

Lexicalization and Modalization of Prepositions in English-Arabic Translation

A. B. As- SAFI
Al- Zaytoonah University

1. A Brief Explication of Three Key Terms

Before embarking on the rendition of some English/ Arabic prepositions through the proposed strategies of using lexical items or modals instead of equivalent prepositions; it might be mandatory to explicate three key terms, namely, translation, lexicalization and modalization.

2. Translation

There has been a plethora of definitions which E.Nida has elaborately surveyed (Nida, 1964-164.) He rightly elucidates:

Definitions of proper translating are almost as numerous and varied as the persons who have undertaken to discuss the subject. This diversity is in a sense quite understandable; for there are vast differences in the materials translated, in the purpose of the publication, and in the needs of the prospective audience (161).

Nevertheless, a workable definition which is not confined to the mere transference of meaning is furnished by Nida and Taber (1969:12) who postulate

Translation consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style. (Emphasis is mine).

- 2.1. **Nida and Taber's definition is adopted here for it serves as a basis for** our concept of translation as a TL product which is as semantically accurate, grammatically correct, stylistically effective and textually coherent as the SL text. In other words, the translator's main attention should not be focused only on the accurate semantic transference of SL message into the TL, but also on the appropriate syntax and diction in the TL, which are explicitly the translator's (not the source author's domain of activity which displays his true competence. Indeed, "the notion of translation competence," according to Wilss (1969:95), "is aptly assessed in transfer situations that require at least some degree of adaptation to new and challenging textual demands." He describes such situations as "accommodatory situations" which need "structural adjustment" (ibid) and generally textual manipulation. In point of fact, the competent translator performs multiple tasks with inevitable intricacies of performance. His approach to translating expressive, emotive or expository texts in particular is deemed to be creativity oriented, that is, hermeneutic/manipulation rather than routine-oriented. In the latter approach, SL words are mechanically replaced by their TL equivalents, albeit one-to-one equivalence rarely, if ever, exists between languages. The following diagram illustrates the former approach.

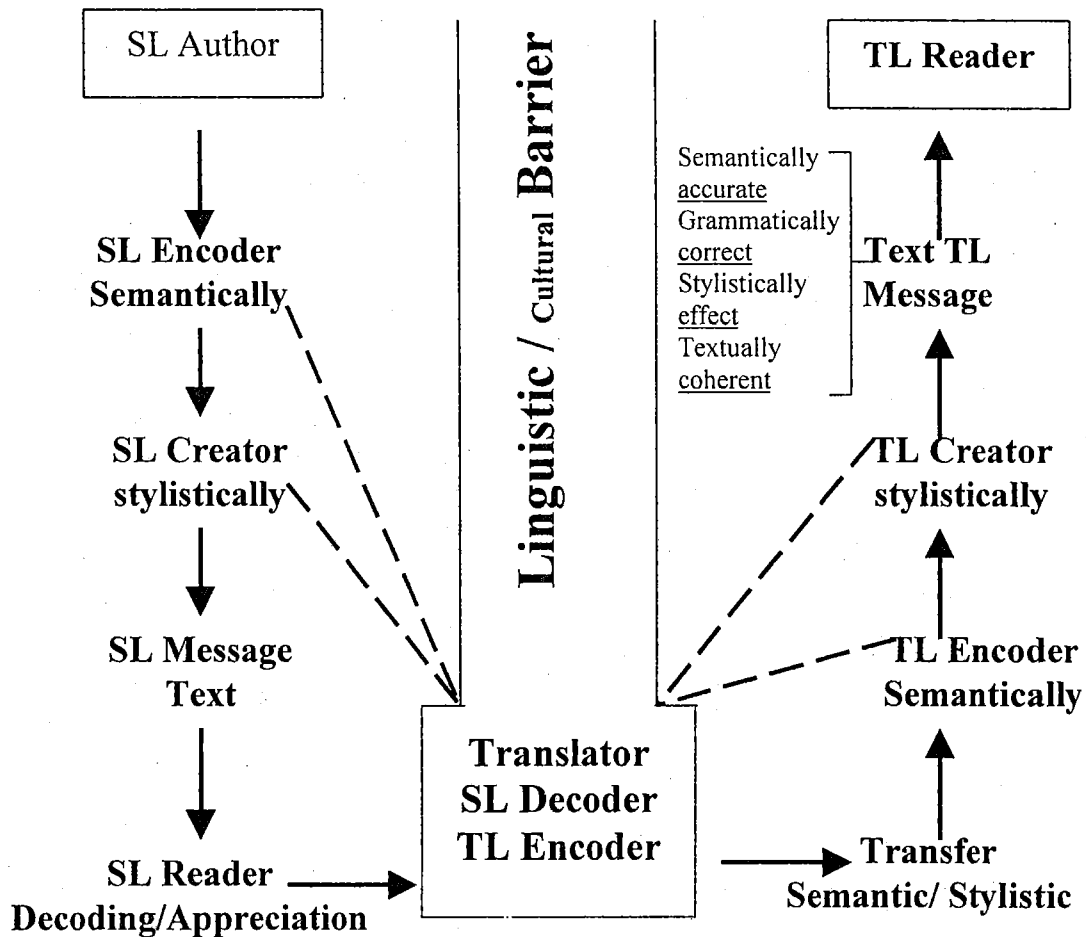


Diagram 1 Translation as a Communicatively Manipulative Act.

2.2. The Above diagram demonstrates the multiple task of the translator as a decoder, appreciator, critic, encoder and creator who maintains an equilibrium to transfer the SL text semantically as well as stylistically by necessity, he reads each word and each sentence in the SL text as carefully as a critic before he transfers and finally composes it in the TL. Such a transference and composition can never be achieved through literal, i.e., word-for-word translation which, Nida and Reyburn (1981) rightly maintain, will inevitably tend to distort the meaning of the source-language message or as Andre Lefevere (cited in Bassnett, 1996:81) puts it distorts the sense and the syntax of the original.

Such a translation impedes the translator’s work and stifles his creativity which is a manifestation of his competence and intelligence. It is, as Dryden (cited in Lefevere, 1992:102) puts it,

Like dancing on ropes with fettered legs; a man may shun a fall by using caution, but gracefulness of motion is not to be expected: and when we have said the best of it, ’its but a foolish task.

There is nothing new in repudiating literalism in translation, on which there is now almost a general consensus. Lefevere quotes Horace as antedating such an attitude:

Word-for-word translation do not find mercy in our eyes, not because they are against the law of translation (as an act of communication) but simply because two languages are never identical in their vocabulary. Ideas are common to the understanding of all men but words and manners of speech are particular to different nations. (Bracketing is Lefevere’s). (ibid)

By corollary, a SL preposition need not always be replaced literally by its formal TL equivalent, i.e., a TL preposition; rather it may well be lexicalized or modalized, i.e., replaced by a modal (auxiliary) verb or a lexical item(s), as illustrated in the following diagram:

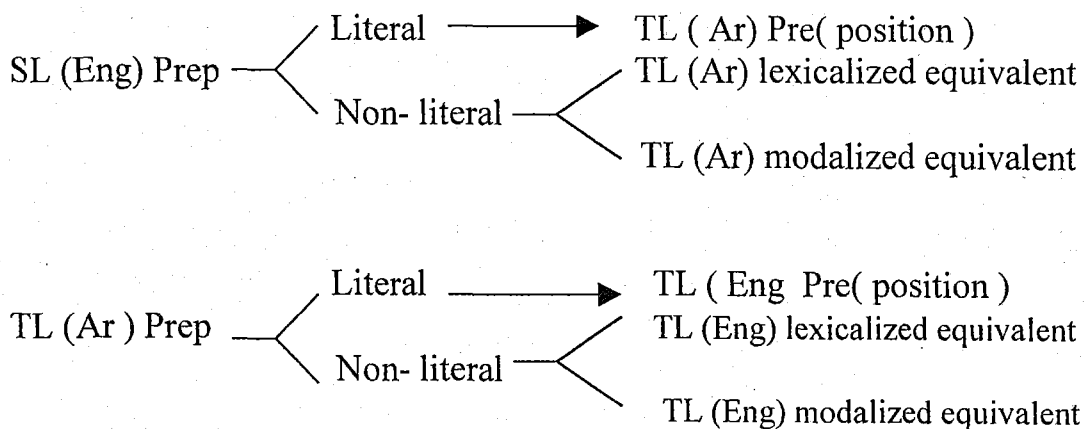


Diagram 2 : Translation Strategies for Lexicalization and Modalization of English/Arabic prepositions.

3. Lexicalization:

To lexicalize a notion, according to Quirk, et al, (1985:1526) is “in lay terms, we now have a word for it.” By the same token, to lexicalize a SL preposition is to have a lexical item, a content word, as an ‘equivalent’ or more accurately as a ‘correspondent’ in the TL. Lexicalization, be it optional or obligatory, renders the meaning of an expression more explicit, or as Lyons elucidates: “it is perhaps only when semantic distinctions are lexicalized, rather than grammaticalized, that what is expressed is explicit.” (Lyons, 1995:193).

4. Modalization

Analogous to lexicalization, modalization simply refers to the use of a TL form of modality for a SL preposition. Obviously, modality can be expressed by different parts of speech. The verbal forms of modality in English include auxiliaries such as will, would, can, could, may, might, must, ought to, need as well as finites such as allow, permit etc. In Arabic too, the verbal forms of modality include auxiliaries such as verbs of “proximation and commencement” أفعال المقاربة و الشروع like kaada كاد, awshaka أوشك, shara'a شرع, ja'ala جعل akhadha أخذ, qaama قام, as well as finites such as yajuuzu يجوز, yastatii'u (may) يستطيع (be able to, can) etc.

The non-verbal forms of modality in English include adjectives such as probable, possible, certain, adverbs such as probably, certainly; and nouns such as probability, possibility, certainty in clauses such as “it is probable/possible” or a probability/ possibility, or “ it is certain/ a certainty”. In Arabic, too, it can be realized by adverbs such as abadan أبداً (absolutely) particles such as qad قد (may) or qat قط (never) or a preposition such ala على or llaam اللام. The following diagram displays modality in English and Arabic.

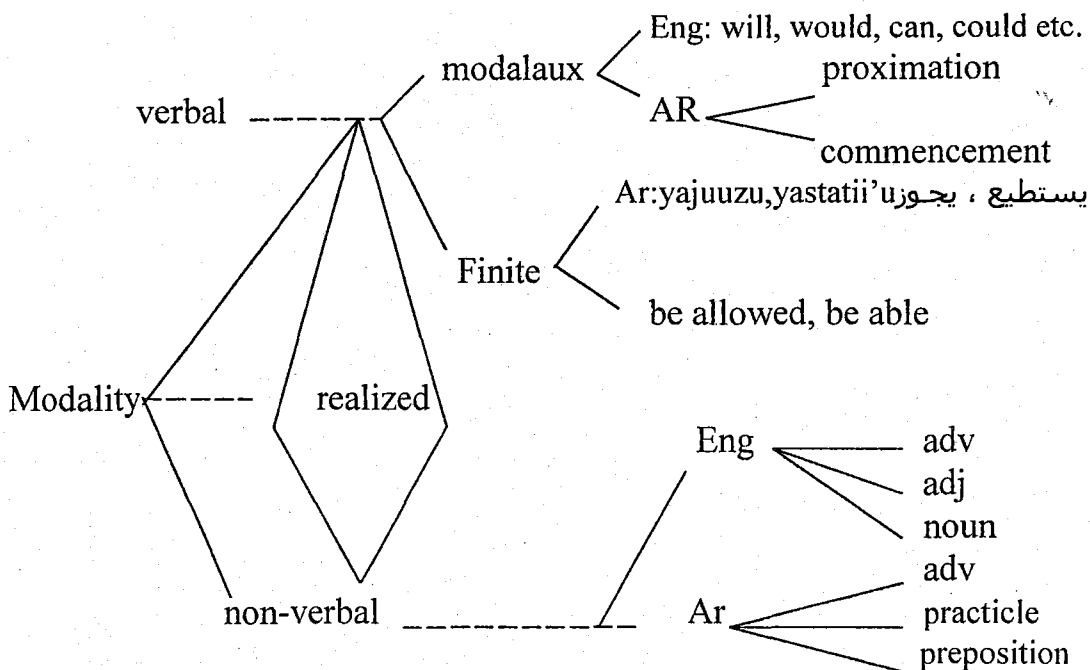


Diagram 3 : Realization of the two Kinds of Modality.

4.1. Modality and Modulation:

Modality is defined by Quirk, *et al* (1985:219), “as the manner in which the meaning of a clause is qualified.” “ The system of modality, according to Bell (1991:139), is an extremely important one, since it gives the communicator the options of expressing an opinion about the extent to which the assertion is possible, probable, certain or frequent. He distinguishes between modality and modulation as follows: the former is concerned with propositions, the latter with proposals; the former comprises probability, possibility, certainty and frequency, the latter obligation and inclination.(*ibid*: 139-140).

Halliday (1976:209), too, distinguishes between modality and modulation but states simultaneously that “they are closely interrelated.... They are the same system in different functions, where ‘functions’ refers to components of the linguistic system: the one is interpersonal, the other ideational.” Furthermore, “modulation is a condition imposed by some one; and if that someone is the speaker himself then it becomes a kind of modality.”(*ibid*). Hence, due to this overlap and what Halliday accurately describes as “ the complex nature of the relationship between modality

and modulation which he considers a kind of 'quasi modality' (ibid: 205-213) it would suffice here to adopt the term 'modality as subsuming modulation.

4.2. Exemplification

4.2.1. English Modal Auxiliaries

- a. You may be right. (Possibility: it can also be realized non-verbally:
 - a.1. It is possible that you are right.
 - a.2. Perhaps /Possibly, you are right.
- b. Can you call back tomorrow? (Ability: are you able to...?)
- c. You must be joking. (Necessity: it is necessarily the case that you are joking.
- d. You can/ may do as you wish. (permission: you are allowed..)
- e. You must be back by ten o'clock. (Obligation: you are obliged to be back by ten).
- f. I'll write as soon as I can. (Volition/ intention: I tend to write as soon as I can).
- g. I'll do it, if you like, (Volition/ willingness: I'm willing to do it.)
- h. She will/ would keep interrupting me. (Volition/ insistence: she insists on interrupting me).
- i. The guests will / would have arrived by that time. (prediction: they are expected to...)

Sometimes a modal auxiliary verb expresses more than one modal concept. The following are some examples borrowed from Quirk, et. al. (1985: 219-239).

- j. You may have to play it again. (possibility+obligation).
- k. She must have been willing to help. (necessity + volition).

4.2.2. Arabic Modal Auxiliaries

The salient Arabic modal auxiliaries which precede the finite (imperfect) verbs are the verbs of proximation and commencement stated in (4) above. Here are some examples.

- Kaada yamuutu atashan. كاد يموت عطشاً
(He was about to / on the point (verge) of dying of thirst).
- Yakaadu al-barqu yakhtfu 'absarahum: (البقرة) يكاد البرق يخطف أبصارهم
(Lightning all but snatched away their sight).
- Shara'a ash-shaa'iru yanshidu qasiidatahu. شرع الشاعر ينشد قصيدته
(The poet started/ commenced reciting his poem).
- Akhadha yaqra'u bisautin ?aalin... أخذ يقرأ بصوت عالٍ...
(He began to read aloud.)

4.2.3 Finite Verbs of Modality

Modality can be lexicalized by finite verbs such as yajuuzu, yastatii'u (may /might, can / could), or verbs like allow:

- Tastatii? ann taf'al maa tashaa' تستطيع أن تفعل ما تشاء
(You can / may do as you wish)
- Yajuuzu / yasmahu laka ann tudaskin. يجوز (يسمح لك) أن تدخن
(you can/ are allowed to smoke),
- yuhtamal / yurajahu ann yusaafira ghadan. يحتمل/ يرحح أن يسافر غدا
(it is probable that he will travel tomorrow.)

4.2.4. Non-verbal Modality

The bracketed sentences in 4.2.1 above exemplify non- verbal modality in English. In Arabic it can be realized by a noun, a particle or a preposition as mentioned in 4 above and as illustrated in the examples in 5 and 6 below.

5. Rendition of English Prepositions into Arabic: The Strategy of Lexicalization

By employing the above strategy, English prepositions are lexicalized instead of being replaced literally by Arabic equivalent prepositions. The strategy is hoped to reproduce a vivid, creative and dynamically communicative translation. In the following examples, some Arabic lexical items are bracketed to indicate optionality; otherwise lexicalization is obligatory.

5.1. after

- She was named after her mother. سميت باسم أمها.

5.2. at

- The country has been at war with the neighbour for eight years كان في البلد في (حالة) حرب مع جارتها لمدة ثمانية أعوام.

5.3. before

- He stood before the king. مثل (في حضرة) الملك.
- The ship sailed before the wind. (with the flowing wind from behind) أبحرت السفينة باتجاه الريح

5.4. behind

- She is behind her brother in work. إنها (متخلفة) عن أخيها في العمل.

5.5. below

- It is below your dignity to do that. لا يليق بك أن تفعل ذلك.

5.6. down

- There is an exhibition of costumes down the ages. هناك معرض للأزياء يغطي العصور كافة.

5.7. for

- They fight for their country يقاتلون دفاعاً عن / في سبيل / بلدهم
- His lawyer acts for him in this case. يعمل محاميه نيابة عنه في هذه القضية.
- The university gave a dinner for him. قدمت الجامعة غداء تكريماً له.

5.8. in

- Glory in the mist مجد يكتنفه الضباب
- The woman in black المرأة المتشحة بالمواد

5.9. of

- Mr Jones, of the Manor farm, had locked the hen-houses. (Orwell: *Animal Farm*) أغلق السيد جونز صاحب حقل مانور بيوت الزجاج.

5.10. on

- There are some evidences on her. هناك بعض الأدلة في غير صالحها / ضدها

5.11. over

- He will stay over the weekend (طيلة عطلة الأسبوع) سيمكث حتى نهاية
- Over the entire country على طول البلاد وعرضها

5.12. to

- She sang to her guitar غنت بمصاحبة قيثارتها

6. Rendition of Arabic Prepositions into English

6.1. Strategy of Lexicalization

It is perhaps worth reiterating that this strategy is based on a functional equivalence and on a hermeneutic/manipulative approach. Here are some examples.

6.1.1. bi الباء

- Laysa biya ann azraka ليس بيّ أن أضرك
(It is not my intention to harm you.)

6.1.2. fii في

- Kalaamun fii kalaam. كلام في كلام.
(Just (so many) words.
- Nahnu 'aqaribun fii 'aqqrib نحن أقارب في أقارب
Our social relations are those of kinsfold.

6.1.3 ala على

- Kaana ala haqq كان على حق (He was right).
- Huwa ala shi'in mina 'l-dhakaa' هو على شيء من الذكاء
(He has a good deal of intelligence).
- alayka bi'l sabr عليك بالصبر (You must have patience)
- qiila ala lisaanihi قيل على لسانه (He was supposed to have said)

6.1.4 عن ?ann

- qutuluu ?ann 'aakhirihum قتلوا عن آخرهم (They were killed to the last man)
- maata ?ann tarikatin kabiira. مات عن تركة كبيرة. (He died leaving a large fortune).
- ?ann 'bi hurayra (on the authority of) عن أبي هريرة

6.1.5 من min

- 'akala min 'l ta?aam أكل من الطعام (He ate some food.)
- khudh min 'l daraahim خذ من الدراهم (Take some money.)
- maa lilaahi min shariik ما لله من شريك (God has no partner.)

6.1.6 مع ma'a

hal ma?aka qaamuus ? هل معك قاموس (Have you got a dictionary?)

6.2. Strategy of Modalization

- Arabic modality can also be expressed by prepositions such as على ?ala and اللام .

6.2.1 ?ala

As a modal, the preposition على ?ala is sometimes preceded by a modal verb yajib يجب which is deletable.

- Yajib ?alayka ?ann tutii'a 'l- qwaniin. (يجب) عليك أن تطيع القوانين (You must obey the laws.)
- Maa ?ala ' -rasuuli 'ilaa 'l-balaagh al-mubiin. ما على الرسول إلا البلاغ المبين. (المائدة : 99)
- (The messenger's duty is but to proclaim the message.)

6.2.2. l (lam اللام for permission, possibility and assertion)

- laka 'ann taf?al maa tashaa' لك أن تفعل ما تشاء (you can/ may do as you wish)
- liyuziihum allaahu 'ahsana maa ?amaluu ليجزئهم الله أحسن ما عملوا (النور : 38)

(God may reward them according to the best of their deeds).

- wa 'anna rabaka lahuwa al'aziizu At- rahiim.

وان ربك لهو العزيز الرحيم (الشعراء 191)

(And verily your Lord is Exalted in Might, Most Merciful.)

- la'ann 'amartahum Liyukhrijanna

لئن أمرتهم ليخرجن (النور 53)

(If you command them, they would leave their homes.)

6.3. The strategy explained in (6.2) above can be reversed in directionality, so that English modality can be realized by prepositions in Arabic Some examples in 4.1 above on English modal verbs can be rendered into prepositions in Arabic: cf.

- Can you call back tomorrow? هل لك أن تتصل ثانية غداً ؟
- You must be joking. لا بد أنك تمزح (لا يمكن أن تكون جاداً)
- You must be back by ten o'clock.. يجب عليك أن تعود بحلول الساعة العاشرة .
- She will/would keep interrupting me.
إنها لتقاطعني باستمرار/ إنها تصرعلى مقاطعتي
- The guest may/ might/ will/ would/ have arrived by that time.
ربما يكون الضيوف قد وصلوا في ذلك الوقت.
- You may have to play it again.
قد يتوجب عليك أن تعيد العزف (أو أن تعزف ثانية)
- She must have been willing to help.
لا بد أنها كانت راغبة في المساعدة.

7. Conclusion

To be dynamically communicative and effective, translation as a TL product should be as semantically accurate, grammatically correct, stylistically correct, stylistically adequate and textually coherent as the SL text. Such a product can never be realized through the so-called literal or word-for-word approach, but rather through a creativity- oriented, hermeneutic/manipulative one which has prompted two strategies for the rendition of English/ Arabic prepositions. The first strategy is that of lexicalization, the second of modalization; through the former, the SL prepositions are lexicalized in the TL, through the latter they are modalized whether verbally or non-verbally. The manipulation of the two strategies require a rather exceptional translation competence which capacitates the translator to perform a multiple task: as a SL text decoder/appreciator or a critic and as a TL text encoder / creator who caters not only for the

transference of the semantic values but of the aesthetic values as well. Exemplification has verified the two strategies which serve to produce an accurate, vivid, creative and effective translation.

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