

## Investigating Morpho-Syntactic Translation Errors Made by Yemeni EFL Students

**Muayad Shamsan**

University of Bisha, Asir, Saudi Arabia

&

Omdurman Islamic University, Omdurman, Sudan

**Abdul-Majeed Attayib**

English Language Centre

Umm AlQura University, Mecca, Saudi Arabia

### Abstract

This study investigates the most common morpho-syntactic Arabic-English and English-Arabic translation errors made by fourth year students of the English Department (Translation Program) at the University of Science and Technology (UST) in Yemen. It identifies how frequently these errors occur and sheds light on issues for EFL students and translation teachers in Yemen in general and the UST in particular, regarding the importance of having a good command of both Arabic and English. This may help learners identify and reduce such errors. In this empirical study, a test of 20 English and 20 Arabic sentences was given to the subjects of the study to be translated into Arabic and English respectively. Findings from the study show that the students make significantly more errors in tense, noun, verb, preposition, pronoun, relative clauses, article, and voice when they translate sentences from Arabic into English. There are also no significant differences in the students' translation in terms of agreement, word order, mood, and condition. The study concludes with some important recommendations such as adding a course on contrastive analysis and other Arabic language courses to the curriculum of the Translation Program in the English Department. Teachers and students are advised to take into account the different morpho-syntactic rules when teaching or translating respectively.

**Keywords:** errors, morpho-syntactic, text type, translation

## 1. Introduction

People of different communities with different languages need to communicate and understand each other. That is why, translation is necessary for understating people who speak other languages. It is regarded as a means of cross-cultural communication. Translation as defined by (Mahmoud, 2013, p. 1016) "was and still an effective means that can be used to help anyone to communicate with people out of his/her own speech community". It is a kind of interlingual communication (Farghal & Shunnaq, 1999). It is a process of transferring meaning from one language to another. Ghazala (2008) emphasizes that meaning is a product of the different language components comprised of: grammar, vocabulary, style and phonology. Thus, EFL Arab learners have to have enough knowledge of the above mentioned components in Arabic and English in order to help them translate correctly and accurately from English into Arabic or vice versa.

Grammar is a very significant language component which requires knowledge of both morphology and syntax that stand as two interrelated linguistic disciplines. That is, morphology studies morphemes and how they operate in the structure of a word and syntax is about how these words are combined to form grammatically correct sentences.

The two issues that make the Arabic language syntactic structure more clear as highlighted by (Ryding, 2005, p. 65) are "verb-subject agreement and word order". Arabic is an inflectional language. That is, the subject in Arabic is known by its inflectional suffix and so is the object but in English, the subject and object are known by their position in a sentence. There are nominal sentences in Arabic whose English counterparts must include verbs.

Arabic and English belong to different language families which broadens the gap between the two languages. Arabic is a Semitic language whereas English is an Indo-European language. According to Haywood and Nahmad (1965), one of the characteristic features of Semitic languages is that their roots have no vowel. The basic form of a word in Arabic is expressed by the consonant sounds. For example, the consonants of the words *kataba*, *kutiba* and *kaatib* express something that is related to *writing*. These words have the same root consonants *k-t-b-*. The difference in vowels (harkat) makes the words different from one another in terms of meaning. The usual Arabic orthographical form of words used nowadays displays the consonants of words and long vowels only and the meaning of a word could be understood through its position in a sentence. The translation of the Arabic word with the root consonants *k-s-r-* could be (*he broke* or *it is broken*) when harakat are not added. What makes the meaning of a word clear in Arabic is adding the harakat to it or its position in a sentence. These and other differences between the two languages might create and cause translation difficulties among EFL Arab learners.

According to Nida (1964), the translator should know how sentences are generated in the source language and the target language and he/she must be acquainted with the meaning of words as well. Jmila (2014, p. 93) claims that "the analysis of texts in terms of morphology, syntax and discourse guarantees a better

understanding of source texts and composing target texts." It is noticed that when the native language text is the TL, the translation process is much easier.

The morpho-syntactic translation errors the students make in their Arabic-English translation are not all akin to the English-Arabic translation errors. The morpho-syntactic errors in this study do not follow a traditional taxonomy of errors of omission, errors of addition etc. They have been categorized as tense, agreement, mood, verb errors etc. Corder (1981) suggests that classifying errors in terms of systems such as tense, number, mood etc. is more adequate and systematic.

A variety of studies dealt with translation problems that EFL Arab students encounter when translating from Arabic into English or vice versa. A study on translation errors made by Yemeni students when they translate from Arabic into English was conducted by (Moharram, as cited in Muthanna, & Al-Sohbani, Y., 2013). The outcomes of the study indicate that students make several kinds of errors such as incorrect use of vocabulary, prepositions, spelling and gender, incorrect use of grammatical forms and sentence structure. The researcher stated that these errors might be due to the mother tongue interference, lack of vocabulary items and cultural differences between the SL and the TL. Al-Zakri (2006) attempts to investigate the grammatical and lexical ambiguity problems faced by the students of level four, Faculty of Education, Saber, Aden University. The researcher has found out that it is very necessary for the translator to know the possible meanings of words and the grammatical structures of sentences in Arabic translation and to have adequate understanding and command of the linguistic aspects of both the SL and the TL. Al-Onqobi (2007) has conducted an empirical study on the problems of translating tenses of English and Arabic languages by postgraduate Yemeni students at Taiz University. His study concludes that the problem in translating tenses is not only in areas of differences but also in areas that are similar where the resemblance might lead to incorrect translation. Alfadly and Aldeibani (2013) investigate problems in translation between Arabic and English as being encountered by English majors at Hadramout University, Yemen. Fifty four Arabic native speaker students of both sexes participated in the study. They had already studied courses in language skills and other specialized courses in linguistics and literature. The result of the study reflects the students' weaknesses in grammar that causes them difficulties in understanding and translating sentences from Arabic into English and/or vice versa. Muthanna and Al-Sohbani (2013) explore the major challenges that the fourth year Yemeni students, Department of English, Faculty of Arts, Ibb University face when they translate from Arabic into English or vice versa. The main problems that the results show are: insufficient lexical and grammatical knowledge, inadequate grammatical practice and cultural backgrounds, and inappropriate teaching atmosphere and methodology. These challenges as stated by the researchers "point to the dire need for re-systematic reforms of the curriculum, the pedagogy and the class sizes in Yemen."

Mouakket (1986) explores the semantic problems, the structural patterns and the lexical features that create ambiguities when translating from Arabic into English. He investigates the contextual meanings of Arabic expressions and how to handle them in translation without changing the meaning in translation. Hassan (1990) did a contrastive study of tense and aspect in

English and Arabic, with special reference to translation and he discussed some of the problems of tense and aspect in translation. Ouided (2009) has carried out a study on the problems of translating tenses from English into Arabic with special reference to the present perfect in Algeria. The participants of the study were forty two students from level two, English Department, at Mentouri University, Constantine. The result of the study displays that most of the students make errors when translating English tenses into Arabic. They translate the present perfect according to the context and the affirmative sentences through the use of *qad* though most of them know how to translate present perfect sentences into Arabic and when to use this word or not. Bakir and Lazim (2009) administered an Arabic-to-English translation test to forty advanced-level students, in the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Translation, Ajman University of Science and Technology to investigate their stylistic errors. It is found that the students focus on the translation of words and ignore the style. It is suggested by researchers that the cultural, idiosyncratic and linguistic features of the language involved in translation should be taken into consideration.

Zagood (2012) investigates the problems that fourth-year students of English at El-Mergib University in Libya face when translating relative clauses from English into Arabic and vice versa. This study presents the different kinds of errors the students make when translating Arabic and English relative clauses. It shows the students' weakness in both English and Arabic in the use of relative clauses and relative pronouns. It also proves the students' lack of competence in both Arabic and English grammar.

Alshehab (2013) investigates a number of syntactic difficulties that the Jordanian English students face when translating from Arabic into English at Irbid National University. The subjects of study made 292 mistakes. The majority of these errors are grammatical errors.

This study is different from the above-mentioned studies in that it sheds light on the morpho-syntactic errors that students of the University of Science and Technology face in translation from Arabic into English and vice versa.

### ***1.1 Problem of the Study***

It is noticed that the students of English language majors at the UST in Yemen encounter different kinds of translation difficulties. They make morphological and syntactic errors such as wrong word order; agreement violation; they misuse tenses; and they make errors in the use of relative clauses, passive sentences etc. They have problems with nominal and verbal inflectional morphology. They sometimes over-generalize the rules by analogy of the regular rules. For example, they may add the past tense suffix *-ed* to irregular verbs or the plural suffix *-s* to irregular nouns. Some students make errors as a result of the wrong use of *-ing* in place of *-en* or vice versa. Though Arabic language is their mother tongue, they make different kinds of morpho-syntactic errors when they translate from English into Arabic. For example, they may use the subject where the object must be used which changes the meaning of a sentence completely, and sometimes they use the agent in place of the theme or vice versa when they translate from English into Arabic. They misapply the syntactic rules when they transfer the English word order into Arabic. These morpho-syntactic errors are considered serious because they reflect the students' insufficient language competence.

### ***1.2 Questions of the Study***

This study investigates the effect of the different morpho-syntactic errors made by the students of the English Department (Translation Program) at the University of Science and Technology in Yemen on meaning. It provides some solutions that help both teachers and students get rid of them by analyzing the students' translation. The questions addressed by this study are:

1. What are the most common morpho-syntactic Arabic-English and English-Arabic translation errors and how frequently do they occur in the students' translation?
2. What is the difference in quantity of morpho-syntactic translation errors with reference to text type?
3. In which morpho-syntactic categories do the students make significantly more errors when translating from Arabic into English and vice versa?
4. Which group of the students, students of the main campus (Sana'a) or Taiz branch, make more morpho-syntactic errors?

### ***1.3 Significance of the Study***

The significance of this study lies in the fact that it is an attempt to realize and clarify issues for EFL students and translation teachers in Yemen in general and the UST in particular regarding the importance of having good command of the source and the target languages, that provides them with "general (clear) guidelines for translating" (Newmark, 1988, p. 4). It helps them know how to cope with these problems and eliminate or at least minimize them.

### ***1.4 Limitations of Study***

The present study is limited to the examination and analysis of the morpho-syntactic translation errors made by Arab EFL students at the University of Science and Technology, in Yemen. The study is also limited to the fourth year students of the Translation Program in the English Department at this university in the academic year 2014/2015. Consequently, the results and the findings of this study should not be generalized to all the Yemeni universities.

## **2. Method of the Study**

### ***2.1 Method of the Study***

This is an empirical study that examines the morpho-syntactic errors made by the fourth level students in the English Department (Translation Program) at the UST, Yemen. It describes the morpho-syntactic errors made by the respondents and attempts to identify the causes of these errors. Data for this study was collected by using a translation test which is designed and administered to a sample of Yemeni students doing a translation course at UST. The test involves 20 sentences in Arabic, the mother tongue of the subjects, to be translated into English, the foreign language, and 20 sentences in English to be translated into Arabic. Results of this test were analyzed statistically and linguistically to answer the major questions of this study .

### ***2.2 Sample of the Study***

The subjects of this study are level four students who were studying English in the translation program of the English department at the UST in the main campus in Sana'a and in Taiz branch. The total number of the students is forty two (nineteen in the main campus and

twenty three in Taiz branch). Fourth year students were chosen because they had already studied most of the courses in linguistics and translation during the previous levels of their study at the university.

### 2.3 Data Collection Procedure

The best way to test the students' translation progress and to analyze their translation errors is via translation tests. Therefore, a translation test was conducted to the sample of the study. The test was divided into two parts in which the subjects were asked to translate twenty English sentences into Arabic and twenty Arabic sentences into English. Morpho-syntactic errors were identified and analyzed. Since the test was conducted in order to analyze the students' morpho-syntactic errors when translating from English into Arabic or vice versa, it was not easy to find a standardized ready-made test in this field. Therefore, some sentences in Arabic and in English were selected from different books and others were constructed by the researcher to suit the test requirement. It is worth mentioning that when preparing the test it was taken into account that all the sentences (Arabic and English) pose a potential morpho-syntactic difficulty in translation. A pilot study was conducted for preliminary analysis to check the reliability of the test. At the piloting stage, the test was administered to fourteen senior students other than the participants at UST, Taiz branch. The test was introduced for a group of specialized university doctors and lecturers in order to provide the researcher with their comments and suggestions about its validity. According to Lado (1964, p. 169) "Validity is the degree to which a test measures what it claims to measure". The test was modified upon the light of the pilot study analysis and the referees' comments and suggestions.

### 3. Data Analysis

The quantitative and qualitative approaches were adopted for analyzing the data. The quantitative analysis of the errors is regarded as a prerequisite for the qualitative analysis which is used to describe the errors made by the subjects of the study, and to identify the reasons for these errors. The participants made different kinds of errors, but the analysis was confined to the morpho-syntactic errors only. That is to say, other kinds of errors are not taken into account. The SPSS was used to present a detailed analysis of the frequency of the morpho-syntactic errors and to answer the research questions.

#### 3.1 Quantitative Analysis

Tables 1 and 2 provide the answer to the first question. They show statistics of the Arabic-English and English-Arabic translation errors respectively. It is noticeable that the most frequent kind of errors in Arabic-English are errors in the use of tense, whereas in the English-Arabic translation agreement errors are the most frequent. Errors in the use of verbs are the third in rank of the Arabic-English translation, whereas, in English-Arabic translation, there are a fewer errors in this area. There are no voice errors in the English-Arabic translation, but the students made a few errors in the English-Arabic translation in the use of prepositions which forms one of the common errors in Arabic-English translation.

Table 1. *Frequency of Errors in the Arabic-English Translation*

Category	Taiz	Sana'a	Total	Percentage
Tense	117	129	246	21.8%
Noun	97	73	170	15.1%

Verb	63	81	144	12.8%
Preposition	62	50	112	9.9%
Pronoun	38	46	84	7.4%
Agreement	46	33	79	7.0%
Relative	35	40	75	6.6%
Part of Speech	27	43	70	6.2%
Article	30	31	61	5.4%
Word Order	29	20	49	4.3%
Voice	25	14	39	3.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>569</b>	<b>560</b>	<b>1129</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>50.4%</b>	<b>49.6%</b>	<b>100%</b>	

Table 2. Frequency of Errors in the English-Arabic Translation

Category	Taiz	Sana'a	Total	Percentage
Agreement	62	50	112	25.7%
Tense	53	52	105	24.1%
Case	42	47	89	20.4%
Conditional	19	17	36	8.3%
word order	13	10	23	5.3%
Mood	15	7	22	5.0%
Pronoun	9	3	12	2.8%
Relative	7	4	11	2.5%
Verb	8	1	9	2.1%
Article	5	2	7	1.6%
Marginal	2	4	6	1.4%
Preposition	2	2	4	0.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>436</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>100%</b>	

Table 3 shows the difference in number of morpho-syntactic translation errors with reference to text type (i.e., Arabic-English vs. English-Arabic). The distributions of all the dependent variables (i.e., the morpho-syntactic translation errors) were not normal. Thus, non-parametric tests were used to answer the second question. Because all the students were asked to translate the same sentences from Arabic into English and vice versa, Related-Samples Wilcoxon Signed Rank tests were conducted.

As shown in Table 3, the students made significantly more tense, noun, verb, preposition, pronoun, relative, speech, article, and voice errors when they had to translate sentences from Arabic into English than when they had to translate sentences from English into Arabic. But they made significantly more case errors when they had to translate sentences from English into Arabic than when they had to translate the sentences from Arabic into English. There were no significant differences in terms of agreement, word order, mood, and condition.

Table 3. Wilcoxon Signed Rank Results for Morpho-Syntactic Errors across Text Type

Error	Arabic to English			English to Arabic			Z	
	Md	M	SD	Md	M	SD		
Tense	0	3.07	5.13	0	1.31	3.42	-3.04	**
Noun	0	2.12	3.91	0	.00	.00	-4.95	***
Verb	0	1.80	2.71	0	.11	.48	-4.99	***
Preposition	0	1.40	2.25	0	.05	.22	-4.94	***
Pronoun	0	.05	2.69	0	.15	.51	-3.95	***
Agreement	0	.99	1.95	0	1.40	3.90	-.64	
Relative	0	.94	2.84	0	.14	.57	-2.40	*
Speech	0	.88	2.43	0	.08	.31	-2.97	**
Article	0	.76	1.63	0	.09	.60	-3.49	***
Word order	0	.61	1.85	0	.29	.83	-1.10	
Voice	0	.49	1.67	0	.00	.00	-2.81	**
Mood	0	.00	.00	0	.28	1.74	1.60	
Case	0	.00	.00	0	1.11	2.14	4.58	***
Condition	0	.00	.00	0	.45	2.75	1.60	

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

The answer to question 3 is also found in table 3. The students made significantly more tense, noun, verb, preposition, pronoun, relative, speech, article, and voice errors when they had to translate sentences from Arabic into English than when they had to translate sentences from English into Arabic. But they made significantly more case errors when they had to translate sentences from English into Arabic than when they had to translate the sentences from Arabic into English. There were no significant differences in terms of agreement, word order, mood, and condition. This means that the participants are better at translating from English into Arabic than from Arabic into English. This result might stem from the assumption that the participants have a linguistic background of their native language. It might also stem from the focus on translating from the foreign language into the native language. According to Dickins, Hervey and Higgins (2002, p. 2) "translator training normally focuses on translation into the mother tongue, because higher quality is achieved in that direction than in translating into a foreign language."

Table 4 shows the morpho-syntactic errors of the two groups of the participants. It answers question 4. Because the students differed across locations, Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U tests were conducted. The figures in Table 4 reveal that the number of errors does not differ significantly with respect to study location. The results in this table prove the test reliability as well.

Table 4. Mann-Whitney U Results for Morpho-Syntactic Errors across Study Location

Error	Sana'a			Taiz			Z
	Md	M	SD	Md	M	SD	
Tense	0	2.26	4.50	0	2.12	4.39	-.22
Noun	0	.91	2.45	0	1.21	3.40	.38
Verb	0	1.03	2.18	0	.89	2.07	-.50
Preposition	0	.65	1.55	0	.80	1.91	-.04

Pronoun	0	.61	2.17	0	.59	1.79	.17
Agreement	0	1.04	2.64	0	1.35	3.48	.52
Relative	0	.55	2.19	0	.53	1.98	.23
Speech	0	.59	1.96	0	.36	1.56	-1.37
Article	0	.41	1.29	0	.44	1.25	.21
Word order	0	.38	1.04	0	.52	1.75	-.13
Voice	0	.17	.97	0	.31	1.40	.06
Mood	0	.09	.78	0	.19	1.57	.58
Case	0	.59	1.83	0	.52	1.36	.21
Condition	0	.21	1.90	0	.24	2.01	.58

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

### 3.2 Qualitative Analysis

In the qualitative analysis, the samples are presented as they were written by the participants and the morpho-syntactic errors are underlined. It should also be noted that the SL sentence examples are given the same serial number in the test.

#### 3.2.1 Qualitative Analysis of Arabic-English Translation

Translating tenses from Arabic into English is one of the most tough tasks that students face. The majority of Arabic-English test errors are found in mistranslating tenses from Arabic into English. The underlined verbs in the sample of sentence (19) is an example of the errors made by Arab learners in the sentence tense.

الجملة (19) ذهب الرجل إلى الساحل قبل ساعة، واصطاد سمكة بشكل سريع ثم عاد.

The man goes to the beach before hour to fish fast and come back

The verb errors that frequently occur in the students' translation can be described as auxiliary or main verb deletion, addition and verb form or auxiliary substitution.

الجملة (13) سأعيرك سيارتي إن احتجتها.

I will borrow you my car if you need it

The students make errors of various types when using nouns in their translations.

الجملة (11) المشتقات النفطية من أخطر المواد التي قد تتسبب في تلوث مياه الأنهار والبحار والمحيطات.

Petrol is the most dangerous materials that might cause pollution in rivers, seas and ocean.

The translation sample of sentence (4) includes an erroneous use of the preposition *to*.

الجملة (4) حدث محمداً عليّ حديثاً أنساه كل همومه، وجعله يشعر بالسعادة طيلة يومه

Mohammed told Ali some words made Mohamed to forget every worries and made his happy for the rest of his day.

The pronoun *them* was redundantly added in the translation of sentence (7).

الجملة (7) أعرف كثيراً من الناس يختلفون عن أولئك الذين كنت تتحدث عنهم البارحة.

I know a lot of people that differ from those who you're talking about them yesterday.

In sentence structure, there must be an agreement between the subject and its verb or the pronoun and its antecedent. The following sample proves an agreement violation.

الجملة (2) أصانم الرجلان؟

Is the two men fasting?

Relative clause errors are common in relative pronoun addition, omission or substitution.

الجملة (15) هناك الكثير من الطلاب لا يعرفون الفرق بين الأفعال اللازمة والمتعدية لمفعول والمتعدية لمفعولين.

There are a lot of student don't know the differences between intransitive and transitive verbs

The students in some samples erroneously use one part of speech for another.

الجملة (20) يستطيع المعاقون إنجاز الكثير من الأشياء بإتقان.

Handicapped can do many things perfection.

The disable people can do a lot of things very well.

In the following sample, the definite article was used in place of the indefinite article.

الجملة (17) يحزنني أن أرى طفلا يعمل في متجر وهو محروم من الدراسة ويجزني أكثر من ذلك أن أرى طفلا يتسول في الشوارع.

I'm sorry to see the child works in the bar without studing and I'm very sorry to see also to beg in the street.

The following samples are about errors in sentence word order.

الجملة (5) لقد أسدى إليّ والدي بعض النصائح القيمة قبل سفري بيومين.

My father give me some advice before my travel two days.

My father advised me some value advices before two day I travel.

The following are samples about errors in the translation of relative clauses which show that the TL samples have the same word order of the SL sentence.

الجملة (9) تُوفي صديقي الذي كان يتكلم اللغتين العربية والإنجليزية بطلاقة.

My friend died who was speak Arabic and English fluently

My friend died who was spoke the two languages Arabic and English fluently.

The errors in the use of voice are either due to using active where passive must be used or vice versa.

الجملة (14) تُربى الخراف في المنازل والمزارع، ويُفضل الإنسان تناول لحومها عن غيرها.

The sheeps brought up in the houses and farms and the human like to eat their lamps a lot.

الجملة (2) أصانم الرجلان؟

Are the two men fasted?

### 3.2.2 Qualitative Analysis of English-Arabic Translation

Gender distinction is common in Arabic but not in English language. Dawood and Mohammed (2008) point out that "It is also commonly believed that at the sentence level the

gender of the complement in English does not determine the choice of the subject pronoun unlike in Arabic." The following is a sample from the subjects translation to illustrate the loss of gender agreement.

There is no gender agreement between the pronoun هم and its antecedent مديرات.

**Sentence (5)** They are schoolmistresses in Sana'a.

هم مديرات مدارس في صنعاء

Since English language has twelve tenses "most of them have no precise equivalents in Arabic" (Ghazala 1995, p. 61), this creates a problem for the students when translating tenses. The Arabic structure that is equivalent to the past progressive is used to translate sentence (8) which is in the past tense.

**Sentence (8)** Who taught your brother English before he joined the university?

من كان يدرس أخاك اللغة الانجليزية قبل دخوله الجامعة

Case ending is obviously seen in some word categories such as the dual form, and the plural form. In the translation of sentence (6), the word أخاك is the subject of the interrogative sentence, but the sample shows that the word it is marked for the accusative case which means that it is the object of the sentence.

**Sentence (6)** Has your brother invited his father-in-law?

هل دعى أخاك حموه؟

In sentence (7), the if clause means *he did not know the fact*. But the Arabic samples below indicate that there is a probability for him to know the fact in the present or the future.

**Sentence (7)** If he had known the fact, he could have told us what to do.

لو عرف الحقيقة سيخبرنا ما نفعله  
إذا عرف الحقيقة يمكن اخبارنا ما علينا فعله

In some samples, the students do not use the correct word order by putting the adjective before the noun it describes as in the translation of sentence (3):

**Sentence (3)** Go and tell the hotel manager that the only disturbing thing in this hotel is the noisy children next door.

اذهب وقل لمدير الفندق ان الشيء الوحيد المزعج في هذا الفندق هو الأطفال المزعجون في الغرفة المجاورة.

The present form of the verb in Arabic is marked for mood. It is usually marked by adding the inflectional suffixes *-u* for indicative mood and *-a* for subjunctive mood, but the jussive mood in Arabic is marked by means of a zero suffix. The verb after the particle *lam* is marked for the jussive mood. But the following sample shows a wrong use of mood.

**Sentence (20)** The doctor has advised the patient to stay in bed for two weeks and to eat fat-containing food sparingly as fat contains high amounts of energy which is stored if it's not used up.

نصح الطبيب المريض بملازمة السريير لمدة أسبوعين وتناول وجبات دسمة من وقت لآخر لكونها تحتوي على نسبه عاليه من الطاقة التي يخزنها الجسم إذا لم يقوم الجسد بحرقها

Some of the students make errors in the use of pronouns.

**Sentence (12)** It is necessary that the rich should help their relatives.

من الأهمية أن الغني يجب أنه يساعد اقاربه

In the translation of sentence (4) which has a relative clause, the sample shows a literal translation.

**Sentence (4)** The man killed in the battle was my friend.

الرجل قتل في معركة أنه صديقي

The verbs يكون seems to be added in the translation of sentence (3) because of the literal translation the student followed.

**Sentence (3)** Go and tell the hotel manager that the only disturbing thing in this hotel is the noisy children next door.

اذهب وأخبر مدير الفندق بأن الشيء المثير للقلق في الفندق يكون بازعاج الاطفال بجانب الأبواب

The students make a few categories errors in the use of articles when translating from English into Arabic. The omission of the definite article in the sample below marks the word امرأتان (two women) for indefinite.

**Sentence (11)** The two women are cooking in the kitchen, but they will not invite their neighbors for lunch.

تطبخ امرأتان في المطبخ لكنهما لن يدعيان جيرانهما إلى الغداء

A few errors in the use of Arabic prepositions are detected in the students samples.

In the negative sentence (10), it is noticed that the Arabic word سوف was redundantly added.

**Sentence (10)** My parents and I will not spend the summer vacation in Yemen.

انا ووالدي سوف لن نقضي العطلة في اليمن

#### 4. Findings

1. The students make significantly more tense, noun, verb, preposition, pronoun, relative, speech, article, and voice errors when they had to translate sentences from Arabic into English than when they had to translate sentences from English into Arabic.

2. They made case errors when they had to translate sentences from English into Arabic.

3. Though the most common errors that students make when translating from English into Arabic are agreement violation errors, there are no significant differences in the students translation in terms of agreement, word order, mood, and condition.

4. The number of errors does not differ significantly between the two groups.

5. The errors made by the subjects under investigation might be attributed to the following reasons:

- a. Inadequate grammatical knowledge of both Arabic and English languages
- b. Mother tongue interference
- c. Adopting literal translation
- d. Overgeneralization
- e. Differences between Arabic and English morphology and syntax
- f. Lack of one-to-one correspondence between Arabic and English grammar

#### 5. Recommendations and Suggestions

The above-mentioned findings lead the researcher to propose the following recommendations:

1. A course on contrastive analysis ought to be added as a prerequisite for translation courses.
2. Since the students take only one Arabic course as a university requirement, other Arabic courses should be added to the curriculum of the Translation Program in the English Department.
3. Teachers should be acquainted with the reasons behind their students making the different morpho-syntactic errors.
4. Teachers should not overlook any of the students' morpho-syntactic errors because ignoring them and letting the students excessively make them will create a habit formation in the students' performance which might lead to more critical and fatal errors.

5. Teachers of translation should explain the differences between Arabic and English morpho-syntactic structures to their students.
6. Teachers of translation should inform their students to avoid using literal translation unless there is a correspondence between the SL and the TL in view of structure and meaning.
8. Teachers of translation should teach their students equivalent Arabic tenses for each English tense counterpart.
9. Teachers should tell their students to deal with Arabic and English languages as two different languages of different origins and each of them has its own morpho-syntactic rules that differentiate it from the other.
10. Students should be told not to over generalize the English grammatical rules and to take into account the exceptions and irregularities for these rules when translating.
11. Students should take into consideration the morpho-syntactic rules in their translation.

On the bases of the findings of this study the following suggestions for further studies could contribute to finding out more practical and useful solutions to the morpho-syntactic problems faced by Arab students of translation.

1. A study on the impact of morpho-syntactic errors on meaning is needed because the present study has not touched upon this issue.
2. Conducting similar separate studies on each morpho-syntactic category is required in order to come up with more detailed analysis featuring insightful and practical results.

## 6. Conclusion

This study examines the morpho-syntactic translation errors made by the students of the English Department (Translation Program) at the UST in Yemen. The errors are classified into different types: errors in the use of tenses, pronouns, articles, prepositions, verbs, nouns, relative and conditional clauses, agreement errors, case errors, mood errors, word order errors, and speech errors. The findings of this study reveal that the students makesignificantly more tense, noun, verb, preposition, pronoun, relative, speech, article, and voice errors when they had to translate sentences from Arabic into English. There are no significant differences in the students' translation in terms of agreement, word order, mood and condition. The study shows that students' inadequate grammatical knowledge, mother tongue interference, differences between Arabic and English languages could be the main reasons for committing these errors. In the light of these findings, the study recommends that the translation teachers and students should not ignore the morpho-syntactic rules of both the source and the target languages. It is hoped that this study will help decision makers and officials at the UST to take its results into account in order to solve some of the problems that face their students when translating from Arabic to English or vice versa .

## About the Authors:

**Muayad Shamsan** is a lecturer in the English Department, College of Science and Arts at the University of Bisha, Bisha, Saudi Arabia. Before this, he had a four-year experience in teaching English at the UST, Yemen. He is also doing his Ph.D. in Sudan. His chief interests are contrastive linguistics and translation studies.

**Abdul- Majeed Attayib** is a Professor of Applied Linguistics in the English Language Center at Umm Al- Qura University, Holy City of Makah, Saudi Arabia. Before that Prof. **Attayib** was Chairman of the English Language Department at Khartoum University in Sudan and he is member of a number academic societies concerned with English Language Teaching.

## Reference

- Alfadly, H. & Aldeibani Full, A. (2013). An Analysis of some Linguistic Problems in Translation between Arabic and English Faced by Yemeni English Majors at Hadramout University. *Journal of Islamic and Human Advanced Research*, 3, 1, 15-26. Retrieved from <http://www.sign-ific-ance.co.uk/index.php/JIHAR>.
- Alshehab, M. (2013). Investigating the Syntactic Difficulties which Encounter Translation Students at Irbid National University in Jordan from Arabic into English, *AWEJ Special issue on Translation*, 2, 129-148. Retrieved from <http://www.awej.org/index.php?option.com>
- Al-Zakari, M. (2006). *Problems of Lexical and Grammatical Ambiguity in Arabic Translation as Encountered by Fourth Year Students- Department of English- Faculty of Education- Sabir- Aden University*. (Unpublished M.A. thesis). Aden University, Yemen.
- Bakir, K. & Lazim, H. (2009). Stylistic Problems Confronting Arab Students in Arabic-English Translation. *Journal of College of Arts. University of Basrah*. 50, 24-41. Retrieved from [www.iasj.net/iasj?func=fulltext&aId=53091](http://www.iasj.net/iasj?func=fulltext&aId=53091)
- Corder, S. P. (1981). *Error Analysis and Interlanguage*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Dawood M. A. & Mohammed M. J. (2008). The Ambiguity of Gender in English- Arabic Translation. *Arab Al-Rafidayn*, 52, 1-20. Retrieved from [www.iasj.net/iasj?func=fulltext&aId=32936](http://www.iasj.net/iasj?func=fulltext&aId=32936)
- Dickins, J., Hervey S., & Higgins, I. (2002). *Thinking Arabic Translation: A Course in Translation Method: Arabic to English*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Farghal, M. & Shunnaq, A. (1999) *Translation with Reference to English and Arabic*. Irbid: Dar Al-Hilal for Translation.
- Ghazala, H. (2008). *Translation as problems and solutions: A textbook for university students and trainee translators*. Beirut: Dar El-Ilm Lil-Malayin.
- Hassan, H. M. (1990). *A Contrastive Study of Tense and Aspect in English and Arabic with Special Reference to Translation*. Ph.D. Thesis. UK: University of Bath. ProQuest: UMI Dissertations Publishing
- Haywood & Nahmad (1965). *A New Arabic Grammar of the Written Language*. London: Lund Humphries.
- Jmila, M. (2014). Importance of Linguistics in the Development of Translation Competence. *AWEJ. Special Issue on Translation*, 3, 88-94. Retrieved from <http://www.awej.org/index.php?option.com>
- Lado, R. (1964). *Language Teaching: a Scientific Approach*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company.
- Mahmoud, M. A. (2013). Investigating Some Lexical Problems in English- Arabic Translation Confronted by Undergraduate Students and Proposing Solutions

- for them. *International Journal of Scientific & Engineering Research*, 4, (4), 1016-1082. Retrieved from <http://www.ijser.org/>
- Moukktet, Ahmed (1986). *Linguistics and Translation: Some Semantic Problems in Arabic-English Translation*. Ph.D. Thesis. Washington: Georgetown University. ProQuest, UMI Dissertations Publishing.
- Muthanna, A.& Al-Sohbani, Y. (2013). Challenges of Arabic-English Translation: The Need for Re-Systematic Curriculum and Methodology Reforms in Yemen. In *Academic Research International*, 4, (4), 442-450. Retrieved from <http://www.journals.savap.org.pk/>
- Newmark, P. (1988). *A Textbook of Translation*. London: Prentice Hall.
- Nida, E. (1964) *Toward a Science of Translating, with Special Reference to Principles and Procedures Involved in Bible Translating*, Leiden, Holland: Brill.
- Onqubi, A. (2006) *Problems of Translating Arabic Tenses into English and Vice Versa*. (Unpublished M.A. Thesis). Taiz University, Yemen
- Ouided, Sekhri (2009) *Problems in Translating Tenses*. (Unpublished M. A. thesis). Mentouri University, Constantine.
- Ryding, K. C. (2005). *A Reference Grammar of Modern Standard Arabic*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Zagood, M. (2012). *A Contrastive Study of Relativization in English and Arabic with Reference to Translation Pedagogy*. (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis). Durham University. Available at Durham E-Theses Online: <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/3402/>

**Appendix A**

**Translate the following sentences into Arabic.**

1. Musa helped Saeed.
2. These women are active.
3. Go and tell the hotel manager that the only disturbing thing in this hotel is the noisy children next door.
4. The man killed in the battle was my friend.
5. They are schoolmistresses in Sana'a.
6. Has your brother invited his father-in-law?
7. If he had known the fact, he could have told us what to do.
8. Who taught your brother English before he joined the university?
9. The president received the winners at the airport.
10. My parents and I will not spend the summer vacation in Yemen.
11. The two women are cooking in the kitchen, but they will not invite their neighbors for lunch.
12. It is necessary that the rich should help their relatives.
13. She came across the two girls who were her students at the University of Science and Technology and they insisted on her having lunch with them.
14. Students who are brave enough to attempt the course deserve to succeed.

15. Don't visit me in the afternoon because I won't be home. I am going to be studying at the library.
16. A father told his daughters, "You are the happy memories of the past, the joyful moments of the present and the hope and promise of the future."
17. The girls, I taught last year, were so intelligent that one cannot challenge them with any type of question.
18. Sami will have graduated from university by the time his younger brother is seventeen years old.
19. The children have to play in the street till their parents come home.
20. The doctor has advised the patient to stay in bed for two weeks and to eat *fat-containing food* sparingly as *fat contains* high amounts of energy which is stored if it's not used up.

#### Appendix B

#### Translate the following sentences into English.

1. رَأَى صَدِيقِي سَعِيداً رَاكِباً الْفَرَسِ.
2. أَصَانِمُ الرَّجُلَانِ؟
3. هُنَاكَ عَشْرَةٌ مِنْ أَصْدِقَاءِ الْمُدْرَسِينَ فِي الْمُدْرَسَةِ.
4. حَدَّثَ مُحَمَّدٌ عَلِيَّ حَدِيثًا أَنْسَاهُ كُلَّ هَمُومِهِ، وَجَعَلَهُ يَشْعُرُ بِالسَّعَادَةِ طِيلَةَ يَوْمِهِ.
5. لَقَدْ أَسَدَى إِلَيَّ وَالَّذِي بَعْضُ النَّصَائِحِ الْقِيَمَةِ قَبْلَ سَفَرِي بِيَوْمَيْنِ.
6. وَجَدَ الطَّلَابُ الصَّغَارَ الْمَقْرَرِ صَعْباً بَيْنَمَا وَجَدَهُ الْكِبَارُ سَهْلًا.
7. أَعْرَفَ كَثِيرًا مِنَ النَّاسِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ عَن أَوْلَانِكَ الَّذِينَ كُنْتَ تَتَحَدَّثُ عَنْهُمْ الْبَارِحَةَ.
8. تَعْتَبِرُ اللُّغَةَ الْعَرَبِيَّةَ وَاحِدَةً مِنَ اللُّغَاتِ الْأَقْدَمِ فِي الْعَالَمِ.
9. تُوفِي صَدِيقِي الَّذِي كَانَ يَتَكَلَّمُ اللَّغَتَيْنِ الْعَرَبِيَّةَ وَالْإِنْجِلِيزِيَّةَ بِطَلَاقَةٍ.
10. سَتَكُونُ ابْنَتِي قَدْ نَامَتْ عِنْدَمَا أَصَلَ إِلَى الْبَيْتِ لِأَنَّهَا وَزَمِيلَاتُهَا سَيَسْتَيْقِظْنَ مَبَكْرًا اسْتِعْدَادًا لِلْإِخْتِبَارِ.
11. الْمَشْتَقَاتُ النَّفْطِيَّةُ مِنْ أخطرِ الْمَوَادِّ الَّتِي قَدْ تَتَسَبَّبُ فِي تَلَوُّثِ مِيَاهِ الْأَنْهَارِ وَالْبَحَارِ وَالْمَحِيطَاتِ.
12. هَلْ تَحِبُّ أَصْهَارَكَ؟
13. سَأَعْبِرُكَ سَيَارَتِي إِنْ احْتَجَّتْهَا.
14. تُرَبَّى الْخِرَافُ فِي الْمَنَازِلِ وَالْمَزَارِعِ، وَيُفَضَّلُ الْإِنْسَانُ تَنَاوُلَ لَحْمِهَا عَن غَيْرِهَا.

15. هناك الكثير من الطلاب لا يعرفون الفرق بين الأفعال اللازمة والمتعدية لمفعول والمتعدية لمفعولين.
16. من يسيء التعامل مع العلماء، ولا يقدر مكانتهم، فجزاؤه سيأتيه عاجلاً أم آجلاً.
17. يحزنني أن أرى طفلاً يعمل في متجر وهو محروم من الدراسة ويحزنني أكثر من ذلك أن أرى طفلاً يتسول في الشوارع.
18. كان لي جار نشيط أكثر من اللازم، فقد كنت أستيقظ من نومي باكراً في الوقت الذي يكون فيه قد ذهب إلى عمله.
19. ذهب الرجل إلى الساحل قبل ساعة، واصطاد سمكة بشكل سريع ثم عاد.
20. يستطيع المعاقون إنجاز الكثير من الأشياء بإتقان.