versions of the SDGs. Each SDG was analyzed separately to examine how words, terms, and concepts were translated for Arabic-speaking audiences in relation to the specific, relevant thematic domain of each goal (social, economic, and environmental). Special attention was paid to the terms with less direct equivalents in the target language and to the consistency of the language used. It is worth mentioning that this study focuses on the textual product of the English-Arabic translation rather than the production process. Therefore, factors related to institutional mediation are acknowledged but not empirically examined.

Results

This section presents the original English SDGs, their descriptions, and their Arabic translations, as stated on the United Nations Department of Economic

and Social Affairs website. Guided by the theoretical framework, this section answers the two main research questions.

To answer the study questions, the researchers carefully examined the translation strategies and procedures that were employed to render the SDGs into Arabic, providing feedback on how terms, words, and phrases were converted to their Arabic equivalents. Ten SDGs, along with their goal statements as previously mentioned, were considered for analysis (see Table 1). They were selected based on the criteria outlined under the methodology section to constitute a representative sample, especially since the translation strategies and procedures that were employed in the translation process are largely similar. For clarity purposes, each SDG, along with its Arabic equivalents, was examined in a separate paragraph, and then a concluding remark was provided at the end of the subsection.

Table 1. *Selected SDGs and their descriptions with their corresponding Arabic translation*

Topics in English	English Source Text	Arabic Target Text	Topics in Arabic
No Poverty	Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere	رقف اللى عاضق ال 1: فدهل انكم لك يف هل اكشأ عي مجب (Goal 1: The elimination of poverty in all its forms everywhere)	لى عاضق ال رقف ال (Elimination of Poverty)
Zero Hunger	Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture	عوجل اللى عاضق ال 2: فدهل يئاذغل نمأل ريفوتو زيزعتو قنئس حمل قئذغت او ةمادتس مل ةعارزلا (Goal 2: The elimination of hunger, provision of food security and improved nutrition, and the promotion of sustainable agriculture)	ماتل ال عاضق ال عوجل ال (Elimination of Hunger)
Good Health and Well-being	Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages	عتمت نامض ال 3: فدهل ةيحص شيع طامنأب عي مجل ا رامعأل عي مج يف ةي هافرل ابو (Goal 3: Ensuring that everyone enjoys healthy lifestyles and well-being at all ages)	ةديجل ال ةحصل ال هافرل ابو (Good Health and Well-being)
Quality Education	Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all	ديج ميلعت نامض ال 4: فدهل صرف زيزعتو لم اشو لداعو عي مجل ل ةايحل ا دم ملعتل (Goal 4: Ensuring good, equitable, and inclusive education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all)	ديجل ال ميلعتل (Quality Education)

Topics in English	English Source Text	Arabic Target Text	Topics in Arabic
Gender Equality	Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls	٥: فدهلا ةاواسملا قيقحت لك نيكم تو نيسنجلان يبتايتفل او ءاسنلا (Goal 5: Achieving equality between the genders and empowering all women and girls)	نيب ةاواسملا نيسنجلان (Equality between Genders)
Clean Water and Sanitation	Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all	٦: فدهلا ةرادل او رفاوتل نامض فدرصل او هايمل ةمادتسملا عيمجلل يحصلا (Goal 6: Ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all)	ةفيظنلا هايمل ةفاظنلا ةيحصلا (Clean Water and Sanitation)
Decent Work and Economic Growth	Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all	٨: فدهلا ومنل زيزعت لماشل او درطملا يداصتقالا ةلامكلا ةلامعلا او مادتسملا او قئاللا لمعلا او ةجتعمل او عيمجلل (Goal 8: Promoting sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all)	قئاللا لمعلا داصتقالا ومنو (Decent Work and Economic Growth)
Responsible Consumption and Production	Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns	١٢: فدهلا طامن انامض ةمادتسملا جاتنل او كالهتسال (Goal 12: Ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns)	كالهتسال جاتنل او نالووسملا (Responsible Consumption and Production)
Climate Action	Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts	١٣: فدهلا ةلجاع تاءارج اذاختا خانملا ريغتلا ي دصتلا دراثا (Goal 13: Taking urgent action to address climate change and its impacts)	يخانملا لمعلا (Climate Action)
Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions	Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels	١٦: فدهلا تاعمتجملا زيزعت لجانم ةلامشلا او ةيملسال ريفوتو، ةمادتسملا ةيمنتلا عيمجلل ةلادعلا اىل لوصولا ةعضاخو ةلاعف تاسسؤم ءانبو عيمج اىل ةلامش و ةلاءسملا يبتايتسملا (Goal 16: Promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels)	لدعل او مالسال تاسسؤملا او ةيوقلا (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions)

The translation of the first SDG reveals that a direct translation method was used to render the source meaning. The translation of the goal statement also shows that the literal translation method was used, where the Arabic target text follows the structure and order of the English source text. Additionally, the expansion that was added to the English version of the goal “in all its forms everywhere” was also translated literally into “نالكم لك يف هل الكشأ عي مجب” (*in all its forms, everywhere*), reflecting both linguistic considerations and cultural sensitivity in both texts. However, the Arabic translation employed a type of modulation represented by the use of the phrase “ىل ع اء اقل” (*elimination of*) that shifted perspective from an outcome to a process. Additionally, the translation process illustrates a transposition in the phrase “in all its forms”, which is translated as “هل الكشأ عي مجب” (*in all its forms*). The target phrase maintains the same meaning but adjusts the grammatical structure slightly to meet the Arabic syntax. Such structural adjustment also reflects culturally influenced syntactic preferences in Arabic, ensuring the sentence reads naturally and is easily comprehensible to the target audience.

The Arabic translation of the second SDG employed the oblique translation strategy represented by the use of the equivalence procedure. The metaphorical usage of the word “zero” symbolizes the complete eradication and absence of hunger. The Arabic translation, however, does not directly transfer the underlying meaning. Instead, the equivalent phrase is rendered as “اء اقل” (*complete elimination of hunger*), achieving the same meaning, which is communicating the idea of completely eliminating hunger. By doing so, the same situation is expressed in both the source language and the target language. The translator/s did not, for example, render the metaphor literally by saying “عوج رفص” (*zero hunger*), which would sound unnatural and even weird to the target Arabic audience. This is because the numerical metaphor “zero” is not conventionally used in Arabic to express total absence, making the literal rendering culturally inappropriate with Arabic rhetorical norms. The chosen equivalent, therefore, reflects cultural adaptation to ensure more clarity. Similar to the first SDG goal, the second goal employed a modulation procedure reflected in the shifted perspective from an outcome to a process. As for the goal’s statement, it was rendered using a word-for-word method where each term and word is directly translated into their closest Arabic equivalents, maintaining the original order and structure.

In the third SDG, the literal translation procedure was employed for the goal and its statement. The majority of terms were literally translated into their corresponding Arabic terms. By doing so, the translation straightforwardly communicates the key concepts without any deviation from the source language terms. However, the noun phrase “healthy lives” was rendered into “ةي حص شي ع طامنأ” (*healthy lifestyles*) reflecting a modulation procedure. The Arabic phrase shifts the emphasis to the individual patterns that would lead to a healthy life. The selected Arabic terminology may reduce the focus on the role of specialized institutions

in providing healthcare and place more responsibility on individuals. In this context, the individual is the one who needs to take care of their health through maintaining an appropriate diet and doing exercises, for example. This shift also reflects culturally embedded perceptions in some Arab contexts, where health is often framed as an individual responsibility, indicating that the translation is influenced not only linguistically but also by socio-cultural assumptions. This might reflect an ideological stance that the governmental responsibility in ensuring healthcare is limited, especially in Arab countries. Historically, the health system in Arab countries is not as good as that of Western countries. The translated goal statement also employs the equivalence procedure represented in the usage of the word “*في هافل*” (*well-being*) as an equivalent to the source word “well-being”. Even though the Arabic word is culturally relevant, it is slightly different from the source meaning embedded in the word “well-being”. The English term may refer to a broader state of being healthy, comfortable, and happy, reflecting an overall quality of life. The Arabic equivalent, however, is slightly narrower, which may focus on material comfort.

Although the order of the Arabic words does not match the English one in the fourth SDG, all terms were translated directly into their closest Arabic equivalents. Adjectives such as “inclusive”, “equitable”, and “lifelong”, for instance, were translated into “*لماش*” (*inclusive*), “*لداع*” (*equitable*), and “*يديم*” (*lifelong*), respectively. By following a straightforward translation, the translator/s ensured that the focus was on quality education and that the translation was accessible to the Arabic-speaking audience. However, the translation of the noun phrase “quality education” employs an equivalence procedure. The Arabic term “*ديجل*” (*good*) is not the literal corresponding of the source language term “quality”. The literal translation of the phrase would be “*يوعون مي لعت*” (*quality education*). The provided translation “*ديجل مي لعت*” (*good education*) is better understood by the Arabic-speaking audiences than “*يوعون مي لعت*” (*quality education*), which may sound more technical. Thus, the phrase “*ديجل مي لعت*” (*good education*) conveys the same meaning in a more natural way in Arabic. The Arabic translation also employs another oblique method by using the transposition procedure. The source verb “promote” was translated into the Arabic noun “*زي زعت*” (*promoting*) to better fit the Arabic structure.

The fifth SDG and its statement were largely transferred directly into Arabic reflecting the underlying meaning of the goal. The key phrase “Gender Equality” was literally translated into “*نيسنجل نيب ةاواسم*” (*gender equality*), maintaining the core sense without any deviation. By doing so, the translator/s can ensure loyalty to the original text. Furthermore, the two main phrases included in the goal statement “achieve gender equality” and “empower all women and girls” were directly rendered into their corresponding Arabic phrases, “*ق ي قحت*” (*achieve*) and “*عاسنل لك ني كمت*” (*empower*), respectively. The phrase “*نيسنجل نيب ةاواسم*” (*gender equality*) is a direct translation of the English phrase, maintaining the core sense without any deviation.

”تأييت فل او“ (*empower all women and girls*), maintaining the same structure and order. However, the Arabic translation includes minor adjustments in its structure compared to the source one leading to another translation procedure, which is transposition. The English phrase “gender equality” is structured as noun + noun, whereas the equivalent Arabic phrase “نيسنجل انيب ؤاواسمل” (*equality between genders*) is structured as noun + preposition + noun. The translator/s made such an adjustment to align the Arabic grammatical structure. Such restructuring aligns with culturally preferred patterns of expression in Arabic, where relational meanings are often made explicit through prepositional phrases, enhancing clarity and acceptability for the target audience.

Similar to the previous goal, the sixth SDG was translated using the direct translation approach where the whole terms and words were transferred to their closest equivalents in the target language. Such translation maintained the structure and content of the source language and ensured clarity and loyalty to the original text. The noun phrase “sustainable management”, for example, was literally converted into its Arabic counterpart “قمداتسمل اقرادلل” (*sustainable management*), conveying the intended message straightforwardly. However, the source language term “Sanitation” embedded in the goal was functionally converted into Arabic as “قحصلا ؤفاظنلل” (*health hygiene*), emphasizing the functional aspect of the term rather than its literal meaning, which is “قحصلا فرصلل” (*sanitation*). In doing so, the translator/s focused on the wider implications of sanitation, aligning it with the specific focus of the sixth goal of enhancing human health. The Arabic translation also shows calque as another translation procedure. This is reflected in the translation of the word “فرصلل” (*sanitation*), which can be seen as a borrowed term. The word was borrowed from English and then translated literally into Arabic.

In the eighth SDG, the direct translation strategy was employed to transfer the original meaning. Following the grammatical norms of Arabic, the goal statement was literally translated. The phrase “decent work and economic growth” was directly translated into its Arabic equivalent “داصلتقالا ومنو قئلالا لملعلا” (*decent work and economic growth*). However, the Arabic phrase “قئلالا لملعلا” (*decent work*) may require further contextualization to sound more natural for the Arabic-speaking audience, as the literal rendering is not commonly used in the Arabic language. The source phrase is more contextualized in the international labor terminology settings. This indicates a cultural gap between global institutional terminology and its reception in Arabic, where such expressions may require adaptation to align with familiar socio-economic discourse and audience expectations. Likewise, the translation of the twelfth SDG of “responsible consumption and production” as “نلالوؤسمل اجاتنلالا و كلالهتساللا” (*responsible consumption and production*) follows a direct translation approach. The goal statement, “Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns”,

is translated as “تَمَادَت سُمْلَا جَاتِنِ إِلَاوْ كَالِهَتْسَالَا طَامِنَا نَامُضْ” (*ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns*) using a literal translation, too.

The Arabic translation of the thirteenth goal was largely based on the literal translation approach. The phrase “Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts” is translated directly as “رِي غَتْل يَدِصْتَلَلْ قَلْجَاع تَاءَارْجِ ذَاخْتَا” (*take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts*), keeping the same structure and source meaning. However, the phrase “لَمْعَلَا” includes a calque translation. While the word “لَمْعَلَا” (*work*) aligns with the Arabic stylistic norms, the word “يَخَانَمَلَا” (*climatic*) is considered a lexical borrowing. It is meant to be borrowed rather than literally translated to preserve the original meaning rather than equivalence. Furthermore, the phrase “combat climate change” translated into “خَانَمَلَا رِي غَتْل يَدِصْتَلَا” (*combat climate change*) demonstrates a type of modulation. The word “combat” with its English confrontational connotation is mitigated into “يَدِصْتَلَا” (*addressing*), which implies a less confrontational tone in Arabic. Finally, the goal statement encompasses transposition represented in the phrases “take urgent action” and its Arabic counterpart “قَلْجَاع تَاءَارْجِ ذَاخْتَا” (*take urgent action*). The transposition occurs in the structure shift from verb-noun structure into a noun-verb structure, reflecting a more natural meaning in the target language.

Maintaining the same order and meaning of the source text, the translation of the sixteenth goal employs a literal translation approach, adhering to the Arabic syntactic norms. Words like “peace”, “justice”, and “strong institutions” are transferred into their direct Arabic counterparts. Nevertheless, the Arabic translation employed a transposition procedure by shifting the English verb-object structure into a noun-verb structure in Arabic, as reflected in the phrases “provide access” and its counterpart “لَوْصُولَا رِي فَوْتَا” (*providing access*). This Arabic phrasing sounds more natural in Arabic syntax compared to other alternatives, such as “لَوْضُولَا رِفْوِي” (*provide access*). On the other hand, the Arabic translation incorporated a type of modulation represented in the translation of the word “accountable” into “قَلْءَا سَمَلَلْ قَعْضَاخَا” (*accountable*). The latter is a more idiomatic expression, widely used in Arabic in such a setting. This modulation demonstrates cultural adaptation, as the idiomatic phrase aligns with Arabic legal and institutional discourse, making the concept comprehensible and contextually appropriate for the target audience.

Having carefully examined the translation strategies and procedures employed in translating the SDGs into their Arabic equivalents using Vinay and Darbelnet’s model, it is evident that the two key strategies were used: direct and oblique. Specifically, literal translation and borrowing were used as direct strategies. On the other hand, transposition, modulation, and equivalence were employed as oblique translation procedures to convey the intended meaning. This balanced employment of direct and indirect translation procedures achieved both linguistic

accuracy and cultural appropriateness in the Arabic target text. Arguably, the literal translation (word-for-word) procedure was primarily followed throughout the target text to convey the underlying message of the SDGs, ensuring the translator/s' fidelity and enhancing precise meaning. The analysis, however, demonstrated that the indirect translation strategy was preferred over the direct one for a more purposeful transfer. Overall, the results showed that the translator/s of the SDGs was/were found to be faithful towards such an institution-based text by using different translation strategies and procedures that facilitated meaning transfer and created the same influence in the target reader, ensuring that the SDGs were effectively communicated to the target Arabic-speaking audience. Such a balanced approach that combines fidelity to the source text with adaptability to the target audience facilitated accurate meaning transfer while preserving the intended impact of the original text. The translation process paid attention to cultural references, ensuring they were relatable to Arabic-speaking audiences. Cultural norms and values were considered to adapt examples and phrasing without compromising the original intent. The Arabic version of the SDGs then succeeded in maintaining both semantic integrity and cultural resonance. This ensured that the goals were effectively communicated to Arabic-speaking audiences in a manner consistent with their global significance.

While the analysis mainly focused on the linguistic and procedural aspects of the English-Arabic translation, it is also important to highlight the possible influence of institutional factors in shaping the final Arabic translated version of the SDGs. Given that the SDGs were provided by the UN, the translation process is likely guided by institutional standards as well as established practices. These may include terminology management and editorial supervision. This actually may explain the use of literal translation and borrowing, which arguably support consistency in terminology and reflect the formal nature of institution-based texts. At the same time, the use of oblique procedures suggests that translators were allowed some flexibility to ensure clarity as well as cultural relevance.

Discussion

The current study investigated the translation strategies and procedures employed in the Arabic translation of a selection of SDGs and the extent to which this translation maintained linguistic accuracy, cultural appropriateness, and conveyed the underlying ideologies of sustainability and development. By exploring an institution-based text and its English-Arabic translation, the current study addresses a gap in the literature related to the lack of research examining the methodological strategies and the ideological implications involved in rendering the SDGs for an Arab-speaking audience. We found that both Vinay and Darbelnet's direct and oblique translation strategies were employed to transfer the global SDGs into Arabic. Direct procedures such as literal translation

and borrowing were used to maintain the linguistic meaning of the English source text. However, oblique procedures, including transposition, modulation, and equivalence, helped to adapt the text to Arabic linguistic norms and cultural expectations. Such a combination of methods represents more than a mechanical transfer between the two languages. It rather demonstrates an effort to mediate between global sustainability agendas and the cultural and ideological context of the target Arab audience. By considering both linguistic accuracy and cultural appropriateness, the Arabic translation has shaped how Arab-speaking readers interpret and engage with the SDGs. Arguably, this highlights the relationship between language, culture, and ideology in global policy written communication.

The predominant employment of literal translation across the SDGs and their statements emphasizes the translators' commitment to maintaining the original meaning as well as the structure of the source text. This frequent usage of the literal translation reflects Newmark's view that literal translation is the foundation of any translation process, as he stated: "I believe literal translation to be the basic translation procedure, both in communicative and semantic translation, in that translation starts from there" (1988, p. 70). However, Newmark emphasizes that this method becomes challenging above the word level, which necessitates another translation procedure. Applying this to the current study, the findings demonstrated the efficiency of using other indirect translation procedures, such as transposition, modulation, and equivalence, to convey the intended meaning naturally. It thus could be argued that the translator/s of the SDGs was/were found to be loyal to the English source text, adhering to the UN's institutional norms and ideology. Mossop (1990) argues that translators maintain the underlying meaning to meet the institutional purpose. The employment of literal translation in this study as a major translation strategy with its related translation procedures echoes Mossop's observation that the institutional translator's faithfulness to the source text plays a crucial role in institutional translation, where key messages are conveyed without distortion. This is mainly relevant for the SDGs, which serve as a global framework for development and require uniform interpretation across languages, including Arabic. Even though there is no clear agreement between translation researchers on whether to mainly adopt the literal or the free translation methods when transferring the meaning into the target language (Lomaka, 2017), the literal translation procedures used in this study demonstrated that this method should be employed for such policy texts. According to Lomaka (2017), direct translation is the most accurate way to transfer a foreign language text to another. Indeed, such a transfer was achieved in the Arabic text under examination. Moreover, the careful employment of literal translation along with selective oblique procedures enabled the translator/s not only to preserve the precise meaning of the SDGs and their ideological intent but also to ensure that cultural and policy-specific differences were effectively communicated to Arab-speaking audiences. This

strategy echoes the findings of Badah et al.'s study (2026), which examined the translation of the SDGs from a critical discourse analysis perspective, showing that the translation choices made by the UN's translators reflect the underlying ideologies of the source text.

Discussing institutional discourse, we argue that the target text effectively conveyed the underlying message of the related sustainable development discourse and reconstructed the whole discourse in Arabic, creating a similar impact on the Arabic-speaking audience as the original. While research on the translation of institutional texts has grown, relatively few studies have examined the translation of institutional texts such as the SDGs into Arabic. Recent investigations into Arabic-speaking institutional environments in Oman suggest that translation is affected by challenges related to inadequate staffing and quality assurance procedures (Jamoussi et al., 2024). The existing literature, however, aligns with the current study's results. Previous research on institutional translation emphasizes that when an organization acts as both author and translator, it exercises control over the content to reflect its institutional aims and ideologies (Choi, 2020). Similarly, Zhang and Pan (2017) found that linguistic choices in translations within governmental contexts clearly reflect the social roles and authority of the institutions. Our findings extend this understanding by showing how strategic translation procedures not only preserve institutional voice but also mediate cultural and ideological meanings through which global sustainability notions resonate effectively with the target Arab-speaking audiences. By ensuring the textual fit (Choi, 2020) is met, the institution ensures that its intended message has been transferred successfully across all levels of the target Arabic language and culture.

Conclusion

This study has analyzed the Arabic translation of a selection of SDGs. By systematically employing Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995) model, the findings revealed that both direct and oblique translation strategies were applied, with literal translation being the predominant procedure in this institutional setting. Such an approach ensured loyalty to the English source text, where accuracy and consistency are prioritized in the institutional context. The terminological precision was ensured across the Arabic translation. The usage of other procedures, such as transposition, modulation, and equivalence, further facilitated the natural transfer of the SDGs into Arabic. These procedures collectively allowed for greater linguistic and cultural appropriateness without compromising the underlying meaning. When it comes to the implications of the current study, it could be argued that the study highlights the key role of the literal translation procedure in ensuring consistency and accuracy in the global policy discourse. However, this suggests that institutional translators should balance loyalty, through strict adherence to the source text, with translation

clarity. Drawing on this implication, the analysis of this study demonstrated that the strategic use of oblique procedures was found to be significant to achieve naturalness and cultural appropriateness. The findings show that modulation, transposition, and equivalence were not only linguistic strategies but also tools for aligning the translated text with Arabic discourse norms, audience expectations, and culturally preferred expressions. This balance between fidelity to the source text and cultural adaptation ensured that the SDGs were communicated effectively. Additionally, the study suggests that academic translation programs should place greater emphasis on institutional translation competence. This might include familiarity with standardized terminology and the underlying purposes of international organizations.

Rather than simply adding to the rising body of literature, the current study engages with the established research in institutional translation, especially those studies that examine the translation of global policies. It contributes by offering a careful analysis of the translation strategies and procedures employed in rendering the SDGs into Arabic. In doing so, the research situates itself within the ongoing scholarly discussions on cross-linguistic mediation of one of the global discourses. Despite this, the study has two key limitations. First, the analysis was limited to the titles and statements of 10 SDGs, which may not fully capture the challenges of translating the entire SDG framework. Secondly, the study does not include insights from translators themselves that would reflect their views towards the translation of institution-based discourse. Thus, it does not provide direct evidence of the institutional constraints that may have shaped the final version of the Arabic translation.

In light of the scope and findings of the present study, future research could expand the analysis by examining a larger corpus of SDG-related discourse to provide a more comprehensive understanding of institutional translation practices within the UN context. Besides, empirical studies might incorporate qualitative methods, including interviews with professional institutional translators. This will offer valuable insights into the constraints that shape the translation patterns and practices across institutions. Importantly, future research may investigate the translation methods and procedures that were adopted when rendering the SDGs discourse into the other four UN official languages to identify potential differences in the way in which the sustainable development discourse is transferred across different languages and cultures.

Data Availability Statement

Data will be made available on request.

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