

## **Aspects of Technical Translating from English into Arabic**

**Salah Salim Ali**  
Turkish Studies Centre  
Mosul University  
Mosul  
Iraq

### **Abstract**

It is axiomatic that English - Arabic technical translating is increasingly becoming a topic of much concern and importance today. Oil on the Arab side and technology on the Western side contributed to this increasing importance. This paper highlights the problems that are likely to be encountered in English Arabic technical translating and tries to establish certain possible factors which may finally lead to a theory of technical translating. It also unlocks certain differences that exist between technical texts and poetic texts, then it sets off these differences against another class of differences between English and Arabic. The paper also provides a model for English - Arabic technical translating process which is rather suggestive in any further attempts driving at more extensive study.



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| Noun      | Verb                   | Adjective               | الصفة      | الفعل                      | الاسم      |
|-----------|------------------------|-------------------------|------------|----------------------------|------------|
| attack    | grant                  |                         |            | يُنح —                     | هجوم، غارة |
|           | carry out an--         | a fresh--               | جديد —     | يقوم بـ —                  |            |
|           | foil an--              | a mock--                | وهمي —     | يحبط، يفشل —               |            |
|           | frustrate an--         | a night--               | ليلي —     | يحبط، يفشل —               |            |
|           | launch an--            | a surprise--            | مفاجيء —   | يقوم بـ —                  |            |
|           | repel an--             |                         |            | يصد —                      |            |
| attempt   | resume an--            |                         |            | يوصل —                     | محاولة     |
|           | foil an--              | a coup--                | انقلابية — | يفشل، يحبط —               |            |
|           | make an                | an unsucce-<br>ssfull-- | فاشلة —    | يقوم بـ —                  |            |
| attention | arrest the--           |                         |            | يلفت —                     | انتباه     |
|           | attract the--          |                         |            | يجذب —                     |            |
|           | call the--             |                         |            | يشد —                      |            |
|           | engross the--          |                         |            | يستحوذ على —               |            |
|           | pay-- to<br>stand to-- |                         |            | ينتبه إلى<br>يقف في حالة — |            |

| Noun        | Verb  | Adjective       | الصفة           | الفعل   | الاسم                    |
|-------------|---|-----------------|-----------------|---|--------------------------|
| ambition    | achieve an--<br>attain an--<br>harbour an--         |                 |                 | يحقق --<br>يحقق --<br>يخفي --   | طموح                     |
| anarchy     | advocate--<br>bring about--<br>cause--              |                 |                 | يدعو إلى --<br>يحدث، يقود إلى --<br>يتسبب في، يقود<br>إلى --                    | فوضى                     |
| anchor      | create--<br>cast--<br>drop--<br>lie at--<br>weigh-- |                 |                 | يخلق --<br>يلقي --<br>يلقي --<br>يلقي --<br>يرفع --                             | مرساة                    |
| anxiety     | cause--<br>occasion--                               |                 |                 | يتسبب في --<br>يتسبب في --  | قلق                      |
| appeal      | issue an--<br>make an--<br>reject an--              | an emotional--  | عاطفيا --       | يصدر --<br>يوجه --<br>يرفض --   | نداء، مناشدة             |
| appetite    | whet the--  | an insatiable-- | نهمة --<br>شرهة | يفتح --   | شهية                     |
| approval    | express-<br>give--<br>grant--<br>seek the--         |                 |                 | يعبر عن --<br>يعطي بمنح --<br>يعطي، بمنح --<br>يسعى للحصول<br>على --<br>يلقى -- | موافقة، قبول،<br>استحسان |
| arbitration | meet with--<br>award-- to<br>resort to--            |                 |                 | يعطي نتيجة -- إلى<br>يلجأ لـ --   |                          |
| arrest      | place under--                                       | house--         | إقامة جبرية     | يضع رهن --  | اعتقال                   |
| assembly    | ban   | public--        | تجمهر الناس     | يحظر --   | تجمهر                    |
| asylum      | deny--  | political--     | سياسي --        | يرفض منح --   | حق اللجوء                |

Appendix 4

| Noun       | Verb                | Adjective       | الصفة          | الفعل                              | الاسم           |
|------------|---------------------|-----------------|----------------|------------------------------------|-----------------|
| acceptance | receive--           | wide--          | — واسع         | يحظى بـ —                          | قبول، موافقة    |
| account    | audit an--          |                 |                | يدقق —                             | حساب            |
|            | balance an--        |                 |                | يوازن —                            |                 |
|            | call to --          |                 |                | يؤرخ                               |                 |
|            | examine an--        |                 |                | يدقق —                             |                 |
|            | verify an--         |                 |                | يدقق —                             |                 |
| accident   |                     | an industrial-- | — عمل          |                                    | إصابة           |
| accusation | bring an-- against  |                 |                | يوجه —                             | اتهام           |
|            | discharge from an-- |                 |                | يرى من —                           |                 |
| affection  | level an--          |                 |                | يوجه —                             | عاطفة، شعور     |
|            | show                | deep--          | — عميق         | يظهر —                             |                 |
| age        | attain an--         | an advanced--   | — متقدم        | يبلغ —                             | عمر، سن         |
|            | reach an            | an old--        | — متقدم        | يبلغ —                             |                 |
| agony      | cause--             |                 |                | يتسبب في —                         | كرب، ألم<br>مبح |
|            | suffer--            |                 |                | يعاني من —                         |                 |
| agreement  | conclude an--       | a bilateral--   | — ثنائية       | يعقد —                             | اتفاقية         |
|            | make an--           | a prior--       | — سابقة        | يحرر —                             |                 |
|            | supersede an--      |                 |                | يبتل —                             |                 |
| aim        | achieve an--        |                 |                | يبلغ، يحقق —                       | هدف             |
|            | attain an--         |                 |                | يبلغ، يحقق —                       |                 |
| alarm      | raise--             |                 |                | يدق ناقوس —                        | انذار، خطر      |
|            | set the--           |                 |                | يضبط جرس —<br>يقرع، يدق<br>ناقوس — |                 |
| alert      | sound the--         |                 |                | يقرع، يدق<br>ناقوس —               | تأهب            |
|            | be on the--         | red--           | — حالة<br>قصوى | يكون في حالة —                     |                 |
|            | go on--             |                 |                | يكون في حالة —                     |                 |

3- Pure : --- chance  
--- folly  
--- necessity

sheer : --- determination  
--- folly  
--- ignorance  
--- luck

4- Complete : --- inability  
--- surprise

total : --- darkness  
--- defeat  
--- disregard  
--- silence  
--- stranger

utter : --- clarity  
---destruction  
--- fool  
--- mystery

- 5 — احتجزت السلطات الفرنسية سفينة إيرلندية.  
 6 — كان الضباب كثيفا هذا الصباح.  
 7 — تلقى ضربة حادة على الرأس.  
 8 — كانت الأشجار عارية من الأوراق.

| 1           | 2                   | 3                   |
|-------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Arabic Term | Correct Translation | Translator's Choice |
| كثيف        | heavy               | thick               |
| إكليل       | wreath              | garland             |
| أمالا كبيرة | high hopes          | great expectations  |
| أغرق        | scuttle             | drown, sink         |
| احتجز       | seize               | detain              |
| كثيف        | thick               | dense               |
| حاد         | sharp               | keen                |
| عاري        | bare                | naked               |

### Appendix 3

1 - Marginal : --- effect

--- inscrease

--- profits

--- sales

--- victory

slight : --- argument

--- book

--- pain

---smell

2- Bare : --- feet

--- floor

--- hillside

--- room

--- word

naked : --- eye

--- light

--- truth

--- wall

## Appendix 1.

- 1 — رفضت الدول الأوروبية طلب المغرب الانضمام لعضوية السوق الأوروبية المشتركة.
- 2 — هذا العقد سليم.
- 3 — كان عليه أن يتعامل مع المسألة بحكم موقعه الوظيفي.
- 4 — لقد أصبح النفط قضية تهم مختلف القطاعات.
- 5 — إن زيادة معدلات الانتاج قد تؤثر على الطلب خلال الشهور القادمة.
- 6 — ناشدت الأمم المتحدة الدول المعنية وقف كافة العمليات العسكرية.
- 7 — صديقي مقتصد في معاشه.
- 8 — أصيب بعض الركاب بإصابات بالغة.
- 9 — لم يكن التعويض المقدم من شركة التأمين كافيا.

| 1<br>Arabic Term | 2<br>Correct Translation | 3<br>Translator's Choice |
|------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| طلب              | request                  | claim                    |
| سليم             | valid                    | well                     |
| وظيفي            | professional             | functional               |
| قضية             | issue                    | case                     |
| زيادة            | increase                 | expansion                |
| ناشد             | appeal                   | implore                  |
| معاش             | living                   | salary                   |
| أصيب             | sustain                  | expose                   |
| تعويض            | compensation             | substitution             |

## Appendix 2

- 1 — كانت حركة السير كثيفة هذا الصباح.
- 2 — وضع الضيف إكليلا على قبر الجندي المجهول.
- 3 — يعلق المراقبون آمالا كبيرة على المحادثات.
- 4 — أغرق التاجر سفينته طمعا في الحصول على تعويض من شركة التأمين.

locations extensively in specifying the range of usage and selecting examples which, most of the time, illustrate the typical distributions of the word in question.

For the translator, a collocational dictionary could serve many purposes :

1- Correct associations can be made,

2 - The meanings of the various lexical items will become clearer when given in a collocational context,

3 - Distributional properties of various verbs and adjectives can be explicitly expressed and learned consciously,

4 - The distribution of various prepositions and the article ( $\emptyset$ , (a)n and the) can be stated and generalisations can be derived therefrom.

The analysis of the English lexicon in this manner would reveal to the translator an intricate, mysterious and complex world where each lexical item demonstrates a unique pattern of distribution. Therefore, the development of this dictionary will not only enhance his knowledge of the English vocabulary but will put him on the right path to explore and discover the almost infinite possibilities present in the lexicon. And once this process is embarked upon, the translator's awareness of the peculiar syntactic features, the finer distinctions and shades of meaning and the distributional properties of words will improve his command of English and increase his sensitivity towards the choice of words. Thus expression, whether written or verbal, would transcend the mere conveying of the message to become a creative process which brings the translator closer to the level of competence demonstrated by the native speaker.

cal entry. He needs to identify the collocational range a certain word may have. And, finally, he requires levels of meaning which go well beyond the scope of conceptual meaning. All these features can, in theory, be incorporated in a dictionary. Unfortunately, none of the Arabic-English dictionaries on the market provides such a wealth of information.

### 3 - Proposed Solution

In all fairness to dictionary compilers and lexicographers, one must admit that some of the deficiencies are inherent and unavoidable for reasons of space limitations and the overall size of the dictionary in question. And although one should in no way underestimate the stamina required and the efforts exerted in compiling a dictionary, one can not hope that these shortcomings will be remedied and a much more comprehensive dictionary will be eventually produced. Meanwhile, one must try to seek means and ways of improving the student's vocabulary. For example, one may suggest that vocabulary development be viewed as a long term and primary objective which embraces the language programme in its entirety. Secondly, certain important semantic notions can be introduced at an advanced stage in the programme, such as style, denotation and connotation, emotive meaning, etc. Thirdly, benefits derived from available dictionaries can be maximised. Dictionaries are not merely depositories of conceptual meanings ; in addition to phonological, morphological and etymological information, dictionaries provide a wealth of information about style, regional varieties and a host of semantic relations at the lexical level such as synonymy, antonymy, homonymy and polysemy. Other features such as the shared meaning element can also be emphasised.

Undoubtedly, some of the above suggestions merit a much more thorough examination and exposition. This, however, lies beyond the scope of this paper which is primarily concerned with the development of a bilingual collocational dictionary.

Although syntagmatic relations holding between lexical items started to play an important

role in the formulation of a semantic theory as early as 1934, the notion of collocation itself was first introduced, so far as the author can determine, by J.R. Firth in 1957 as part of his theory of meaning. (Lyons, 1977). It indicated a level of analysis «intermediate between the situational and grammatical (levels).» Since then, reference, albeit brief, has often been made to this notion in the literature. Typically, bipartite syntagms or collocations consist of a noun and a verb (e.g **the mind boggles, the battle raged and the need arises**), a verb and a noun (e.g **launch a campaign, raise the alarm, fell a tree and sustain injury**) and an adjective and a noun (e.g. **fierce fighting, blind landing and tense situation**).

The bilingual collocational dictionary we propose here is to be structured along the same lines. It is further suggested that the noun should be given as the lexical entry with the verbs (in pre-nominal and post-nominal positions) and adjectives as well as any other classes listed their respective syntactic positions. A representative example is given in Appendix IV.

In compiling such a dictionary, however, the lexicographer is bound to face two problems. First, he will find that lexical items, to quote Lyons, vary «enormously with respect to the freedom with which they can be combined in syntagms with other lexemes» (Lyons 1977). The two most obvious examples are **good** and **bad** which can collocate with a vast number of nouns. Secondly, such a dictionary will exclude figurative usages of words.

In spite of these problems, the development of a bilingual collocational dictionary should be viewed as an important tool for the enrichment of the translator's vocabulary. For in contrast with words like **good** and **bad**, there are words which occur in highly restricted sets of environments such as **rancid** (butter), **wreak** (havoc), **aquiline** (face or nose) and **brackish** (tea or water). And although the great majority of the English words do not exhibit the same distributional properties, we can still find thousands of lexical items which can be recorded and learned by association. This fact has long been recognised by dictionary compilers who have used col-

1 - The collocational level. The most notorious examples here are pretty and handsome,

2 - The stylistic level or level of formality such as refuse / reject, stop / refrain, make / conduct, begin / commence, dump / dispose and hit / strike.

3 - The emotive meaning level. Examples are politician / statesman, conceal / hide, stingy / thrifty, skinny / thin, etc.

As a result, the message conveyed in English will have a distinctly foreign element, so foreign, as a matter of fact, that it will sometimes be rejected by the native speaker or, at best, frowned upon. Let me quote some of the examples that we may encounter in translation.

In English, people talk about a tennis match played on a tennis court and refereed by an umpire in which the score may, at one point, be forty-love. A football match, on the other hand, is played in a football field where a referee controls the game which may end in 3-nill. In a translated text, both games are played in a playfield, and both will have referees, arbitrators or arbiters and will result in a score of forty-zero and 3-zero respectively. A visiting head of a state would lay a wreath on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. The same head of state will, in the case of our translator, put or place a bunch of flowers, a diadem or a garland at the grave of the anonymous soldier. Two ministers may, as a matter of routine, discuss bilateral relations and issues of common interest which will become, in the translation, dual, biradical or mutual relations and matters or affairs of shared or common concern.

In the author's judgment, these problems stem from two major sources :

1 - Lack of emphasis on vocabulary in the language courses

2 - Inadequacy of Arabic-English dictionaries utilised by the translator.

1 - As for the first point, a cursory glance at the various language courses offered in a typical English department in an Arab university would reveal that these courses normally incorporate a vocabulary sub-component which is lis-

ted as a separate objective or subsumed under the reading skill. In both cases, however, the student is expected at the end of the course to have increased the number of lexical items he knows and, in certain cases, to have familiarised himself with certain morphological processes. Emphasis, meanwhile, is placed on guessing the meaning from the context as well as using the new items in sentences. The use of the dictionary is typically covered in one or two lectures as part of study skills. Beyond that, the language teacher rarely concerns himself with vocabulary.

During the language courses, the development of vocabulary is often carried out on a totally arbitrary basis ; the number and the nature of the new terms taught or reinforced will almost always depend upon the prescribed reading material. Once such material proves unsatisfactory for any reason whatsoever, it will be either replaced in toto or supplemented by external and / or extensive reading, irrespective of the consequences such a change or supplement may entail both to the language course itself and the continuity and coherence assumed to exist in the overall language programme. Furthermore, controlling vocabulary will become an almost impossible task if the language teacher relies solely on extensive reading unless vocabulary is catered for in another part of the programme.

2 - Upon encountering a new word, the translator can learn about the meaning from three sources : thesauruses, monolingual dictionaries and bilingual dictionaries. The thesaurus is of an extremely limited use to the translator because it provides a wealth of synonyms and semantically related words which will more often than not confuse the student rather than assist him. Monolingual dictionaries, on the other hand, are more commonly used, but translators tend to rely more on bilingual dictionaries for obvious reasons.

The nature of the translator's work necessitates the availability of certain types of information in the dictionary which the ordinary user may not require. For example, the translator needs to know the exact difference between words listed as synonyms opposite a certain lexi-