

A Critical Study of Three English-Arabic Internet Glossaries

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Abstract

This paper tackles the degree of accuracy in producing three electronic glossaries that have been published on the web. The glossaries are: *A Finance Glossary* (from English into Arabic), *A Glossary of Arabic Grammar Terms* (from Arabic into English), and *A Glossary of United States History and Government* (from English into Arabic), using a descriptive and analytical approach of the Web data. The paper aims at highlighting the inaccurate renderings of specialized terminology within three electronic glossaries, and suggesting some measures for tackling the problem. The shortcomings observed included a number of inaccurate equivalents, vague and literal rendering of some culture-specific notions, use of inappropriate TL collocations, and vague and literal renderings of a number of idiomatic expressions. It is evident that the authors of such glossaries have exerted serious efforts to prepare them, and have generously made them accessible freely, yet such inaccurate renderings of specialized jargon may have certain disadvantages and can be misleading to inexperienced translators and students of translation. From the three glossaries the paper cites a number of examples that are incorrect, inaccurate, and poor renderings as a case in point, specifying the error or weakness, and providing substitute renderings for them. It also suggests some solutions for the problem under consideration.

Key Words: glossary, translation, equivalent, financial terms, grammar terms, history terms.

1. Introduction

The problem of translating specialized jargon is a very old one. During the reign of the Abbasid caliph Al-Ma'moon, Arab translators faced the problem of translating scientific jargon from Greek, Persian, and Indian into Arabic (Bahumaid, 1994). Since the first half of the 20th century Arab scholars, Arab Academies, Arab universities and institutes, as well as many researchers and translators have been concerned about the rendering of specialized jargon in many Arab countries. In an attempt to resolve the problem, Arab Academies were established in a number of Arab countries to tackle the problem of translating specialized jargon (Syria in 1919, Egypt in 1932, Iraq 1947, Jordan 1976, Tunisia 1983, the Institute for Studies and Research for Arabicization in Morocco, and the Kuwait Research Institute). Unfortunately these academies did not succeed in producing consistent renderings for specialized terms, but produced inconsistent renderings.

In our times of modern information technology (the Internet), new efforts have been exerted to provide electronic glossaries of specialized jargon in a number of disciplines on the websites.

2. Internet English-Arabic Electronic Glossaries

Three electronic glossaries are tackled in this paper that were published on the web site:

[(<http://arabswata.org>)(<http://www.pixzo.us/uploads/7eb0d5c36e.doc>)

The author came across these glossaries on the internet:

1. Finance Glossary
2. A Glossary of Arabic Grammar Terms
3. A Glossary of United States History and Government

As a number of inaccurate renderings were observed in the three glossaries, and because the blog (<http://arabswata.org>) is consulted by a large number of translators and students of English-Arabic translation, the researcher felt it necessary to investigate the matter.

The shortcomings observed are tabulated in the following three tables that list the errors, their type, and suggest substitutes for each case.

2.1. Examples from the English-Arabic Finance Glossary

No.	English Expression	Glossary Rendering	Critical Comment	Substitute Rendering
1	Deed of trust	سند برهان عقاري يعطى ضمانا للوفاء بزمه	[SL item is paraphrased rather than rendered into a translation equivalent] Substitute Rendering →	ضمانة عقارية
2	Flood hazard insurance	تأمين ضد الطوفان	[SL item is inaccurately rendered into the TL as طوفان (back translation: deluge)] Substitute Rendering →	تأمين ضد الفيضان
3	Postdated check	شيك يحمل تاريخا مقدما	[SL TL? item is vague and holds some ambiguity] Substitute Translation: →	صك بتاريخ آجل
4	Mortgage	رهن	[SL item is specific in meaning related to real estate, but the TL rendering is generic]. Substitute Translation: →	رهن عقاري
5	Recordation taxes	تسجيل الضرائب	[SL modifier-modified relation in the noun group is reversed (back translation: registering the taxes)]. Substitute Translation: →	ضرائب التسجيل

6	Estate tax reductions	تخفيضات من ضرائب الملكية	[SL item 'Estate' is specific in meaning, but the rendering is generic (back translation: reducing ownership taxes)]. Substitute Translation: →	خصومات ضريبة العقار
7	Automation	الإدارة الميكانيكية	[SL item is inaccurately (back rendered into the TL translation: Mechanical Management)]. Substitute Rendering →	الأتمتة (التشغيل الآلي)
8	Current cost	تكاليف تجارية	[SL item is inaccurately rendered into a vague TL expression and odd collocation]. Substitute Rendering: →	الكلفة الحالية
9	Current liabilities	إلتزام جاري	[SL item is inaccurately rendered into a vague TL expression and odd collocation]. Substitute Rendering: →	الالتزامات المالية الحالية
10	Governance	الرقابة	[SL item is inaccurately rendered into the TL (back translation: censorship)] Substitute Rendering: →	الحوكمة (وضع سياسات ومتابعة تطبيقها)

2.2. Examples from the Glossary of Arabic Grammar Terms

No.	English Expression	Glossary Rendering	Critical Comment	Substitute Rendering
1	المُضَاف	1 st Particle of the construction	[SL term is paraphrased into the TL in a vague and ambiguous way.] →Substitute Translation:	The Annexed
2	المُضَاف إِلَيْهِ	2 nd Particle of the construction	[SL term is paraphrased into the TL in a vague and ambiguous way.] Substitute Translation: →	The annexed-to
3	الفِعْلُ الْمُجَرَّد	؟	[SL item is not translated]. Translation: →	Verb Root or Verb Stem
4	وزن الفعل	The Pattern of the verb	[SL item is translated with vague meaning]. Substitute Translation: →	Verb Paradigm
5	جُمْلَةٌ شَرْطِيَّةٌ	Conditional Phrase	[SL item is inaccurately rendered into 'phrase' due to haste or careless handling]. Substitute Rendering: →	Conditional Sentence

6	التَّعَجُّب	The Verbal Exclamatory-ion Style	[SL item is paraphrased with redundant and vague explanation]. Substitute Translation: →	Exclamation
7	التَّوَكُّيد	Added word for emphasis	[SL item is paraphrased with redundant and vague explanation]. Substitute Translation: →	Emphasis
8	جملة إسميَّة	Sequential Sentence (Nominal)	[SL item is translated with a vague meaning]. Substitute Translation: →	Nominal Sentence
9	الحال	<u>H</u> aal Accusative	[SL item is transliterated and also rendered into a vague and inaccurate meaning]. Substitute Translation: →	Circumstantial Adverb

10	المُبْتَدَأُ	The subject of a Sequential (Nominal) Sentence	[SL item is paraphrased with redundant and vague explanation]. Substitute Translation: →	Topic Or : Theme
11	نَائِبُ الْفَاعِلِ	Subject of the Predicate (Substitute of the Doer of the Verb)	[SL item is paraphrased with redundant and vague explanation]. Substitute Translation: →	Subject of a passive sentence
12	النَّكْرَةُ	A common noun	[SL item is rendered with vague and inaccurate meaning]. Substitute Translation: →	Indefinite Noun
13	الفِعْلُ الْمَزِيدُ	one or more of the Increased Letters	[SL item is paraphrased with vague and inaccurate meaning]. Substitute Translation: →	derived verb
14	المبني	The end of a word, noun, verb or particle is static. Some employs the term “indeclension”.	[SL item is paraphrased with redundant and vague explanation except for the last clause]. Substitute Translation: →	The Indeclinable
15	المعرب	The vowel of the last consonant in a verb or noun is dynamic.	[SL item is paraphrased with redundant, vague and inaccurate meaning]. Substitute Translation: →	The Declinable

2.3. An English-Arabic Glossary of United States History and Government

No.	English Expression	Glossary Rendering	Critical Comment	Substitute Rendering
1	Bessemer process	عملية بسمير	[Culture-specific SL item is transliterated with vague meaning in the TL]. Substitute Translation: →	طريقة بسمير في صناعة الفولاذ
2	Wounded Knee	معركة ووندد ني	[Culture-specific SL item is transliterated producing vague meaning in the TL]. Substitute Translation: →	مذبحة الهنود الحمر في قرية ووندد ني بولاية داكوتا (الجنوبية)
3	The Zenger Case	قضية الزنكر	[Culture-specific SL item is transliterated with vague TL meaning]. Substitute Translation: →	قضية [الصحفي] زنكر [عام 1733]
4	Real politic	بولتيك حقيقي	[Culture-specific SL item is transliterated producing vague meaning in the TL]. Substitute Translation: →	السياسة الواقعية

5	Ku klux klan	كو كلاس كلان	[Culture-specific SL item is transliterated with vague TL meaning]. Substitute Translation: →	[منظمة] كوكلاكس كلان السرية [المعادية للزواج واليهود والأجانب]
6	Bill of Rights	لائحة قوانين	[Culture-specific SL item is literally paraphrased producing vague TL meaning]. Substitute Translation: →	لائحة الحقوق المدنية
7	Black Power	قوة سوداء	[SL idiomatic expression is literally translated into the TL with vague meaning]. Substitute Translation: →	النفوذ الاقتصادي والسياسي للأمريكيين السود
8	Magna Carta	وثيقة حقوق	[Culture-specific SL item is translated into the TL with vague general meaning in the TL (back translation: a bill of rights)]. Substitute Translation: →	وثيقة الماغنا كارتا لسنة 1215 الخاصة بحقوق نبلاء إنجلترا

9	Manifest Destiny	قدر واضح	[Culture-specific SL item is literally translated producing vague meaning in the TL (back translation: clear predestination)]. Substitute Translation: →	قدر الولايات المتحدة بالتوسع حتى المحيط الهادي (اعتقاد ساد في القرن 19)
10	Civil disobedience	عدم الطاعة المدنية	[SL item is translated with inappropriate collocation in the TL]. Substitute Translation: →	عصيان مدني
11	greenbacks	ورقة نقد أمريكية	[Specific SL item is vaguely paraphrased in the TL]. Substitute Translation: →	الدولارات الأمريكية
12	Gross domestic product	انتاج محلي كلي	[SL item is translated with inappropriate collocation in the TL]. Substitute Translation: →	إجمالي الناتج المحلي
13	Gross national product	انتاج وطني شامل	[SL item is translated with inappropriate TL collocation.] Substitute Translation: →	إجمالي الناتج القومي
14	High crimes	اجرام عالي	[SL item is translated with odd collocation in the TL]. Substitute Translation: →	جرائم كبرى

15	Human resources	مصادر انسانية	[SL item is translated with inappropriate collocation in the TL]. Substitute Translation: →	موارد بشرية
16	Rugged Individualism	فردية وعرة	[SL item is translated with strange collocation in the TL]. Substitute Translation: →	نزعة فردية قوية
17	Separation of powers	فصل القوى	[Incorrect rendering as SL item is translated with inappropriate collocation leading to TL ambiguity]. Substitute Translation: →	الفصل بين السلطات
18	Spanish Civil War	الحرب المدنية الاسبانية	[SL item is translated with inappropriate collocation in the TL]. Substitute Translation: →	الحرب الأهلية الإسبانية
19	Under consumption	تحت الاستهلاك	[SL idiomatic expression is literally translated into the TL producing strange collocation and vague meaning]. Substitute Translation: →	ضعف الاستهلاك

20	Works Project Administration	مشروع ادارة الأعمال	[Incorrect rendering as SL classifier-modified relation in the noun group is reversed.] Substitute Translation: →	إدارة مشاريع الأعمال
21	Subsistence farming	دوام الزراعة	[Incorrect rendering as SL item is translated with inappropriate TL collocation].]. Substitute Translation: →	الاكتفاء الزراعي الذاتي
22	Stock market crash	اصطدام سوق الأسهم	[SL item is translated with a vague and incorrect meaning, producing a vague meaning in the TL. (back translation: collision of stock market)]. Substitute Translation: →	انهيار سوق الأسهم
23	Commander-in-Chief	زعيم القيادة	[SL item is literally translated with inappropriate collocation, producing a vague meaning in the TL]. Substitute Translation: →	القائد العام
24	Chief justice :	رئيس عدالة	[SL item is literally translated with inappropriate collocation, producing a vague meaning in the TL]. Substitute Translation: →	

				رئيس المحكمة العليا
25	Anti-Defama-tion League	فئة الافتراء	[SL item is incorrectly rendered, and has reversed the original meaning in the TL (back translation: defaming group)]. Substitute Translation: →	رابطة مكافحة التشهير [اليهودية الأمريكية]
26	Anti-trust	ضد الثقة	[SL item is incorrectly rendered, and has changed the original meaning in the TL (back translation: against confidence)]. Substitute Translation: →	مكافحة الاحتكار
27	Bay of Pigs Invasion	غزوة البي أف بجز	[SL item is transliterated producing a vague meaning in the TL Substitute Translation: →	غزو خليج الخنازير
28	checks and balances	صكوك وميزانيات	[Incorrect rendering as SL item is literally translated producing a vague and incorrect meaning in the TL]. Substitute Translation:	توازن السلطات [الأمريكية الثلاث]

29	compare and contrast	مقارنة وتناقض	[SL item is inaccurately translated with inappropriate collocation in the TL (back translation: comparison and contradiction)]. Substitute Translation: →	تبيان أوجه الشبه والاختلاف
30	Counter culture	ثقافة الشباب الغابرة	[Incorrect rendering as SL item is translated with a vague and incorrect meaning (back translation: youth's old culture)]. Substitute Translation: →	ثقافة مضادة
31	contra-brand	تهريب	[Incorrect rendering of the SL item (back translation: smuggling)]. Substitute Translation: →	السلع المحرمة تجاريا
32	Cultural interdependence	تداخل اعتماد حضاري	[Incorrect rendering as SL item is translated with a vague and inaccurate meaning (back translation: civilized dependence overlap)]. Substitute Translation: →	تكامل ثقافي
33	Cultural pluralism	جمع حضاري	[Incorrect rendering as SL item is translated with a vague and inaccurate meaning (back translation: civilized grouping)]. Substitute Translation: →	التعددية الثقافية

34	demobilization	شل الحركة	[Incorrect rendering of the SL item (back translation: paralyzing movement)]. Substitute Translation: →	تسريح الجند
35	desegregation	أعادة فصل	[Incorrect rendering of the SL item (back translation: re-separating)]. Substitute Translation: →	الاندماج العرقي
36	Draft evaders	متملصين التيار	[Incorrect rendering of the SL item (back translation: evaders of the current)]. Substitute Translation: →	المتهربون من الخدمة العسكرية
37	Federal deficit	نقص فدرالي	[Incorrect rendering as SL item is translated with a vague and inaccurate meaning (back translation: federal shortage)]. Substitute Translation: →	عجز الميزانية الفدرالية
38	Machine politics	سياسة الميكانيكية	[Incorrect rendering as SL item is translated with a vague and inaccurate TL meaning (back translation: the policy of mechanism)]. Substitute Translation: →	سياسات السيطرة
39	Market economy	سوق الاقتصاد	[Incorrect rendering as SL classifier-modified relation in the noun group is reversed] Substitute Translation: →	اقتصاد السوق

40	Martial law	قانون الزواج	[Incorrect rendering due to mixing up similar words (martial and marital). (back translation: Marital Law)] Substitute Translation: →	الأحكام العرفية
41	Middle Atlantic	نصف أطلسي	[SL expression is incorrect as it is literally translated into the TL (back translation: half the Atlantic)]. Substitute Translation: →	ولايات وسط الأطلسي الأمريكية
42	Pacific Northwest	شمال شرق الهادي	[SL item is incorrectly rendered due to haste or careless handling. (back translation: northeast the ..)] →	شمال غرب المحيط الهادي
43	Plains States	تصرح السهول	[SL expression is inaccurate as it is literally translated into the TL (back translation: plains say)]. Substitute Translation: →	ولايات السهول الأمريكية
44	reservations	احتياطات	[SL expression is inaccurately translated into the TL (back translation: reserves)]. Substitute Translation: →	تحفظات
45	Securities and Exchange Commission	أسهم ولجنة تبادل	[SL expression is inaccurate as it is literally translated into the TL (back translation: stocks and exchange committee)]. Substitute Translation: →	

				هيئة السندات والحوالات
46	Share cropping	زرع	[SL expression is incorrectly translated into the TL (back translation: planting)]. Substitute Translation: →	مُزارعة
47	Sherman Anti-Trust Act	أجراء شرمن لعدم الثقة	[SL expression is incorrectly translated into a vague TL expression (back translation: Sherman's measure of mistrust)]. Substitute Translation: →	قانون شرمن لمكافحة الاحتكار (في الولايات المتحدة عام 1890)
48	Trickle down economics	أسفل علم الاقتصاد	[SL expression is inaccurately rendered as it is literally translated into a vague TL expression (back translation: below economics)]. Substitute Translation: →	الاقتصاد الانتشاري
49	Upward mobility	بأعلى الحركة	[SL expression is inaccurate as it is literally translated into a vague TL expression. (back translation: higher movement)] Substitute Translation: →	تقدم في المنزلة الاجتماعية
50	Yellow journalism	ضجة اعلامية	[SL idiomatic expression is inaccurately translated into the TL (back translation: media fuss)]. Substitute Translation: →	الصحافة الصفراء

3. Analysis and Findings

The three tables of the three glossaries under discussion reflect a number of shortcomings. They may be summed up as:

1. Translating the SL expression into incorrect TL expression:

Examples:

2, 7, 8, in Table 1;

5, 6, 10, and 12 in Table 2;

22, 25, 26, 28, 2, 30, 31, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, and 44 in Table 3.

2. Culture-specific SL item transliterated not translated:

Examples:

4, and 6 in Table 1;

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 27 in Table 3.

3. Culture-specific SL item literally translated into the TL with vague meaning:

Examples:

6, 8, 9, and 47 in Table 3.

4. Idiomatic SL expression literally translated into the TL with vague meaning:

Examples:

7, 19, 28, 41, 43, 46, and 50 in Table 3.

5. Mixing up the SL modifier with the modified:

Examples:

5 in Table 1;

20, and 39 in Table 3.

6. Mixing up SL similar words, and producing incorrect renderings:

Examples:

10 in Table 1;
40 in Table 3.

7. Rendering SL item with specific meaning into generic TL meaning:

Examples:

4 and 6 in Table 1;
6 in Table 3.

8. Rendering SL item with specific meaning into vague TL meaning:

Examples:

1 and 2 in Table 2;
4 and 5 in Table 3.

9. Paraphrasing specific SL meaning into vague TL meaning:

Examples:

1 and 3 in Table 1;
1, 6, 11-15 in Table 2;
11-13, 32, 45, and 48- 49 in Table 3.

10. Rendering SL expression into inappropriate TL collocation:

Examples:

7, 10, 14-19, 21, 23, 28, 41, 43, and 46 in Table 3.

11. Simple mistakes and Missing Translation:

Examples:

3 and 5 in Table 2;
40 in Table 3.

Conclusion:

1. Many drawbacks were observed in the three glossaries under consideration that include incorrect, inaccurate, or inappropriate renderings.
2. It seems that many electronic glossaries on the web sites are uploaded without adequate control or reviewing. Although such glossaries can be quite helpful in many respects, they can also be harmful if they contain incorrect or inappropriate renderings.
3. To ensure benefit and advantages of electronic glossaries, some form of quality control is essential to avoid any negative consequential effects on learners using them.
4. Specialized academic committees may become in charge of such undertaking prior to publishing if possible, or reviewing them after publication so as to improve them.

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