

## INTRODUCTION

### 1. Introduction: This Work on Translation

This Textbook on translation (English-Arabic) is written for Arab and Arabic speaking university students of translation at the undergraduate level. It is also useful to trainee translators. It adopts a practical approach to translation and considers the whole subject in terms of problems and solutions, rather than in terms of general theory and application. In this sense, translation is viewed as a subject that creates problems of different types (grammatical, lexical, stylistic and phonological) which demand suitable, practical and possible solutions. When we translate, we come across these problems, so that we stop translating, to think and rethink and perhaps use a reference, or a dictionary of some kind, monolingual (English-English/ Arabic-Arabic), bilingual (English-Arabic/ Arabic-English) or trilingual (e.g. English-French-Arabic). These problems require acceptable and possible solutions, based on practical, solid grounds.

Problems of translation are caused by grammar, words, style and sounds of the Source Language (SL) (i.e. English here) when translated into the Target Language (TL) (i.e. Arabic) which has different grammar and sometimes different words, sounds and style. Solutions to these problems are suggested on the bases of the types of text, context, readership, grammatical differences, etc. (More discussion of translation problems and solutions will be given later on in this introduction). Thus, this approach is completely practical, composed of problems and solutions of translating possible, real and natural texts of different types. But, first, what is translation?

### 2. What is Translation?

As a subject, translation generally refers to all the processes and methods used to render and/or transfer the meaning of the source language text into the target language as closely, completely and accurately as possible, using: (1) words/phrases which already have a direct equivalent in Arabic language; (2) new words or terms for which no ready-made equivalents are available in Arabic; (3) foreign words or terms written in Arabic letters as pronounced in their native origin; and (4) foreign words or terms made to fit Arabic pronunciation, spelling and grammar. Here are examples to illustrate these four types respectively:

1. 'speak' (يتكلم)
2. 'satellite' (قمر اصطناعي)
3. 'aspirin' (أسبرين)
4. 'democracy' (ديمقراطية)

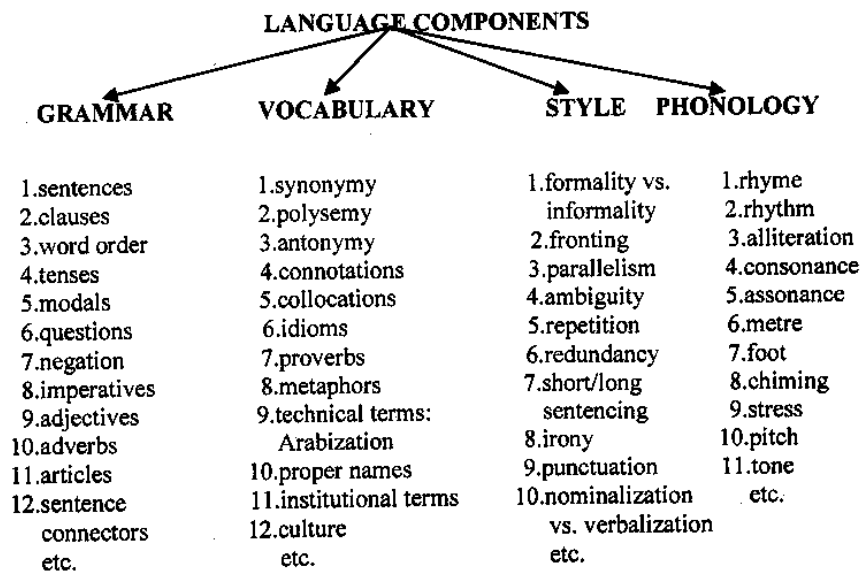
## 2 Introduction

(More examples and illustrations are given throughout the forthcoming chapters).

Now, when we translate, what do we translate? Grammar, words, style or/and sounds, or something else? The following point answers this question.

### 3. What Do We Translate?

We translate neither grammar, words, style nor sounds. What do we translate then? We always translate one thing only: MEANING. What is meaning? It is a big question that is difficult to answer easily, directly, exhaustively and decisively. However, a general, satisfactory and simple answer can be given here. Meaning is a complicated network of language components comprised of: Syntax (grammar), Vocabulary (words), Style, and Phonology (sounds). Each of these components includes several points, shown in Figure 1:



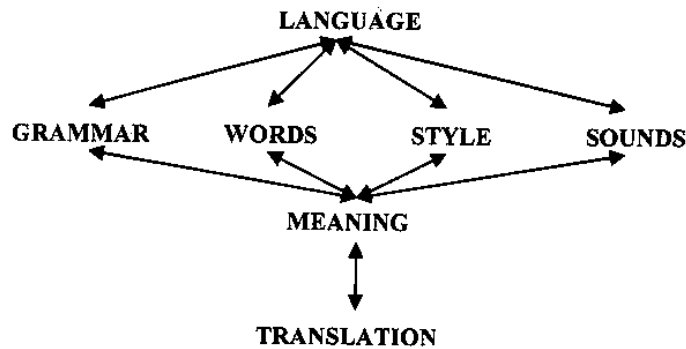
(Fig. 1)

Thus, meaning is the product of the different components of language taken together, occurring in a certain type of text and context, and directed to a certain kind of readership.

In translation, although we do not translate, say, English grammar into Arabic, we account for its role in shaping meaning, making it either easier or more difficult to

understand and, hence, translate. The same can be said of other language components. We are always interested in how they combine, produce, influence, reflect and crystallize meaning.

Hence, with few exceptions, we translate meaning, nothing else but meaning. This means that anything not relevant to meaning is usually disregarded in translation (except for certain texts like poetry where sound/prosodic features are sometimes more important than meaning). On the other hand, meaning is not the product of words only - as many would wrongly think - but also of grammar, style and sounds. Figure 2 illustrates the relationship between meaning, language, language components and translation (it can be read both ways, top-bottom and bottom-up):



(Fig. 2)

Having identified **what** we translate, the next point is to consider the way we translate (or **how** we translate).

#### 4. How Do We Translate?

This question implies two major points: (1) Methods of Translation and (2) The Process of Translation.

##### 4.1. Methods of Translation

A method of translation can be defined as 'the way we translate', whether we translate literally or freely, the words or the meaning, the form or the content, the letter or the spirit, the manner or the matter, the form or the message, the direct meaning or the implied meaning, in context or out of context, and so on (see also Newmark, 1988: 45). Writers on translation have suggested different methods based on the two major old-new methods of translation, **LITERAL** and **FREE**. Among these are:

#### 4 Introduction

1. *Literal vs. free translation* (Newmark, 1981 & 1988)
2. *Semantic vs. communicative translation* (Newmark, op. cit.)
3. *Formal correspondence vs. textual equivalence* (Catford, 1965)
4. *Formal equivalence vs. dynamic translation* (Nida, 1964, Nida & Taber, 1969)
5. *Non-pragmatic vs. pragmatic translation* (Bell, 1991; Hatim & Mason, 1990 & 1997, Baker, 1998; Snell-Hornby, 1988; and others).
6. *Non-creative vs. creative translation* (Beylard-Ozeroff and others, 1998).
7. *Non-idiomatic vs. idiomatic translation* (Newmark, 1988).

Perhaps there is no need to elaborate with details about these pairs of methods. Suffice it to point out that the first pair, 'literal vs. free translation' explains more or less the remaining pairs in general terms. As a matter of fact, the argument of today about the methods of translation is not very much different in essence from the age-old debate about literal and free translation methods, as Newmark (op. cit.) also declares: "The central problem of translating has always been whether to translate literally or freely". Thus, by discussing these two methods, we may understand the main lines of argument about translation methods from a new angle, I hope.

##### 4.1.1. Literal Translation:

Literal translation method is understood and applied in **three** different ways, which can be summarized and exemplified as follows (see also Newmark, 1988: 69, who distinguishes between three similar methods of literal translation):

##### 4.1.1.1. Word-for-word Translation: Literal Translation of Words:

Each English word is translated into an equivalent word in Arabic which is kept the same as, and in line with that of English: e.g.

a. That	child	is	intelligent			
ذاك	الطفل	يكون	ذكي			
		(ذاك الطفل يكون ذكياً)				
b. Mary	wanted	to	take	tea		
ماري	أرادت	أن	تأخذ	شاي		
		(ماري أرادت أن تأخذ شاي)				
c. He	is	living	from	hand	to	mouth
هو	يكون	عائشاً	من	يد	إلى	فم
		(هو يكون عائشاً من اليد إلى الفم)				

5 **Introduction**

d. Please, stay with me on the campus

من فضلك ابق معي على الحرم الجامعي

(من فضلك ابق معي على الحرم الجامعي)

e. Stop beating about the bush

أوقف الضرب حول الشجيرة

(أوقف الضرب حول الشجيرة)

f. This man is a big shot

هذا الرجل يكون كبيرة رمية

(هذا الرجل كبيرة رمية)

g. I know this information

أنا أعرف هذه المعلومة

(أنا أعرف هذه المعلومة)

This method regards translation to be a translation of individual words. All we have to do is find the equivalent word in Arabic for the English word, regardless of differences in grammar, word order, context or special use. Moreover, the whole concentration is on the source language, whereas the target language should follow, imitate and mirror it blindly, perfectly and precisely, neither more nor less. Thus, it seems an easy, straightforward way of translation, which makes it common among students in particular.

In fact, this method is risky as it may disrupt meaning and, hence, translation, for a number of reasons, some of which are:

- (1) It ignores the Target Language completely, making it subject to the Source Language wholly and entirely.
- (2) It disregards the grammatical differences between the two languages which belong to two sometimes sharply different language families. That is, English is an Indo-European, West Germanic language, whereas Arabic is Semitic.
- (3) It transfers the SL grammar and word order (Newmark, 1988: 69). It does not acknowledge the different word order(s) of the two languages.

6 *Introduction*

- (4) It has no respect for the context of words in language and allows for words to be understood in isolation, not in combination with other surrounding words.
- (5) It transfers the primary (or common) meanings of words (Newmark, op.cit.: 69). By this, it dismisses the possibility of any polysemous, special, indirect or metaphorical use of words.
- (6) It cannot deal with the SL words that have no equivalents in the TL.
- (7) It views meaning as the product of words only, which is not acceptable (see point 3 above).

Accordingly, the Arabic versions above are unacceptable, and have to be corrected as follows (the unacceptable words or grammatical sequences are underlined):

- a. (ذاك الطفل يكون ذكياً)----->(ذاك الطفل ذكي)
- b. (أرادت ماري أن تشرب(تتناول)شايًا)----->(أرادت ماري أن تأخذ شايًا)
- c. (يعيش على الكفاف)----->(هو يكون عائشاً من يد إلى فم)
- d. (من فضلك ابق معي في الحرم الجامعي)----->(من فضلك امكث(ابق)معي على الحرم الجامعي)
- e. (كفّ عن اللف والدوران/عن المراوغة)----->(أوقف الضرب حول الشجيرة)
- f. (هذا الرجل عظيم الشأن/مهم)----->(هذا الرجل يكون كبيرة رمية)
- g. (أعرف هذه المعلومات)----->(أنا أعرف هذه المعلومة)

(There will be more discussion of literal translation and the problems of translating examples like these and many others in 1.1 and 2.1).

**4.1.1.2. One-to-one Literal Translation:**

"One-to-one translation" is to Newmark "a broader form of translation, each SL word has a corresponding TL word". It respects collocational meanings in their powerful context. He also adds, "one-to-one translation is more common than word-for-word translation"(op.cit.) This method of translation means to translate each SL word or phrase into an identical word or phrase in the TL, with the same number, grammatical class and type of language. That is, a noun is translated into a noun, two nouns into two nouns, one adjective into one adjective, two into two, and so on and so forth. In a similar way, an idiom should be translated into an idiom, a collocation into a collocation, a proverb into a proverb, a metaphor into a metaphor, etc. All these translations are done in context, not out of context: e.g.

7 **Introduction**

- a. My neighbors are good. (حيرواني يكونون طيبين)  
b. Sanyo is a well-known trademark. (سانيو تكون علامة تجارية معروفة جيداً)  
c. He is a young man. He is kind-hearted. (هو يكون رجلاً شاباً. هو يكون طيب القلب)  
d. Sara loves reading wholly and heartedly. (سارة تحب المطالعة كلية ومن كل قلبها)  
e. I have blind confidence in you. (أنا أملك ثقة عمياء بك)  
f. Let us shake hands. (دعنا نتصافح بالأيدي)  
g. Show me your back. (أرني عرض أكتافك)  
h. A true friend does not stab in the back. (الصديق الحقيقي لا يطعن في الظهر)  
i. All that glitters is not gold (ما كل ما يلمع ذهباً)  
j. This mission is a can of worms. (هذه المهمة تكون حفنة مشاكل)

It is important to point out that such Arabic translations might look too primitive, or unreasonable to expect even from a beginner. The case may be so, but personal practice and experience with the students of translation, especially at early stages, in different Arab Countries, confirm the fact that these translations are frequently come across. Not only this, unfortunately and not surprisingly, some practitioners of translation produce similar versions from time to time.

This method of literal translation is similar to the first one in two respects:

- (1) It retains the SL word order in the TL.
- (2) It insists on having the same type and number of words.

Yet, it is different from it in two respects too:

- (1) It takes context into consideration (see Newmark, 1988).
- (2) It translates collocational meanings, special and metaphorical SL words and phrases into their TL equivalents, if and when available.

Therefore, it is perhaps more acceptable and better than word-for-word translation. Yet, both methods are questionable. In fact, one-to-one translation is sometimes unsatisfactory because:

(1) It transfers the SL grammar and word order, regardless of the TL grammar and word order. This is confirmed in the examples by: (a) starting all the Arabic versions with a subject then a verb each, ignoring nominal sentences (الجملة الاسمية) and the start with the verb in verbal sentences (الجملة الفعلية); (b) insisting on translating verbs 'be' into (يكون) and 'have' into (ملك) only in all the examples; and (c) translating all personal pronouns.

(2) It insists on having the same number and types of the SL words and lexical groups in the TL. The result is two possible mistakes: first, the insistence on having an SL collocation, idiom, metaphor, etc. translated into a TL equivalent collocation, idiom or metaphor, even though it may not be available in its lexicon. 'Shake hands', for example, has no equivalent collocation in Arabic, for (بصافح بالأيدي) is not a collocation and has an unnecessary use of (بالأيدي), which is implied in (بصافح). After all, people have (مصافحة) with 'hands' only. Another example is the translation of the metaphor 'a can of worms' into (حفنة مشاكل). Usually, in Arabic such a metaphor is not available, just an ordinary collocation (مشكلة عويصة), which is a good translation, is available in Arabic; secondly, the insistence on the same number of words in the translation, which is sometimes not possible to achieve. That is why the one-word good translation, (بصافح) is not used here to translate the two-word collocation, 'shake hands'. Likewise, 'well-known' should not be translated into one word like (مشهورة/معروفة/شاهرة), despite its possibility in Arabic. Nor is it acceptable to join the two short sentences of 'c' into one sentence as the number of words will be less than the original, although it is quite feasible in Arabic, as the following improved versions for the above examples on the right handside show (the changed or omitted words are underlined):

- |  |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|
| a. (جيرانى يكونون طيبين)                 | (جيرانى طيبون)                  |
| b. سانيو تكون علامة تجارية معروفة جيداً. | (سانيو علامة تجارية معروفة)     |
| c. هو يكون شاباً. هو يكون طيب القلب.     | (هو شاب طيب القلب)              |
| d. سارة تحب المطالعة كلية ومن كل قلبها.  | (تحب سارة المطالعة من كل قلبها) |
| e. أنا أملك ثقة عمياء بك.                | (عندي ثقة عمياء مطلقاً بك)      |
| f. دعنا نتصافح بالأيدي.                  | (دعنا نتصافح/نتصافح)            |
| g. 'h' and 'i' are unchanged .           |                                 |



ج. هذه المهمة تكون حفة مشاكل

(هذه المهمة مشكلة عويصة/بالغة الصعوبة)

More details about the problems of translating such examples are forthcoming.

#### **4.1.1.3. Literal Translation of Meaning : Direct Translation:**

This type of translation is keen on translating meaning as closely, accurately and completely as possible. It can also be called close, or DIRECT translation. It is the translation of meaning in context; it takes into account the TL grammar and word order. Metaphorical and special uses of language are also accounted for in the TL. In this sense, it can be described as the 'full translation of meaning'.

Indeed, it can be described as the best method of literal translation. It has a different view to literal meaning. Literal meaning is not one single, unchanged direct meaning for a word, but its different meanings in different texts, contexts and combinations with other words. For example, 'run' does not always mean (يجري) in all texts and contexts. Therefore, we cannot say that this is the literal meaning of 'run'. Rather, it is more precisely described as its common or primary meaning. Usually, these two meanings –literal and common- are taken to be one and the same meaning, which is applied to all meanings of the same word. This is not quite acceptable, for 'run' is a polysemous word with different meanings in different contexts, each of which is its literal(or real, precise or contextual) meaning in a certain context: e. g

1. "To run in the race" (يجري/يركض في السباق)
2. "To run a company" (يدير شركة)
3. "In the long run" (على المدى البعيد)
4. "To run short of money" (ينفذ ماله)
5. "To run round" (يطوف/يقوم بزيارة خاطفة)
6. "To run to fat" (يميل إلى السمنة)
7. "To run through" (يتصفح/يمر مرور الكرام)
8. "To run wild" (يتيه/يسير على هواه)
9. "To run across" (يصادف)
10. "To run back" (يعود بذاكرته إلى الوراء)

11. "To run into" (يلقى مصادفة/يصادف)
12. "To run its course" (يأخذ مجراه الطبيعي)
13. "To run in" (يتضد السطور المطبوعة/يقحم/يعتقل ويرمي في السجن)
14. "To run on" (يستمر)
15. "To run out" (ينفذ/يتضاءل/يأخذ في التناقص)
16. "To run dry" (ينضب)
17. "The runs" (إسهال)

Each of these meanings of 'run' can be described as literal in a certain combination and context. We have here 20 literal meanings (three in 13, and two in 15). It is unacceptable, then, to say that it has only one literal meaning, which is number 1 (يجري), because 2, for example, does not have two meanings, one literal, one non-literal; it has only one meaning, which is (يسدير). Therefore, translating it into (يسركض/يجري) is not a literal translation, but a WRONG translation, for we do not say (يجري/يسركض شركة) in Arabic, only (يسدير شركة). The same applies to the rest of the examples.

Similarly, metaphorical expressions like idioms can be looked at in the same way. That is, their metaphorical meanings are the only meanings available in language and, hence, in translation. Thus, "to beat around/about the bush" means only (يلف); "to get the sack" has only the meaning of (يطرد), regardless of its origin; "monkey business" means (أشياء مريبة) only; "fall order" has only one meaning as (مهمة) (see Ch.2:5 on idioms). Other equivalent translations for these idioms are acceptable, anyway. In literal translation of meaning, these are the only meanings available and permissible to the translator.

It is possible to say, then, that literal translation is committed to the real meaning, or meanings, of a word or an expression in language, regardless of whether it is direct or indirect, common or uncommon, non-metaphorical or metaphorical. In other words, literal meaning is the real, accurate and contextual meaning of a word, whether used metaphorically or non-metaphorically, as illustrated in Figure 3.

## Chapter One

### GRAMMATICAL PROBLEMS

#### Introduction:

English and Arabic belong to two different and distant language families: West Germanic, and Semitic. Consequently, their grammars are sharply different. Several grammatical features of English create variable problems of translation into Arabic. Experience shows that one of the primary mistakes committed by the students of translation is their presupposition that English grammar and Arabic grammar can translate each other in a straightforward way. To confirm that, the problems of translating the most prominent points of English grammar into Arabic are discussed below. All the problems are followed by one or more suggested solutions.

#### 1.1. Translation of Verb 'BE' (i.e. 'am, is ,are/was, were/be, been'):

##### Problem 1: Literal translation of 'am, is, are':

When these verbs are the main and only verbs in the sentence, they are translated by many students literally into (يكون), which is a poor translation: e.g.

1. "I am a student": (أنا أكون طالباً)
2. "She is kind": (هي تكون طيبة)
3. "You are a father": (أنت تكون أباً)

Solution: 'am, is, are' can be omitted altogether here, thus changing the English verbal sentences into Arabic nominal ones: i.e. into a topic and a comment (مبتدأ وخبر) each. e.g.

1. "I am a student": (أنا طالب)
2. "She is kind": (هي طيبة)
3. "You are a father": (أنت أب)

Therefore, verb 'be' in the present simple is used here to connect as much as equate between two words. It is exactly like saying: 'X=Z'. Thus: 'I=student': (أنا =

## 29 Grammatical Problems

‘She = kind’: (هي-طيبة); and ‘You=father’: (أنت-أب). That is why it is called an ‘equative verb’.

The same applies to the translation of ‘am, is, are’ when used as auxiliary verbs to form the present progressive tense and the present passive voice. A good number of students translate them literally: e. g.

### a. The present progressive:

1. “I am leaving now”: (أنا أكون أغاندر/مغاندر الآن)
2. “He is eating an apple”: (هو يكون يأكل/أكلًا تفاحة)
3. “We are speaking English”: (نحن نكون نتكلم/متكلمين الإنجليزية)

The good versions of these examples drop verb ‘be’, as follows:

1. “I am leaving now”: (أنا) أغاندر الآن/أنا مغاندر الآن
2. “He is eating an apple”: (هو) يأكل (أكل) تفاحة
3. “We are speaking English”: (نحن) نتكلم (متكلمون) الإنجليزية

The progressive tense markers, Verb ‘be’ and the ‘ing’ ending for the main verbs have no equivalent in Arabic grammar. Therefore, the use of (يكون) in the first group does not refer to the progressive tense, or the time of action. An adverb like ‘now’ (الآن) is the only way to refer to the time of action. Other good versions drop the pronoun, as illustrated later in this chapter under the translation of personal pronouns.

### b. The present passive voice:

1. “I am given another chance”: (أنا أكون أعطى فرصة أخرى)
2. “She is invited to the party”: (هي تكون تدعى إلى الحفلة)
3. “They are put in the same situation”: (هم يكونون يوضعون (موضوعين) في الموقف نفسه)

The more acceptable versions of Arabic translation dispose of verb ‘be’:

1. “I am given another chance”: (أنا) أعطى/معطى فرصة أخرى
2. “She is invited to the party”: (هي) تدعى (مدعوة) إلى الحفلة
3. “They are put in the same situation”: (هم) يوضعون (موضوعون) في الموقف نفسه

## 35 Grammatical Problems

### 1.3 Translation of Verb 'HAVE':

Like the previous two verbs, 'Be' and 'Do', verb 'Have' (i.e. have, has, had) is used both as an auxiliary and a main verb. As an auxiliary, it is not so problematic. However, as a main verb, it can pose a few problems to the students of translation.

#### Problem 1 and solution: 'Have' as an auxiliary:

Verb 'have' is used as an auxiliary to perform important grammatical functions with regard to tenses in particular (see tenses later). In this case, it is meaningless in Arabic, and the students can simply ignore it altogether: e.g.

1. "The workers have left early today": (غادر العمال باكراً اليوم)
2. "Two girls had finished knitting fast": (أتمت فتاتان الحيك بسرعة)
3. "The patient has had the medicine": (أخذ (تناول) المريض الدواء)

#### Problem 2: 'Have' as a main verb: different meanings:

Many students translate 'have' into one version only, that is: (يملك), when it is the main verb of the sentence. This is only one of its several meanings, and students are advised to be careful at translating it.

Solution: Students should understand 'have' as a verb of several meanings. Here they are:

1. "She has money": (هي) تملك نقوداً/عندها نقود/في حوزتها نقود/لديها نقود/معها نقود  
(All these translations are possible, but the last version may be the most common, while the first could be the least common).
2. "She has her breakfast at 7 O'clock everyday": (تتناول فطورها عند الساعة السابعة كل يوم)
3. "She has the tablets on time": (تأخذ (تتناول) الحبوب (أقراص الدواء) في الوقت المحدد)
4. "She has just had the ticket": (حصلت على التذكرة للتو)
5. "She had a telephone call this morning": (تلقت مكالمة هاتفية (اتصالاً هاتفياً) هذا الصباح)

### 1.8. Translation of WORD ORDER:

The normal order of the words of the Arabic sentence is sometimes different from that of the English sentence whose normal order is as follows: subject-verb-object/complement. In Arabic, however, the normal word order is two types:

1. Nominal word order: Topic and comment/subject and predicate (مبتدأ وخبر): Two nouns, a noun and an adjective, or a noun and a verb when the noun is emphasised.

2. Verbal word order: Verb-subject-object/complement. ('2' is more frequent than '1').

Problem 1: The reservation of the English word order:

The English word order is usually translated literally: N-V-O/C into Arabic, regardless of its normal word order, which is possible, but not advisable as a rule unless the noun is emphasised. In the following examples, the word order is normal, and the English subject is not emphasised. Therefore, translating them into English word order in Arabic is not justified:

1. "The diplomat left Damascus for London": (الدبلوماسي غادر دمشق إلى لندن)
2. "The sky became cloudy": (السماء تلبدت بالغيوم)
3. "The pupils enjoyed their holiday": (التلاميذ استمتعوا بإجازتهم/بعطلتهم)

Solution: The change into normal Arabic word order:

In normal cases, the English word order is replaced by the more frequent and normal Arabic word order of: verb-subject-object/complement. The examples can, therefore, be retranslated as follows:

1. "The diplomat left Damascus for London": (غادر الدبلوماسي دمشق إلى لندن)
2. "The sky was cloudy": (تلبدت السماء بالغيوم)
3. "The pupils enjoyed their holiday": (استمتع التلاميذ بعطلتهم)

where the verb is first, followed by the subject and then the object(1), or the complement(2&3)(see also the previous section).

Problem 2: Similarity of the word order of English and Arabic:

There is one type of word order in Arabic which is identical with the English word order: subject-verb-object/complement. However, in Arabic it is a nominal rather than a verbal word order, because the subject becomes a topic and the verb functions as a comment. The problem with this similarity is that students mostly translate English into this identical word order in Arabic, regardless of the more normal nominal and verbal

**1.13. Translation of TENSES:**

In English, there are over fourteen tenses, the most common of which are twelve: Simple tenses, perfect tenses, progressive tenses, and perfect progressive tenses in the present (4), in the past (4), and in the future(4). Most of them have no precise equivalents in Arabic which has only two tenses, the present (المضارع) and the past (الماضي) (the imperative is not form, not a tense). This causes a few problems to the students of translation, for some English tenses are difficult and can be confused when rendered into Arabic. The following discussion gives an account of some of these problems, and suggests possible solutions to them in regard to the main tenses in particular. The discussion is based on comparing the major differences between English and Arabic grammars in this respect, and the semantic implications of that, making it easier for the students to translate by understanding the techniques of both languages here.

**Problem 1: The present and the past perfect tenses:**

These two tenses have no one-to-one equivalents in Arabic. This causes a problem to students who try hard to convey the exact time of action implied in these two tenses. Some translators suggest (قد) for the present perfect and (لقد) for the past perfect, to precede the verb in the past(see also I.11. above). This is a likely solution, but there are exceptions for this rule, for either particle can be used with any kind of verb in the near or far past.(Examples can be traced in the Holy Quran). Other words like (للتو/قبل قليل) for 'qad', and (قبل مدة (من الزمن)) for 'laqad' have been suggested to indicate these two tenses. However, this can be an optional solution.

**Solution: The present and past perfect=past tense:**

The direct, easy and proper way of translating these two tenses is to regard them exactly as past tenses. The following three examples are given one translation in Arabic:

- |  |     |                                |
|--|-----|--------------------------------|
| 1. "We heard the news (past simple)":          | } → | (سمعنا (قد/لقد سمعنا) الأخبار) |
| 2. "We have heard the news (present perfect)": |     |                                |
| 3. "We had heard the news (past perfect)":     |     |                                |

Thus, the present and the past perfect tenses are both treated as past simple, and translated into the past tense in Arabic, with or without (قد) or (لقد).

**Problem 2: The present and the past progressives:**

These two tenses also have no equivalents in Arabic. Therefore, students could find them problematic in translation when they insist on literal transmission.

1.16. Translation of ARTICLES:

There are two articles in English:

1. The definite article 'the': (ألف التعريف)
2. the indefinite article 'a/an': (أداة النكرة)

In Arabic, however, there is only one article, the definite article. No equivalent is available for the indefinite article. The problem is not with this difference of articles between the two languages, but in the use of the definite article 'the' in Arabic.

Problem 1: the translation of 'the':

It is obvious that the use of 'the' is usually brought to a minimum in English. Moreover, in general and abstract words, for instance, 'the' is implied, not mentioned, but in Arabic it is mentioned. On the other hand, in the genitive case (الإضافة) 'the' is mentioned before each of the two nouns in English, whereas in Arabic it is used only before the second noun.

Solution 1: Zero article → definite article:

In English, general and abstract nouns are used without articles, but in Arabic they are preceded by the definite article (الـ), as the following examples illustrate:

1. "Man is a speaking animal" (general): (الإسان حيوان ناطق)
2. "Philosophy is my favourite subject"(abstract): (الفلسفة مادتي المفضلة)
3. "Keep medicine out of children's reach"(abstract): (أبعد الدواء عن تناول الأطفال)

(Notice also the general noun "children", which is not preceded by an article in English, yet (الـ) is used in Arabic).

4. "Scientists work day and night' (general): (يعمل العلماء ليل نهار)
5. "Prayer is an obligation"(abstract): (الصلاة فريضة)
6. "Man-made shoes are of a high quality"(general): (الأحذية المصنوعة يدوياً ذات جودة عالية)
7. "Ladies like good manners"(general;abstract): (تحب السيدات السلوك الحسن)
8. "Translators may commit mistakes (general): (قد يرتكب المترجمون أخطاء)
9. "Is translation easy or difficult ?"(abstract): (هل الترجمة سهلة أم صعبة؟)
10. "Domestic animals are useful and harmless"(general): (الحيوانات الأليفة مفيدة وغير ضارة)



## Chapter Two

### LEXICAL PROBLEMS

#### Introduction:

The greater number of translation problems for the students are lexical problems. Words are usually given the first importance in translation to the point of overexaggeration. Moreover, most of the students' mistakes are their superficial, word-for-word translations of the SL texts, and ignorance of Arabic equivalence. More seriously, they understand translation as the translation of individual words only, which is very much to the contrast of reality in translation practice.

The following discussion of the fundamental lexical problems of translation (English-Arabic) provides a detailed, exemplified survey of them, followed by their possible solutions.

#### 2.1. LITERAL TRANSLATION OF MEANING (Metaphorical vs. Non-metaphorical Meaning):

The central lexical problem for the students of translation is their direct, literal translation of almost all words. They dedicate themselves to it wholeheartedly and in an unusual way in all texts and contexts, in regard to all words, phrases and expressions.

Although any language is words in isolation, it cannot be understood as such. Words are used together in special combinations, texts and contexts. Furthermore, there are: (1) grammatical words which have no meaning, but used for a specific grammatical function (such as the use of verb 'do' to make questions and negation in English, 'have' to form the present perfect tense, etc. ); and (2) lexical words which have meanings and make up language.

The relation between language and words is exactly like the relation between the human body and its constituent parts. The body exists and works perfectly only when body parts exist and work perfectly together. Likewise, the parts do not, and cannot work in isolation. Each part works in relation to, and in connection with other parts.

Yet, the interconnection among words does not always result in a new combination and a different, indirect meaning of them. In fact, words can keep their direct literal meanings, even when they occur with one another. This means that direct literal translation is sometimes possible and acceptable.

A common mistake is committed by the students when they take literal translation to be applicable to everything in language.

The comparison between the following three groups of examples illustrates the point here:

Group A:

1. "Wood floats on water": (يطفو الخشب على الماء)
2. "Answer my question, please": (أجب على سؤالي من فضلك)
3. "The children broke the window": (كسر الأطفال النافذة)
4. "Impossible task": (مهمة مستحيلة)
5. "A word of honor": (كلمة شرف)

Group B:

1. "Rainy day": (يوم ماطر/يوم أسود)
2. "Sweet-tongued": (طري اللسان/مخادع)
3. "A can of worms": (علبة ديدان/حفنة مشاكل/مشكلة عويصة)
4. "Fabrication": (حبك/تلفيق)
5. "Ugly person": (شخص قبيح (المنظر)/شخص بشع (التصرف))

Group C:

1. "Enough is enough": (بلغ السيل الزبى/طفح الكيل/أزاد الأمر عن حده)
2. "Tall order": (مهمة شاقة/عسيرة)
3. "Fat salary": (راتب ضخيم/أعمال جداً/بحر)
4. "Bite the dust": (بختر صريعاً)
5. "If you were in my shoes/boat": (لو كنت (في) مكانتي)

By comparing these three groups with one another, we notice that in 'A' a direct translation is quite feasible, in 'C' literal translation is not possible by any means. The following literal translation of the five examples of 'C' into Arabic confirms the point:

1. "Enough is enough": (كاف كاف)
2. "Tall order": (أمر/ترتيب/نظام طويل)

3. "Fat salary": (راتب سمين)  
 4. "To bite the dust": (يعض التراب)  
 5. "If you were in my shoes/my boat": (لو كنت في حذائي/قاربي)

All these literal, word-for-word translations are strange and not understandable. Moreover '3' and '5' are funny. More seriously, '5' can be described as a dangerous translation because it is insulting and could put an end to a translator's career. Such translations are, therefore, unacceptable.

As regards group 'B', both literal and non-literal translations are possible, but not at the same time. That is, the types of text and context are essential to decide which translation to choose. For instance, in a sentence describing a day in winter, 'rainy day' has one translation only :e.g.

"Today it is sunny, but yesterday was a rainy day":

Only 'يوم ماطر' is applicable here, whereas 'يوم أسود' is not. On the other hand, only 'يوم' is acceptable in the translation of the English proverb:

"Save for a rainy day": (حبي قرشك الأبيض ليومك الأسود/وفر للشدة)

Hence, the text and/or the context can be helpful in deciding whether a literal translation is feasible or not, and the possibility or not of the grouping of certain words together. That is, we cannot describe 'أمر' as 'طويل' (long), or 'قصير' (short). Therefore, we conclude that such a translation is wrong, and we have to look for the right one (i.e. مهمة شاقة).

The same argument applies to 'راتب سمين' as a literal translation of 'fat salary'. Only a person or an animal can be described as 'fat' (سمين) in Arabic, but not a thing or an inanimate word like 'salary' (راتب). However, we can say (راتب ضخم/متخم/بحر).

Likewise, can anyone 'bite the dust' in the same way he bites a sandwich, an apple, or a hand? Certainly not. Therefore (يعض التراب) is nonsense, whereas (يغز) صريعاً/يُردى قتيلاً/يلقى حتفه) is quite expressive. (See the translation of collocations later)

**2.4. Translation of COLLOCATIONS:**

A 'collocation' is the 'habitual co-occurrence of individual lexical items' (Crystal, 1981. Printed in Newmark, 1988: 212). It is a combination of two or more words that always occur together consistently in different texts and contexts in language. That is, a certain noun occurs with a certain adjective (e.g. 'blind confidence: ثقة عمياء'), a verb with a noun (e.g. 'draw a sword': يستل سيفاً), a noun with a noun (e.g. 'brain drain: هجرة الأدمغة'), etc. Simply, it is which goes with which in language, namely, which word goes with which word. Many collocations are two words each.

Drawing a comparison between a text and the human body, Newmark (op.cit.: 125) likens grammar to the skeleton, words to flesh, and collocations are the tendons that connect them to one another. Indeed, collocations play a vital role in language. They are its beautiful part, and inject a refreshing spirit in it. They are present and inevitable in any kind of text with no exception. Hence their importance in translation. Students need to attend to them fully in Arabic to lend the Arabic version the same beauty of the English text. This means that undermining the concern with the translation of the English collocations in Arabic - which has been the case until very recently - results in a poor, despirited Arabic text.

The translation of collocations can be discussed through the discussion of their commonest types in English. In principle, fixed phrases and expressions of all types can come under the general umbrella of collocations. Yet, for convenience of discussion and classification, fixed phrases like idioms and proverbs in particular are assigned independent sections.

**Types of Collocations :**

There are several types of collocations. However, the concentration here is on the most important ones only, which are extremely recurrent in language use, and interest students and translators most. The classification of these types is purely *grammatical*, depending on the grammatical groupings of word classes according to their occurrence together in the use of language. The adoption of grammatical description makes the structure of collocations easier to follow, understand and, hence, translate into Arabic.

**1. Adjective+noun collocations: e.g.**

1. "hard labour":

(أشغال شاقة/مخاض عسير)

2. "net weight":

(الوزن الصافي)

3. When '1' and '2' are not possible, a suitable collocation in Arabic can be suggested: two words for two words, three for three, etc. 'Shock enormity', to take one example, is (هول الصدمة). When students do not know that, they may suggest a two-word collocation of their own such as (ضخامة قوة/تأثير) الصدمة, or even (صدمة قوية).

4. If none of the previous solutions is at the students' disposal, a translation of the correct meaning of the collocation is an acceptable resort. It does not matter whether it is translated into one, two, three or more words. For example, 'alive and kicking' (حي و برزق) can be translated into: (على قيد الحياة), (ما يزال حياً), (بصحة جيدة), (صحته على ما يرام), etc. The grammatical structure of the English collocation is ignored completely here.

5. A direct meaning should be translated into a direct meaning (as most of the examples above), and an indirect meaning into an indirect meaning in Arabic (especially the collocations of similes). For example, it is not advisable to translate 'as swift as an arrow' into a direct meaning as (سريع جداً), but into an indirect meaning as (أسرع من لمح البصر/أسرع من الرق/أسرع من السهم).

6. If the English collocation is colloquial, it can be rendered into a colloquial Arabic collocation, if possible. Yet using formal Arabic is quite acceptable. For example, 'smashing victory' is rather colloquial, and can be translated into a colloquial Arabic collocation: (انتصار هائل/كبير). However, the formal (انتصار ساحق) is feasible, even better at this stage, and in formally written texts in particular.

7. By the same token, if the English collocation is formal, the Arabic equivalent should also be formal (as the vast majority of the previous examples show). It is not advisable at all to translate it into a colloquial Arabic collocation.

8. Fixed collocations like 'as....as' similes, which cannot be interrupted in the middle, should be translated into equivalent Arabic ones with extra care. We cannot say, for instance: 'he is as very stubborn as a mule' in English, nor can we say (هو أعند جداً من البغل). We simply say: 'he is as stubborn as a mule' (هو عنيذ كالبغل/هو أعند من البغل), as indicated earlier in connection with these similes.

9. When unable to work out a better solution and as the last resort, students may escape with a blind, literal translation of words. However, it is the poorest translation. It can also be quite risky because it may result in a wrong, funny Arabic version. For example, 'hard currency' is (عملة صعبة), but if it is translated into (عملة قاسية), it will sound

In fine, idioms are fixed phrases that need extra care from the students of translation. Generally speaking, direct translation is dangerous here, and the students must consider the context carefully and check the idiom in a good bilingual, or monolingual dictionary. The teacher can also be a good guide to them.

### 2 5 2 Translation of PROVERBS:

Like idioms, proverbs are special, fixed, unchanged phrases which have special, fixed, unchanged meanings. A proverb cannot be translated or understood as a collection of the individual meanings of its words. Moreover, proverbs are metaphors that stand for something else. Beside that, they are culture-specific. Therefore, they should not be translated or understood directly.

The problems of translating English proverbs into Arabic and the suggested solutions to them are discussed in detail through the following three main groups.

#### Group 'A': Absolute equivalence: e.g.

1. "Like father like son": (الولد سر أبيه؛ الولد طالع لأبيه(عامية))
2. "Do not put off your duty till tomorrow": (لا تؤجل/لا تؤخر عمل اليوم إلى الغد)
3. "There is nothing new under the sun": (لا جديد تحت الشمس)
4. "All that glitters is not gold": (ما كل ما يلمع ذهباً)
5. "A drowning man will clutch at a straw": (الغريق يتعلق بقشة)
6. "Man is known by the company he keeps": (يعرف المرء بصحبه)
7. "As you sow, so will you reap": (كما تزرع تحصد)
8. "I hear wheeling without milling": ((أسمع) جمععة ولا أرى طحناً)
9. "Too many cooks spoil the broth": (كثرة الطباخين (تحرق)الطبخة/كثرة الريان تُغرق السفينة)
10. "A wolf in sheep's clothing": (ذئب في ثوب حمل/تحت جلد الضأن قلب الأذؤب)
11. "Necessity is the mother of invention": (الحاجة أم الاختراع/الحاجة تُفتق الحيلة)
12. "The way to a man's heart is through his stomach": (الطريق إلى قلب الرجل معدته)
13. "To hit two birds with one stone": (يضرب عصفورين بحجر)
14. "Like mother like daughter": (البنات طالعة لأمها/أقلب البنت لأمها(عامية)
15. "No smoke without fire": (لا دخان من دون نار)

The examples of this group are the easiest for students to translate, because most of them can be translated directly. However, the problem remains for the students to know

**3.1. Style of FORMALITY VS. INFORMALITY:**

In 1962, Joos suggested a scale of five 'styles' (or tones) of English language, which is general but proved to be widely acceptable by most people.

- |                      |                      |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Frozen formal     | (فصيح جداً/متصلب/قح) |
| 2. Formal            | (فصيح)               |
| 3. Informal          | (غير فصيح/شبه فصيح)  |
| 4. Colloquial        | (عامي)               |
| 5. Vulgar (or slang) | (سوقي)               |

Examples:

- |                     |                    |   |
|---------------------|--------------------|---|
| 1. Frozen:          | 'Be seated'        | (اجلس)                                  |
| 2. Formal:          | 'Have a seat'      | (تفضل بالجلوس)                          |
| 3. Informal:        | 'Sit down, please' | (اجلس لو سمحت)                          |
| 4. Colloquial:      | 'Feel at home'     | (خذ راحتك/ استريح/ارتاح)                |
| 5. Vulgar(or slang) | 'Sit bloody down!' | (اقعد في مكانك/<br>انقر/انضرب على قلبك) |

There are three notes on this scale and the example:

(a) The five styles are sometimes reduced to two main ones only, for easiness of classification and comprehension, as follows:

- |                   |   |             |
|-------------------|---|-------------|
| 1. Frozen formal  | } | 1. FORMAL   |
| 2. Formal         |   |             |
| 3. Informal       | } | 2. INFORMAL |
| 4. Colloquial     |   |             |
| 5. Vulgar (slang) |   |             |

Such shortened classifications are come across in some language references (e.g. Longman Dictionary of English Idioms, Collins and Websters English Dictionaries). Some of these references use 'colloquial' or 'slang' instead of 'informal'.

**3.10. Style of REDUNDANCY:**

Redundancy is the use of unnecessary, extra words to express something. It is a long, boring way of expressing meaning, using two, three or more words instead of one word only. It is usually considered as a bad style and is, therefore, disposed of in translation. However, this is not quite acceptable because in translation we are expected to reflect the style of the SL text, whether good or bad. This is one part of our faithfulness to the original. It is not our responsibility to improve the translated text, but, rather, to convey it into the TL as it is as much as we can, neither better nor worse. The following examples will shed more lights on that.

1. "As a matter of fact to say the truth I have to say it frankly, I am not interested in your offer".

The underlined phrases have one and the same meaning. For convenience of easiness and quickness of translation, such redundancy can be avoided in Arabic by translating only one of the three expressions, as follows:

(في حقيقة الأمر، أنا غير مهتم بعرضك).

Yet, to reflect the function of politeness, hesitation and stammering of the redundant style of the original, the students had better translate the three phrases into Arabic as follows:

(في حقيقة الأمر...في الحقيقة...عليّ أن أقولها بصراحة، أنا غير مهتم بعرضك).

2. "The economic policy of the new government is unacceptable completely, categorically and in part and in toto".

An acceptable, brief Arabic version is to use one word only for all the three underlined ones as follows:

(السياسة الاقتصادية للحكومة الجديدة غير مقبولة برمتها).

However, the great emphasis intended by such redundancy in English is wasted in Arabic. Therefore, an alternative, equally redundant Arabic version may reflect this important function of emphasis, as the following version may point out:

(السياسة الاقتصادية للحكومة الجديدة غير مقبولة كلية ومطلقاً وجملة وتفصيلاً).



### 3.13. The Style of IRONY:

One of the most difficult, or perhaps, *the* most difficult types of style to realize and recognize in language is the style of irony. The general, simple dictionary definition of irony is "a method of humorous or subtly sarcastic expression in which the intended meaning of the words is the direct opposite of their sense" (e.g. it is irony to call a stupid plan, 'clever') (Webster's World Dictionary, Third College Edition); "The humorous or mildly sarcastic use of words to imply the opposite of what they normally mean (Collins English Dictionary); and "Irony is found when the words actually used appear to mean quite the opposite of the sense actually required by the context and presumably intended by the speaker (Wales, 1989: 263).

A differentiation is made between three major kinds of irony: (1) dramatic irony (هكيم درامسي) (implications of a situation or expression understood by the audience, but not understood by the characters in the play; (2) Socratic irony (هكيم سقراطي) (pretence of ignorance in a discussion to expose the ignorance of the opponent); and (3) "irony of fate (pointed to by Leech, 1969: 170) (سخرية القدر) (adding insult to injury, so to speak).

Other definitions of irony centre more or less around the same meaning. For example, Leech (op.cit.) follows H.W. Fowler who describes irony as "a mode of expression which postulates a double audience, one of which is "in the know" and aware of the speaker's intention, whilst the other is naive enough to take the utterance at its face value" (A Dictionary of Modern English Use, 1926: 295). Irony, adds Leech, involves the notion of disguise, a mask and a concealment that is meant to be found out. For example, if someone dresses up as a monkey to entertain children, he does not intend to be mistaken for a monkey. Also, Nash (1989: 118) defines irony in simple terms as it "... says what it does not mean and means what it does not say". He considers it in a book on Humour, (1985) as a major stylistic resort in humour. The ironist, he says, insincerely states something he does not mean, but through the manner of his statement "...is able to encode a counter-proposition, his 'real meaning', which may be interpreted by the attentive listener or reader" (p.152). He splendidly draws a precise comparison between irony and sarcasm as two different terms. That is, although both involve overstatement and understatement, sarcasm is "ostensibly sincere, whereas irony states something insincerely. For instance, let us have the statement "Tommy is lazy" (تومي كسول). If we want to be sarcastic we say: "Tommy doesn't strain himself" (لا يجهد/لا يُتعب تومي نفسه), but when we try to be ironic, we may say: "Tommy