Translation: Some Lexical and Syntactic Problems & Suggested Solutions

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Abstract

This paper deals with some lexical and syntactic problems of translation and offers modest solutions to each. Among the lexical problems offered are the absence of direct TL counterparts, the different function of the TL counterpart, words with opposite meanings, eponyms, acronyms, abbreviations and proper names. The syntactic problems include: tense, word order and syntactic ambiguity.

Introduction

Translation is the process consisting in "reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source-language message, first in meaning and secondly in style" (Nida & Taber, 1969, p. 12). Since it is a process of constant search for the transfer of a message from the Source Language (SL) into the Target Language (TL), translation is often accompanied by many problems that may be a result of the differences in both languages or differences in the cultures represented by them. Thus, translation problems may be linguistic and/or cultural.

This paper is concerned with some of the linguistic problems, mainly lexical and syntactic, and attempting to offer some solutions to them. First, the problem is decided upon, many examples from different texts in general and the Glorious Qur'ân in particular are given, and the solution is finally suggested. The Glorious Qur'ân examples necessitate offering different translations of their meanings. The translations utilized are those attempted by Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall, ‘Abdullāh Yūsuf ‘Alī, and Muḥammad Maḥmūd Ghâlî.

1. Lexical Problems

1.1. The Absence of Direct TL Counterparts

The first lexical problem any translator faces is to have many vocabularies in the SL with no
direct counterparts in the TL. In this case, the SL word meaning can be conveyed relying on another TL word having the same function. For example, in languages where snow is not a known phenomenon, translating the phrase "white as snow" poses a problem. But this problem can be solved depending on another expression having the same function like "white as cotton", provided that cotton is known to express the meaning of whiteness in these languages (Nida, 1959, pp. 29-30). Other times, however, the SL word has neither a direct counterpart nor another word of a similar function in the TL. Then, the translator can rely on paraphrase. For instance, in translating خُور عَين hûrin 'eenin ¹ included in the Qur'anic verse:

(Kaṭḥâlika wa zawwjânâhum bi-hûrin 'eenin / so it will be. We shall wed them to maidens with large, dark eyes) (44:54)³ into English, a paraphrase like “extremely beautiful females of bright complexion and lovely eyes” can do. If there is no possibility to paraphrase, then transliteration is the last resort; and this is what happened in Arabic with many inventions such as telephone (transliterated as تِل فث, radio (transliterated as راديو) and television (transliterated as تُلفِزيون).

**1.2. The Different Function of the TL Counterpart**

A direct TL counterpart for an SL word may exist, but with a different function. This may also cause a problem for the inexperienced translator, who may be misled and then misleads his/her receptors. As Nida suggests, heart in Greek should be translated as abdomen in Conob, a Mayan language of Guatemala, and as liver in the Kabba-Laka language of Equatorial Africa (1959, p. 30). This does not mean that Conob and Kabba-Laka have no

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¹ See Appendix I showing a table of the Arabic sounds and their phonetic values in English.
² These brackets () are used to quote Qur'anic verses.
³ For more clarification, the translations of the Qur'anic verses are cited from M. A. S. Abdel Haleem's *The Qur'an*. However, this does not mean that the researcher totally agrees with them.
similar words for the Greek *heart*. Rather, it means that the function of the Greek *heart* is carried out by *abdomen* in Conob and by *liver* in Kabba-Laka.

**1.3. Words With Opposite Meanings**

Words with opposite meanings pose a problem in translation, especially when translated from or into Arabic. For instance, anyone aiming at translating the Qur’anic verse:

(والطلقات بترخص بأنفسهم ثلاثات فروء)

(Wal-muţallaqâtu yatarabbaşna bi anfusihinna thalâthata qurû’in/ Divorced women must wait for three monthly periods before remarrying) (2:228) may find himself/herself in a serious problem to know that *qur’* may mean purity or menstrual period (Ibn Katheer, 1970, Vol. 1, p. 477; Al-Fayrûz’abâdî, 1406 A. H.). He/she will not be able to convey both meanings; as they are opposites and, if included together in the translation, would distort the meaning of the whole verse. As a solution, the translator can choose only the closest meaning to the context and leave the other.

**1.4. Eponyms**

Eponyms can cause a lexical problem in translation. An eponym is "any word that is identical with or derived from a proper name which gives it a related sense" (Newmark, 1995, p. 198). Sometimes, the proper name is no longer felt as in, for instance, *diesel* and *boycott*. Nobody is concerned now with the people who were behind the invention of the diesel engine or initiating the policy of boycotting goods; and so many people are unaware of the etymological origins of these words. In this case, the eponymy is not taken into consideration in translation. It is not important to be explained either. *Boycott*, for example, may be translated into Arabic as “مقاطعة اقتصادية” *muqâṭa’atun iqtişâdiyatun*, without any mention of Charles Boycott (1832-1897), who was the first man to adopt the policy of refusing to buy a product or taking part in any activity as a way of expressing disapproval.

**1.4.1. Eponyms Derived From Persons’ Names**
In case the proper name is related to the eponym, problems arise in translation. In transferring eponyms derived from persons’ names, the problem is whether the transferred word will be understood (Newmark, 1995, p. 199). In fact, this depends on the TL receptors’ awareness of the eponym and its origins. If the eponym is known, the transferred eponym is greatly likely to be understood. For example, translating the Arabic phrase \( \text{رسالة محمدية} \) \( \text{ar-risālātu al-Muḥāmmadiyyatu} \) as the Muḥāmmadan message is likely to be understood by nearly all English-speaking receptors since most of them read or at least heard about Prophet Muḥammad.

In case the TL receptors are unaware of the origin of the eponym, they are unlikely to understand it when it is transferred in their language. For example, the Arabic phrase \( \text{قرارات أنتارة} \) \( \text{al-qarāratu al-‘ Antarīyyatu} \) is ambiguous for most Arabs. They are unlikely to understand it, maybe because of their ignorance of its derivation. In fact, most Arabs do not know that \( \text{أنتارة} \) \( \text{‘ Antarīya} \) here refers to the Pre-Islamic poet ‘Anttara Ibn Shaddād (525-615 A.D.), who was extremely brave and whose bravery often made him reckless and quick in taking risky decisions. Moreover, nearly all English-speaking people know very little about ‘Anttara and his recklessness. Therefore, translating \( \text{قرارات أنتارة} \) \( \text{al-qarāratu al-‘ Antarīyyatu} \) as ‘Antteric decisions will be undoubtedly vague for English-speaking receptors. Here, only the sense behind \( \text{أنتارة} \) \( \text{‘ Antarīya} \) or a similar eponym of the same (or at least similar) features can be understood in English. Hence, \( \text{القرارات أنتaría} \) \( \text{al-qarāratu al-‘ Antarīyyatu} \) can be translated as reckless decisions. In addition, \( \text{أنتارة} \) \( \text{‘ Antarīya} \) can be translated as an eponym as Don Quixotic; since Don Quixote was similar to ‘Anttara in being reckless.

**1.4.2. Geographical Terms Used as Eponyms**

Geographical terms can be used as eponyms when they have apparent connotations (Newmark, 1995, p. 200). The Pentagon, for instance, has clear connotations to the US
military headquarters, where all American defense affairs are run. Translating the geographical eponym also depends on the TL receptors' awareness. If they are aware of it, it can be transferred. Since most Arabs know that The Pentagon is the headquarters of the American Department of Defense, it can be transferred into Arabic as Al-Pintagan. In case the TL receptors are not aware of the geographical eponym, it can be transferred and explained in a footnote, or its sense can be directly translated regardless of the eponym altogether. Supposing that The Pentagon is not well known in the Arab world, it can be translated as وازرات الدفاع الأمريكية Wazâratu Ad-Difâ‘i Al-Amrikiyati.

1.4.3. Objects Used as Eponyms

The same procedure can be applied to objects used as eponyms. In most cases, these objects are trademarks. When the object is well known to the TL receptors, it can be transferred. Otherwise, it can be translated by a short explanatory term, which is often a hard task to carry out (Newmark, 1995, p. 200). For example, Walkman is well known in many parts of the Arab world as a small cassette player and, thus, can be transferred into Arabic as ووكمان wukman. But Hoover is hardly known to some Arabs as a vacuum cleaner. Therefore, it cannot be transferred into Arabic. Instead, in order for it to be understood, it should be translated by a descriptive term such as مكتسة كهربائية maknasatun kahrubâ‘iyatun.

1.5. Acronyms

Acronyms pose another lexical problem in translation. Newmark defines acronyms as "the initial letters of words that form a group of words used (vertiginously) for denoting an object, institution or procedure" (1995, p. 200). Generally, they are created for brevity. AIDS, for instance, stands for "Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome" (Cambridge International Dictionary of English, 1995) and MENA stands for Middle East News Agency. The difficulty resulting from the acronyms lies in the fact that some acronyms are not common and sometimes are invented, as what happens in academic papers. Moreover, some acronyms are
not precise, including one letter for many words or including a preposition. Therefore, they are difficult to be guessed. *UNSCOM*, for example, stands for *United Nations Special Committee of Mass Destruction Weapons*. *O* in the acronym stands for the preposition *of* and *M* stands for not only one word, *Mass*, but for three ones: *Mass Destruction Weapons*. Such acronyms are very difficult for any translator not completely aware of them. Therefore, a translator should not depend on his/her guessing in translating acronyms; this may lead to serious mistakes. Instead, he/she should consult specialized dictionaries to get the precise meaning.

In translation, the acronym may be transferred if it is well known in the TL. So, *AIDS* could be transferred into Arabic as *أيدز*; it is well known by many Arabic-speaking people. An acronym can also be translated if there is a standard equivalent in the TL. So, *AIDS* can be translated into Arabic as *مرض نقص المناعة المكتسب*; this is the standard equivalent in Arabic. But if the acronym is not common in the TL, it can be explicated (Massoud, 1988, p. 23). Thus, *MENA* can be explicated in Arabic as *وكالة أنباء الشرق الأوسط*; it cannot be transferred as *مينا* since there is no standard equivalent for it in Arabic.

In translating acronyms for international institutions and companies, it is better, as Newmark suggests, to transfer them, especially when they get internationalisms (1995, p. 148). Therefore, *UNESCO* and *FAO*, for example, are always transferred into Arabic as *اليونسكو* and *الفاو* respectively. However, if the TL receptors are expected to be less educated, these acronyms should be explicated. *UNESCO* (*United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization*) should be translated as *منظمة الأمم المتحدة للتربية والعلم والتلفقة* and *FAO* (*Food and Agriculture Organization*) should be translated as *منظمة الأغذية والزراعة*.
1.6. Abbreviations

Abbreviations are shortened forms of words, terms or expressions, usually employing their initial letters. For example, Wash stands for the American State Washington, B. B. C. stands for the British Broadcasting Corporation and R. S. V. P. stands for répondez s'il vous plaît.

An abbreviation may be written in capital or small letters, thus leading to different meanings. For example, bk stands for bank, while BK stands for the chemical substance berkelium (Al-Ba'labkî, 2000, p. 1195). Similarly, pl stands for plural, while PL stands for partial loss or private line (Al-Ba'labkî, 2000, p. 1106). Sometimes, the same abbreviation may express various meanings. For instance, N.B.A. may stand for National Basketball Association or National Boxing Association (Al-Ba'labkî, 2000, p. 1104).

Abbreviations are so common and cause no problems in most European languages. Sometimes, they are borrowed without being translated. But when translated into Arabic, they lead to many problems. Therefore, a translator should be familiar with these abbreviations, relying all the time on the specialized dictionaries and manuals concerned, especially those of the international organizations such as the Arabic manuals of the United Nations. These tools are of great importance; since they provide him/her with the acknowledged meaning of the abbreviations and their standard translations which should be followed, even if they are not completely precise. For instance, the abbreviation ICCPR standing for International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights is translated in the United Nations as العهد الدولي الخاص بالحقوق. المدنية. والسياسية. Al-‘Ahdu Ad-Dawliu Al-Khâsu bil Huqûqi Al-Madaniyati wa As-Syâsiyati (Enani, 2000, p. 35). Though it can be translated in a different way such as الميثاق الدولي للحقوق. المدنية. والسياسية. Al-Meethâqu Ad-Dawliu lil Huqûqi Al-Madaniyati wa As-Syâstyati, the standard translation should be followed. Moreover, a translator must not depend on his/her guessing in getting the meaning of an abbreviation; this may lead to serious mistakes. One day, a translator incorrectly thought that the abbreviation
ICJ stood for *International Committee of Jurists* and, thus, translated it as اللجنة الدولية للحقوقين. 

Al-Lajnātu Ad-Dawliyatu lil Huqūqiyyeenā (Enani, 2000, p. 36), while it refers to *The International Court of Justice* and should be translated as محكمة العدل الدولية. 

1.7. Proper Names

Sometimes, proper names are a source of lexical problems in translation. They may refer to people's names, names of objects or geographical names.

1.7.1. People's Names

Unless people's names have accepted translations, they should be transferred (Newmark, 1981, p. 70). So, an Arabic name like حسام should be transferred in English as *Husām*; and the rules of transference/transliteration should be strictly followed. Therefore, حسن should be transferred as *Hasan*, not as *Hassan*, which is nearer to حسن Hassān. However, names of historical figures, together with their titles, often have standard translations (Newmark, 1981, p. 70). So, صالح العدين الأبو ظبي, the Muslim leader of the هجينة Battle in 1187, should be translated into English as *Saladin*. *Aristotle* and *Ptolemy I*, moreover, should be translated into Arabic as أرسطو Baṭlamaḥûs Al-'Awwal respectively.

However, in works of literature such as plays, novels, short stories, children's stories, etc., people's names may have connotations and undertones. If so, they should be translated into TL names reproducing their connotations in the SL. For instance, in William Congreve's *The Way of the World*, a Restoration comedy, all characters' names are full of connotations. Each character's name expresses its role and traits in the play. *Lady Wishfort*, for instance, is a woman aspiring to impose her control over everybody. Therefore, *Wishfort* can be translated into Arabic as حربية or انصرار. Similarly, *Waitwell*, who always waits for something to come, can be translated into Arabic as صابر or صبرى. However,
when people's names express national qualities, they should be kept unchanged (Newmark, 1995, p. 200). So, As-Sindbâd was translated into English as Sinbad since it expresses a national quality by its reference to بلاد السيد Bilâd As-Sind (India).

As to people's names used in a historical religious context such as Biblical or Qur’anic names, they should be translated, especially when they have standard translations. Biblical names, including the names of apostles and saints, have standard translations into most languages. Peter, Paul and Mathew, for example, are always translated into Arabic as بطرس Bûtrus, بولس Bulas and متيّي Matta respectively. Moreover, Qur’anic names, including the names of Messengers, Prophets and other important figures, have standard translations into some languages. For instance, إبراهيم Ibrahim, إسماعيل Ismâ’eel, and سليمان Sulaymân can be translated into English as Abraham, Ishmael and Solomon respectively. Nevertheless, some of the Glorious Qur’ân translators insist on transferring Qur’anic names with their Arabic pronunciation, attempting not to imitate the Biblical language. Thus, as a solution, these names can be translated, while the transference can be glossed in footnotes, where the connotations of a name can be explained too. إسماعيل, for example, can be translated as Ishmael and transferred in a footnote as Ismâ’eel. It can also be explained in the footnote that إسماعيل Ismâ’eel is a Hebrew name meaning "'Allâh hears" (Ghâlî, 2003, p. 16).

### 1.7.2. Names of Objects

Names of objects as proper names are trademarks or brand names (Newmark, 1981, p. 72). These names should be transferred in the TL. If they are unlikely to be understood, a classifier should be added to explain or describe the function of the proper name (Newmark, 1995, p. 216). For instance, when Antinal is transferred into Arabic as أنتينال, it is unlikely to be understood. So, a descriptive phrase as مظهر معوي لعلاج الإسهال muṭahirun ma’awīun li’ilâji al-ishâli should be added to clarify the meaning.

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1Antinal is a broad spectrum intestinal antiseptic manufactured by Amon Pharmaceutical Co. under license from Lab, Roques, France.
1.7.3. Geographical Names

Geographical names are those of regions, countries, cities, towns, provinces, governorates, mountains, hills, oceans, seas, rivers, streets, etc. Sometimes, there is a standard translation of a given geographical name. الْقَاهِرَة Al-Qâhira, for example, is Cairo in any atlas. Though Cairo may be not a precise translation, it should be followed as long as it is a standard one. If the standard translation is unlikely to be understood by less educated TL receptors, a classifier can be added to explicate more and more. The standard translation for Thames into Arabic, for instance, is التايمز At-Taymz. When it is not expected to be understood, a classifier such as نَهْر Nahr should be attached, making it نَهْر التايمز Nahru At-Taymz. In case there is not a standard translation of a given geographical name, exact transference should be followed. But classifiers can be easily translated, not transferred. Therefore, شَارِع المنصورية can be rendered as Al-Manşûriya Street, not شَارِعَ Al-Manşûriyatı.

It is usually thought that most geographical names are arbitrary. In fact, this view is totally untrue. Many geographical names have implied connotations related to their origins. Standard translations are often far away from implying these connotations. The Palestinian city الْقَدْس Al-Quds, for instance, is always translated in any English atlas as Jerusalem. This translation does not do justice to the various connotations implied in الْقَدْس Al-Quds referring to holiness and blessing. In case an authoritative text contains a geographical name having a standard translation and implied connotations at the same time, the standard translation can be included in the text while the connotations can be explicated in a footnote. If الْقَاهِرَة Al-Qâhira, for instance, occurs in an authoritative text, it can be translated as Cairo inside the text and explicated in a footnote as follows: الْقَاهِرَة Al-Qâhira, which literally means 'the defeating city', is the capital of Egypt. It was called according to the wish of its founder, Al-Muʿīz Lideen-Ellâh Al-Fâṭimî, who wanted it to defeat and beat all other cities and kingdoms.
A translator should be aware that some geographical names change with the passage of time. For example, the names of many South African cities were changed after the end of Western Colonialism. Also, Zaire has recently become Congo. So, a translator is advised to keep in touch with the latest updates, regularly consulting the latest atlases and encyclopedias.

As noted above, lexical problems may lead to the difficulty of conveying a message from the SL into the TL. However, the modest solutions suggested here can contribute to solving them. Nevertheless, what are more serious and likely to lead to the unintelligibility of the message when translated are the syntactic problems that face any translator on restructuring the SL message into the TL.

2. Syntactic Problems

The various differences among languages cause many syntactic problems when translating the message of a given language into another. The number of these problems increases or decreases according to the degree of relatedness between the SL and the TL. The more related they are, the less syntactic difficulties there are in translating from one into the other. In case they belong to the same language family as, for example, are in the cases of English and German (belonging to the Germanic branch of the Indo-European family) or Arabic and Hebrew (belonging to the Semitic branch of the Afro-Asiatic family), less syntactic problems are likely to be encountered. But when the SL and the TL belong to different language families, as is in the case of Arabic and English, more syntactic problems are likely to be met.

By nature, the ways of arranging signs in languages tend to be different. So, having the words correctly translated is not enough. They, moreover, should be arranged in a way corresponding to the proper syntactic and idiomatic usage of the TL. Otherwise, they are unlikely to be grasped by the TL receptors and, hence, unlikely to be effective. Among the
syntactic problems often encountered in translation are tense, word order and syntactic ambiguity.

2.1. Tense

Tense, as Comrice puts it, can be defined as the "grammatical realisation of location in time" (as cited in El-Shourbagy, 2005, p. 27); that is, how location in time can be expressed in language. The ways of expressing location in time differ from one language to another. Therefore, the number of tenses and the aspects in which they are molded differ from a language to another as well. These differences in tenses and their aspects cause many problems in translation.

The past tense in Arabic poses many problems in translation. This is owing to the fact that it is used to express past actions as in Sâfara Ahmadu ilâ Al-Qâhirati amsal Ahmad left for Cairo yesterday; present actions as in Aqsamtu biLlâhi I swear by Allâh; and futuristic actions as in Şahibatiuka as-salâma May you arrive safely. Thus, the past tense in Arabic is used to denote more than one time; and this overlap makes it difficult for any translator to grasp the intended meaning behind it and accurately convey it in the TL.

For example, on translating the Qur’ânic verse:

(Wa kâna fadlu Allâhi ‘alayka ‘atheeman/ God’s bounty to you is great indeed.) (4:113), a translator should think over kâna. Kâna is the past form of the verb yakûn (to be). Here, it does not refer to the end of the great favor Allâh confers upon men. Rather, it states a general fact; that is, the favor Allâh gives to men is always great. So, the past form kâna expresses a general fact, not something that occurred in the past. To be translated in a way
expressing the sought meaning, the whole Qur’anic verse can be translated as (and Allâh’s favor to you is (always) great) *.

Similarly, the Qur’anic verses that read:

(Itha as-samâ’ u infaţarat) When the sky is torn apart (82:1) and

(Ilimat nafsun mâ qaddamat wa akhkharat) each soul will know what it has done and what it has left undone) (82:5) pose another problem in translation. These verses refer to one of the signs of the Doomsday. Hence, they express futuristic actions, though the verbs used are past ones: infaţarat and ilimat. This owes to the fact that the past forms of these verbs "do not indicate a tense, but an action. So, expressing the future by the past form carries the meaning that the action will undoubtedly happen, not that it happened in the past tense" (El-Shourabgy, 2005, p. 34). When translating the Qur’anic verse:

(Itha as-samâ’ u infaţarat) (82:1), it should be kept in mind that it is a time clause. Therefore, it can be translated as (When the heaven rents asunder) *, not (When the heaven will be rent asunder) as Ghâlî renders it (2005, p. 587). This is owing to the fact that a time clause cannot include a future verb form (Thomson & Martinet, 1997, p. 301). The suggested time clause When the heaven rents asunder, employing a present verb form (rents), expresses a future action. In the other verse:

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* This sign is used to indicate a translation suggested by the researcher.
(‘Alimat nafsun mà qaddamat wa akhkharat) (82:5), the past form verb ‘alimat indicates a fact that will happen in the Doomsday. Therefore, it can be translated as (Then, each self will know what it did and what it left undone) *

As noted above, the past tense in Arabic may cause many problems in translating Arabic texts into English. The only solution to this problem is not being concerned with the past tense form. Rather, the semantic function carried out by it is to be given priority. This function is the factor that can decide which tense in English can carry out a similar function.

2.2. Word Order

Word order poses a big problem in translation. Each language has a special word order, an order in which words are arranged into sentences. Some languages have so rigid word orders that they are too difficult to be changed. However, many other languages, especially inflectional languages such as Arabic, have very flexible word orders. The various word orders in these languages may have subtle meanings and connotations. So, it is a serious mistake on the part of any translator to try to impose the SL word order on the TL word order. Translation should be done according to the TL word order, thus making it idiomatic and natural. In order to get acquainted with the natural word order of the TL, a translator can analyze a great deal of TL different texts. This, besides, can make him/her familiar with when and why the TL word order changes in addition to getting acquainted with the parts of speech (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, prepositions, determiners, conjunctions and interjections) and how they are used. Only then can the translator change the SL word order, when necessary, so as to conform to the TL word order.

Arabic and English are two completely different languages. Arabic is a synthetic language of a greatly flexible word order. In fact, "Arabic … is such a densely rich language in grammatical rules and sentence forms. It shows great variations regarding verb forms, articles, demonstratives, word orders, noun cases, etc." (Bedeir, 2000. p. 55). On the contrary,
English is an analytic language with a less flexible word order; and English grammar is not as complicated as that of Arabic.

Arabic has two main sentence patterns: the nominative sentence and the verbal one. The word order of the nominative sentence is \textit{subject + predicate}, which may be a complement or a transitive or intransitive verb) as in 

\textit{‘Alî\textsc{u}n Mujtahidun} (‘Ali is diligent); 
\textit{‘Alî\textsc{u}n z\textsc{a}ranayawma Al-Jum‘a al-m\textsc{a}diyati} (‘Ali visited us last Friday); or 
\textit{‘Alî\textsc{u}n h\textsc{a}dara ad-dursa} (‘Alî attended the class). The main word order of the verbal sentence, in contrast, is \textit{verb + subject + (object)} as in 

\textit{حضر\textsc{r}\textsc{a} ‘Alî\textsc{u}n ad-dursa} (Attended ‘Alî the classes) or \textit{verb + object + subject} as in 
\textit{حضر\textsc{r}\textsc{a} ad-dursa ‘Alî\textsc{u}n} (Attended the classes ‘Alî). It should be known for any translator that the preferred word order in Arabic is the verbal sentence. English, on the contrary, has only one sentence pattern, the nominative sentence that has the same word order of the Arabic nominative sentence: \textit{subject + predicate}.

In translating a nominative sentence from Arabic into English or vice versa, there is no problem. Both English and Arabic employ nominative sentences of the same word orders. So, the focus of the sentence does not change. In the English sentence ‘\textsc{A}lî came yesterday, for example, the focus is on ‘\textsc{A}lî. Translating this sentence into an equivalent Arabic nominative sentence as 
\textit{‘Alî\textsc{u}n j\textsc{a}‘a ams}, the focus is still on the subject ‘\textsc{A}lî\textsc{u}n.

In translating an Arabic verbal sentence into English, some problems arise. Since English does not have an equivalent verbal sentence, any Arabic verbal sentence is directly translated into English as a nominative one. So, for instance, 
\textit{Ista‘adda Ah\textsc{m}\textsc{a}dul lil-ikhtib\textsc{r}i} can be translated only as a nominative sentence in English such as 
\textit{Ah\textsc{m}\textsc{a}d has prepared for the test}. Though the translation into English carries the same message, it changes the focus of the original sentence. While the focus in the Arabic verbal
sentence is on the action carried out by the verb استعد *ista’adda* (prepared), the focus in the English nominative sentence is on the subject أحمد *Ahmad*.

The nominative sentence, however, should be kept in English since trying to impose the SL word order on the TL word order may distort the message. This is indicative of the absence of compromise between form and content. If so, content should be given priority over form, especially if "the form in which a message is expressed is an essential element of its significance, there is a very distinct limitation in communicating this significance from one language into another" (Nida & Taber, 1969, p. 5).

The problem of word order is always there in translating the Qur’ân. For instance, the verse:

(Wa *dakhala ma’ahu as-sijna* fatayâni / Two young men went into prison alongside him) (12:36) is a verbal sentence, beginning with the verb دخل *dakhala*. The focus here is on the action of Prophet Joseph’s (Yûsuf’s) being imprisoned expressed by the verb دخل *dakhala* at the very beginning of the sentence. It is not directed towards the servants who were imprisoned with him. While Yûsuf ‘Alî translates this verse as (Now with him there came into prison two young men) (1403 A. H., p. 563), Pickthall renders it as (And two young men went to prison with him) (1981, p. 307). ‘Alî’s translation, trying to follow the SL word order, seems to focus on the verb دخل *dakhala* more than the subject *fatayâni* قتیبان. In attempting that, ‘Alî produces an awkward less communicative sentence. On the contrary, Pickthall, trying to conform to the TL word order by focusing on the subject *قاتیبان* fatayâni rather than the verb دخل *dakhala*, produces a more idiomatic nominative sentence in English. Looking closely at the two rendered sentences shows that Pickthall’s translation is more likely to be grasped by English-speaking receptors and, thus, more likely to be effective.
Therefore, any translator is advised to pay much attention to word order. He/she is not to impose the SL word order on the TL one since this may lead to syntactic ambiguity, which poses another syntactic problem in translation.

2.3. Syntactic Ambiguity

Syntactic ambiguity refers to arranging the parts of speech in a sentence in an ambiguous way, thus leading to making the sentence express more than one meaning or a meaning far away from the intended one (Crystal, 1991, p. 17). For instance, Visiting speakers can be awful is an ambiguous sentence; it may mean It is awful to visit speakers or Speakers who visit are awful. A translator should write in a clear way and be far away from syntactic ambiguity.

In their The Theory and Practice of Translation, Nida and Taber maintain the viewpoint that the same syntactic construction may represent a number of different relationships, thus leading to different meanings (1969, p. 35). They see that the grammatical construction consisting of two nouns or pronouns connected by of is one of the most ambiguous constructions in English since it expresses various relations. They also set some translated Biblical examples such as God of peace and the Holy Spirit of Promise. The relation between God (A) and peace (B) is that God (A) causes peace (B). Moreover, the relation between the Holy Spirit (A) and Promise (B) is that the Holy Spirit (A) is the goal of Promise (B). Nida and Taber think that these constructions are not clear. So, they suggest restructuring them in an easier way as follows: God causes/produces peace instead of God of peace and God promised the Holy Spirit instead of the Holy Spirit of Promise (1969, p. 35). As noted here, employing the verbs causes/produces and promised in place of nouns leads to clarifying these constructions in a more intelligible way.

The same procedure can be applied to Arabic that employs the same function expressed in English by of by adjoining (الإضافة al-ıdâfa), which is relating a noun to another
noun. Examples include: صوت الماء (A) saaut al-mā′ī (B) causes صوت (A) saaut (B); بناء الأهرام (A) bunātu Al-Ahrāmi (B) causes بناء (A) bunātu (B); جزاء الطالمين jazā′u ath-thālimeen (A) causes جزاء (B) jazâ′u (A); البنوا bunâtu (A) causes البنوا (B) bunâtu (A); مقرر المحكمة maqru al-mahkamatī (A) causes مقرر (B) maqru (A); عصر اللصوص عصر ašru (A) is the time of عصر (B) ašru (A); and & عَمَّال al-luṣûṣi (A) causes عَمَّال (B) al-luṣûṣi (A).

Adjoining is common in the Qurʾān such as:

(Thanlikum wa′anna Allāha mūhinu kāydi al-kāfīreena / 'That is what you get' — and God will weaken the disbelievers' designs) [underlining added] (8:18);

(Innamā yataḥakkaru 'ulū al-'albābi / Only those with understanding will take it to heart) [underlining added] (13:19). In translation, the relation between the two nouns A and B should be clear so that the TL receptor can understand the relation well and grasp the whole message. In case بناء الأهرام bunātu Al-Ahrāmi is translated into English as the builders of the pyramids and this translation is unlikely to be understood, the relation between A and B should be made clear such as those who built the pyramids. In translating the Qurʾānic verse:

(Innamā yataḥakkaru 'ulū al-'albābi) (13:19) [underlining added], Pickthall renders it as (But only men of understanding heed) [italics added] (1981, p. 323). The relation between أولو أَلْبَابَ (A) and أَلْبَابُ (B) is that (A) owns (B). Pickthall's translation does not state أولو أَلْبَابَ (A) and أَلْبَابُ (B) is that (A) owns (B). Pickthall's translation does not state أَلْبَابُ (A) and أولو أَلْبَابَ (B) directly, but it shows its function; that is, understanding. The relation between men (A) and understanding (B) in Pickthall's translation is that (A) causes
(B). If it is likely to be misunderstood, it can be made clearer by expanding it as (people endowed with minds) *.

**Conclusion**

It is clear here that there are many lexical and syntactic problems of translation, which should be tackled with a high awareness of the features of both the SL and the TL along with a vast background about the readership. The lexical problems offered can be met by beginning translators in rendering a large number of texts. The inexperienced translators may be accustomed to solving them easily. However, the syntactic problems offered can be met by both beginning and experienced translators. Mistranslating a tense and syntactic ambiguity can be noticed in many translations done by experienced translators. So, the solutions proposed here, it seems, can be of much benefit to overcome these problems.
Appendix 1

Transliteration of Arabic Sounds in English ¹

<table>
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<td>ِ</td>
<td>Long ١ as in عود‘ عدد</td>
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<td>ظ</td>
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<td>Accentuated ١ as in علي‘Alî</td>
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</table>

¹ Adapted from Ghâlî’s English Grammar (2001, p. 45)
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