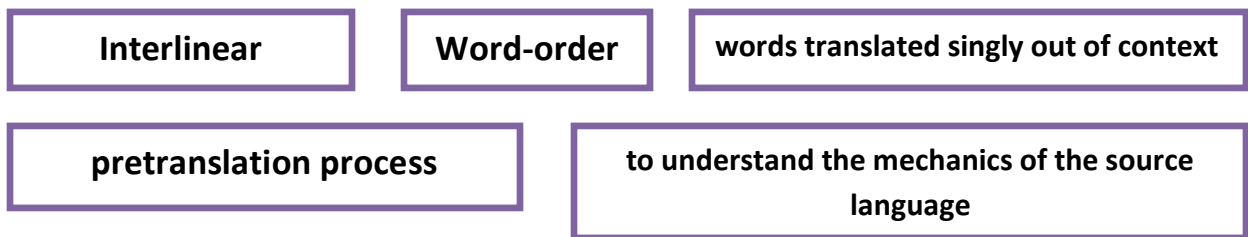


## Initiation to Translation Prof. Jebbar lecture 4

### On Translation Methods Based on Peter Newmarks' A Textbook of Translation (Word-for-word / Literal Translation)

#### ❖ Word-for-word Translation

- Word-for-word is usually confused with the second method (literal) suggested by Newmark. Though they might sound the same, they are not. Newmark defines word-for-word as follows:
- Word-for-word "is often demonstrated as interlinear translation, with the TL immediately below the SL words. The SL word-order is preserved and the words translated singly by their most common meanings, out of context. Cultural words are translated literally. The main use of word-for-word translation is either to understand the mechanics of the source language or to construe a difficult text as a pre-translation process."
- Though it is detailed, unfortunately this definition is usually squeezed to cover only the fact that the method has to do with replacing words from the SL by their equivalents in the TL. Yet, there are a number of other key words and expressions in the definition that need to be underlined for a better understanding of the method.



- It is interlinear: (Every single word in the ST has' its equivalent in the TT)

**Source text line:** التنس                      احمد                      يلعب

↓    ↓    ↓

**Target text line:** tennis                      Ahmed                      plays

- the "word-order is preserved"
- In the example above, the translation is done between two languages the word-orders of which are different; Arabic with a commonly VSO order and English with an SVO order.

- The outcome is not grammatically acceptable though semantically speaking the meaning is there because the sentence is very simple. The case should be different if the translation is done between languages with the same word-order as it is the case, for instance, with English and French.
- Word-for-word translation is a method that pays no attention to the context for “words are translated singly...out of context”. This suggests that multiple-meaning words or Homonyms, for instance, will not always be translated accurately.

I **left** the phone on the **left** side of the room.

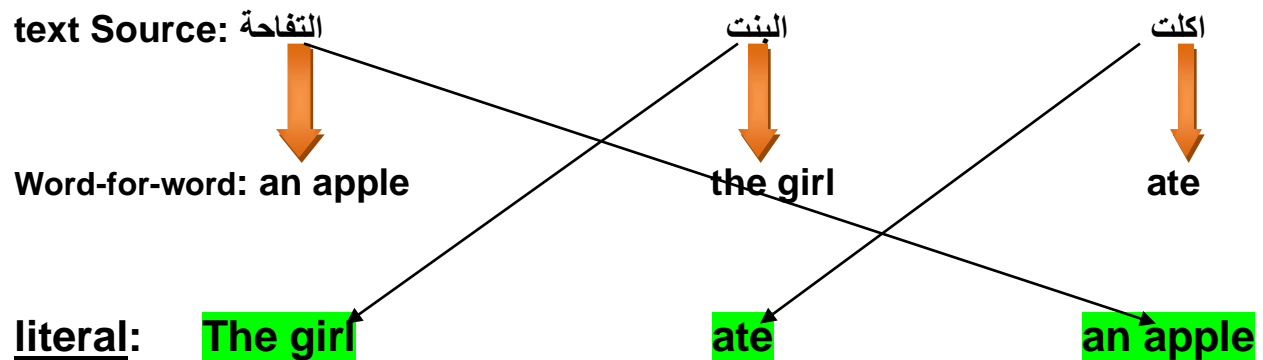
- Apparently, they look the same: same spelling but different meanings. Out of context, these two words might be translated in the same way and this should not be the case.
- Importance of the context: The first “left” is a verb (the simple past of leave) but The second “left” is an adjective (the opposite of right)
- Because word-for-word translation cannot be trusted in to produce translations which are lexically and semantically acceptable, it is suggested by Newmark that this method fits best if approached as a tool **“to understand the mechanics of the source language” or “as a pretranslation process”**. He would add in another context that this method “is normally effective only for brief simple neutral sentences”.

### ❖ **Literal Translation**

Literal translation is defined by Newmark as a method where: **“The SL grammatical constructions are converted to their nearest TL equivalents but the lexical words are again translated singly, out of context. As a pre-translation process, this indicates the problems to be solved.”**

- As explained before (in class 4), this method is usually confused with “word-for-word” method, especially that the two definitions provided for the two methods contain the following phrase “words translated singly”. Hence, it’s not surprising to hear individuals making use of the two methods to refer to the same thing.
- This definition addresses the issue of ‘nearest equivalents’ which is totally ignored in “word-for-word” as the process of translation is interlinear “with the TL immediately below the SL words”.
- This suggests certain flexibility that the translator should agree to when it comes to rendering a grammatical construction from the SL to the TL as languages are different in their syntactic string of words (VSO-SVO-SOV).

- To exemplify, the word orders of English (SVO) and Arabic (VSO) are not the same and, hence, any act of translation that does not take into account these differences would end up translating word-for-word. Therefore, producing readable translations in the TL requires from translators to pay attention to these differences.
- The process is certainly different if the act of translation is involving two languages with the same word order (French and English, for instance)
- The following is an example of an act of translation that takes place from Arabic into English



- Based on the above example, it seems that literal translation is capable of producing legible translations if compared with word-for-word which remains mechanical in a sense; nevertheless, it's not always possible for literal method of translation to offer a comprehensible final product, especially in the case of 'lexical words' which are again 'translated singly, out of context'.
- Classifying the method as 'a pre-translation process' suggests that Newmark himself does not regard literal translation as the ideal method to adopt if a translator wishes to produce a **final draft**. However, it is very much convenient for contexts where translators seek pointing out issues that should be fixed up before producing a well translated text in the TL
- Further, it should be noted that the classification used at the beginning to distinguish literal and free methods of translation locates this method in the first line of the "V" diagram down to the right, which suggests certain tendency towards prioritizing the SL in form and content.