# Lexical Challenges in Translating Business English Texts from English into Arabic Faced by Students of Business English, Faculty of Languages/ University of Abyan

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**ABSTRACT:**

This paper aims to investigate two aspects of Business English translation into Arabic: lexical problems(polysemy) and their causes. So the purpose of this study is to explore the lexical problems (polysemy) that students of business English encounter in translating Business English texts into Arabic and the reasons of these problems. The lexical problems are examined in translating business English texts at sentence and paragraph levels. The study reveals that there are several reasons behind these lexical problems. The most important reasons are: - Insufficient English and Arabic vocabularies. - Less awareness of the connotative meaning of lexical items in Arabic. - Lack of practicing translating in the classroom. - Lack of qualified teachers in the field of translation.

**Key words**:  business English translation, polysemy, connotative meaning

## Introduction

Translation has become more essential in communication. It is a linguistic activity that aims to transfer the meaning from the source language (SL) into the target language (TL). According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2008, p.1646), "translation is the process of changing something that is written or spoken into another language". Actually, translation is required everywhere when people buy any kind of products; medicine, food, etc., as they figure out a translation process between two, three or even more languages. Naturally, English is often included as a lingua franca at the present time.

Translation can be classified into; business, medical, legal, media and scientific translation, etc. Business translation is one of the translation types used in the Business world. Many scholars emphasize the importance of translating Business English documents. The use of English has increased for international purposes, as English has become the language of science, technology and business.

The process of translating English texts into Arabic has some obstacles which make the message unclear during the translation process. Lexical problems of translating Business English texts into Arabic are one of these obstacles. Some scholars consider translating lexical items as one of the most difficult problems in this area (Ghazala, 2008, p.83).

Consequently, they cannot translate isolated words, sentences, phrases and texts in their major study (i.e. Business English).The current study aims to explore some lexical problems (polysemy, monsemy, collocations and idioms) which the 4th year students of business English encounter at the Faculty of languages / University of Aden in translating Business English texts into Arabic and to identify the basic reasons behind these problems.

## Literature Review

### *Introduction*

Translation plays a vital role in transferring knowledge from one language into another. It is an essential element in the development of many sciences that contribute to the development of civilizations, as do many technological and scientific inventions.

Translation has become one of the most important areas of specialization due to the fact that most business, political and media activities in our globalized world depend basically on this profession (Alabbasi, 2015, p.11). Hence, demand for translation and interpreting service increase significantly in the world.

According to Newmark (1988), "the chief difficulties in translation are lexical, not grammatical, i.e. words, collocations and fixed phrases idioms" (p.32). He also adds "if you cannot understand a word, it may be because all its possible meanings are not known to you or because its meaning is determined by its unusual collocation or a reference elsewhere in the text" (1988, p.33).

In short, students of Business English at the Faculty of Languages/ University of Abyan may face some serious problems while translating the text from one language into another, their tasks are more difficult than that of the creative author who thinks and writes in one language consequently. This study aims at identifying lexical problems as one of the major problems that the students of Business English encounter while translating Business English texts into 12.

Arabic and the reasons behind these problems at the Faculty of Languages / University of Abyan.

This chapter consists of four sections. The first addresses English for specific purposes. The second deals with English for business purposes. The third discuses business translation. The last one presents lexical problems (i.e. polysemy, monosemy, collocations and idioms) in translating business English texts into Arabic with some details for each.

### *Lexical problems in translating business English texts*

The words are really hard to translate whose precise meaning depends heavily on the context. Most of scholars agree about lexical difficulties (i.e. meaning of words) as one of the most serious problems which students may face during the translation process. Ghazala (2008) discusses these problems in a clear way. He provided a clear explanation for each problem along with suggestions for solving these problems, as he states: The central lexical problem for the students of translation is their direct, literal translation of almost all words. They dedicate themselves to it wholeheartedly and in an unusual way in all texts and contexts, in regard to all words, phrases and expressions. (p.83)

It is obvious that Ghazala (2008) thinks that the relationship between words and how they are combined in a text should be given importance. However, words even as a part of a larger unit keep their direct, literal meaning. Al-Saqqaf (2003) finds that semantic problems were higher in percentage than the syntactic ones. The semantic problems in his study include the polysemy of words, idioms, proverbs, and vocabulary. Equally, Shudooh (1988) conducts a study to identify the syntactic errors that students commit while they translate from English 28 into Arabic. The study was based on actual data elicited from a sample of M.A students at Yarmouk University. The study found that lexical problems in English are primarily thirteen types of error which are as the following: choice of words, omission, redundancy, ambiguity, foreign terminology, misunderstanding of the ST, collocations, style, register, wrong derivation, word formation, literal translation, word order, weak structure, distortion of the message due to the difference in structure between Arabic and English.

There are many reasons that may lead students to commit these mistakes; they do not know or understand the meaning of words that maybe new words, and the structures are different between English and Arabic, etc. Awawdeh (1990) states that the lexical problems are due to the lack of agreement with appropriate Arabic terms and to the weakness of the lexical arabicization. He attributes the arbitrary creation of Arabic terms by translators to the problem of non-standardization in the area of terminology. Lexical problems usually occur when a word or an expression is not understood, misunderstood or totally unknown to translators. Synonymy, polysemy and monosemy, collocations, metaphors and idioms are considered as the most common lexical problems. (Ghazala, 2008, p.19)

The study believes that many individuals have difficulty in translating and using English in the business field, due to the limited English they learn at schools which mainly of general English type. The non-availability of a special academic course in business English at the university level is one of the reasons for the inadequate proficiency in the translation of business English into Arabic.

### *Polysemy*

There are many definitions of polysemy; Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2008, p.1174) defines it as "the fact of having more than one meaning". Palmer (1981) agrees on the same points as he maintains that "the same word may have a set of different meanings" (p.100). Yet, Panman (1982, p. 108) gives a more specific definition when he says it is "the phenomenon that two or more identical forms have different, but related meanings". (cited in Al-Sulaimaan, 2005).From all these definitions, there is an agreement that polysemy is a word which has different meaning according to the types of text. For example the word *depression* in fact has two meanings in different texts as the following examples illustrate:

1. The patient is suffering from *depression*. (الشديد الحزن من المريض يُعاني)

( *juʕa:ni: ʔlmari: dʕ min ʔlhuzn ʔʃadi:d* )

2. A severe economic *depression*. (كساد اقتصادي) ( *kasa:d ʔiqtisʕa:di: ʕami:q*)

Each meaning of the word *depression* can be taken as a literal meaning in a given structure and context. So, to say that the word *depression* has only one literal meaning which is (حُزن)

(*ħuzn*), a feeling of great sadness, or a medical condition that makes you have this feeling

(Longman Active Study Dictionary,2004,p.197), is not acceptable, because in example (2)

which is (a severe economic *depression*), *depression* has only one meaning which is (

كساد) (*kasa:d*) (a long period during which there is very little business activity and many people do not have jobs. Longman Active Study Dictionary (2004, p.197).So, if the word *depression* is translated in this business text into (حُزن) (*ħuzn*) and to say: اقتصادي حُزنعميق(*) (*ħuzn ʔiqti- sʕa:di: ʕami:q* ) is a wrong translation because it can only say: (كساد عميق اقتصادي) (*kasa:d ʔiqtisʕa:di: ʕami:q*) in this business English text.

The problems of translating business polysemous words appear when the translator consider the common meaning and neglects the other specific meaning, so they translate them as monosemous words. Boubidi (2010) investigates a study of the first master students that supposed to know the meaning of polysemous words as they were studied translation courses from the second year in the English Department, Faculty of Letters and Languages, Mentouri Constantine University. To achieve that aims, a translation test is given to them. The problems are the misunderstanding of polysemous system of words sometimes poses problems in rendering the right translation of the TT and found the Arabic equivalence within a context from English into Arabic. The study revealed that first master students have translated the core meaning into Arabic because they may know only the common meaning and apply it for all context.

Moreover, Hamlaoui (2010) claims that the problems of ambiguous nature of English word are particularly polysomic words and he supposes using the linguistic context to success .The findings are summarized as follows:

1. Problems for the 2nd year students in translation emerge from words.

2. Because most of English words are still foreign, at this stage, they create ambiguity for the 2nd year students.

3. The 2nd year students use the linguistic context to understand difficult words.

4. The 2nd year students do not know polysemy, but they define it as hyponymy.

5. Because the 2nd year students do not know polysemy, this may create more problems for them.

6. Because the 2nd year students lack of English vocabularies, they fail in translation; whether these words are polysomic or not.

## Research Methodology

The descriptive analysis method has been adopted, frequency and percentage.  The subjects of this study consists of 30 4th year students of Business English at the Faculty of Languages /University of Abyan. The analysis of this data was based on the descriptive analysis.

### *Instrument*

The instrument used to collect data was the test. Seliger and Shohamy (1989, p.176) point out that "tests are generally used to collect data about the subject's ability in knowledge of the second language in areas such as vocabulary, grammar, reading, meta-linguistic awareness and general proficiency".

## Results Interpretation and Discussion

### Lexical problems at the sentence level revealed by the test

Section one deals with translating idioms, ploysemous words, monosemous words and collocational items which are considered as lexical problems. This section includes twenty sentences. Every five sentences deal with one of the lexical problems mentioned above. The study starts with data analysis of the first section of the test at the sentence level. Polysemy sentences are the first group in the table analysis, and then the results of other problems i.e. monsemy, collocations and idioms are analyzed and interpreted respectively. The inputs of the analyzed sentences in the tables are arranged according to their position in the test. Frequencies, easiness, difficulty are used

| Polysemy Sentences | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| No. of Sentences | Sentence | The correct trans. | Answer | No. of Students | Easiness% | Difficulty% | Total | Rank |
| 1 | **The political issue in Yemen caused great *depression* according to several international organizations.** | *Depression* | Wrong. | 28 (93.3%) | | | | |
| | | كساد اقتصادي *kasa:d ʔaqtisˤa:d i:* | Correct | 2 (6.7%) | 7.0 | 93.0 | 100.0 | 1 |
| 2 | **The National Bank *interests* are very high.** | *Interests* | Wrong | 17 (56.7%) | | | | |
| | | فوائد *fawa:ʔid* | Correct | 13 (43.3%) | 43.0 | 57.0 | 100.0 | 5 |

| 3 | We need *a cut* in taxes. | *a cut* | Wrong | 21 (70%) | 30.0 | 70.0 | 100.0 | 2 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | تخفيض | Correct | 13 (30%) | | | | |
| | | *taxfi:dʕ* | Total | 30 (100%) | | | | |
| 4 | You need to *redeem* your debt, before they take away your properties. | *redeem* | Wrong | 19 (63.3%) | 36.7 | 63.3 | 100.0 | 3 |
| | | تَسدد | Correc | 11 (36.7%) | | | | |
| | | *tusdid* | Total | 30 (100%) | | | | |
| 5 | *A saving* account is one where you leave any extra money .you have for a longer time so that you can get more interest. | *A saving* | Wrong | 12 (40%) | | | | |
| | | التوفير | Correct | 18 (60%) | 40.0 | 60.0 | 100.0 | 4 |
| | | *ʔawfi:r* | Total | 30 (100%) | | | | |

Table   above contains five English polysemy sentences that the students of Business English are asked to translate them into Arabic. Looking at sentence No. 3 in the table above 'The political issue in Yemen caused great *depression* according to several international organizations'. It can be realized that the majority of subjects (93.3%) do not succeed in translating this sentence whereas two of them (6.7%) translate it correctly. It may refer to their misunderstanding of the polysemous word '*depression'*. They translate it literary into the common equivalent 'نزح '*[ħuzn]. But two of them translate it into 'دوكر'[ruku:d] similar to the exact meaning'كساد قتصادي'[kasa:d ʔqtisʕa:d i:]. Consequently, the students should not stick on the core meaning of the words but they should consider the type of the text and its

overall meaning.

With reference to sentence No. 9 in table 8 'The National Bank *interests* are very high', the result reveals that more than half of the subjects (56.7%) fail to translate this sentence, while the remaining subjects (43.3%) translate it correctly. In this sentence, the subjects who interpret the word '*interests'* inaccurately, used two Arabic words which are equivalent to the English

word '

اهتمام *[ʔihtima:m ] and هواية '*[hiwa:iah].The rest subjects succeed in translating this word into 'فوائد [fawa:ʔid] and 'ارباح '[ʔarba:ħ], because they use the key word of the sentence 'bank' which help them to get the intended meaning.

The result shows that most of the subjects (70%) get difficulty in translating sentence No. 12 'we need *a cut* in taxes' in table 8. This could attribute to the subjects who mistranslate the polysemous meaning of '*a cut'* and give the familiar meaning 'قطع *[qatʕaʕ]. Students usually use the common meaning in their translation into Arabic without paying attention to its other possible meanings. The remaining subjects (30%) succeed to convey the real meaning of the sentence into Arabic 'تخفيض'[taxfi:dʕ] recognizing the word '*tax* 'which helps them to provide the exact meaning in the sentence.

Sentence No. 13 'You need to *redeem* your debt, before they take away your properties'; the result implies that more than half of the subjects (63.3%) wrongly translate this sentence whereas (36.7%) give accurate translation. In this context, students fail in translating the polysemous word '*redeem* 'into Arabic as they say 'افاقي *[ ʔiq a:ʃ], because they may misunderstand the word as it is not a common meaning. According to Boubidi study (2010), students translate the core meaning into Arabic because they may know only the common meaning then apply for all context. Nevertheless, the rest subjects consider the word '*debt* ' which is a key word to understand ' *redeem* ' as well as ' *properties* 'hence, they translate it successfully into 'تسدد'[tusdid] and'تدفع '[tadfʕ].

The analysis of sentence No.20 in table 8 *'A saving* account is one where you leave any extra money you have for a longer time so that you can get more interest' shows that more than half of the subjects (60%) can translate successfully this sentence whereas the remaining subjects (40%) translate it incorrectly. The subjects understand the marginal meaning of the words

تلفوير' [ʔtawfiːr] and 'عاديا'[ʔiːdaːʕ] as they are very common for them. In addition, the key words like account, money and interest are related to the same meaning in the context. The wrong translation of this word relates to students' lack of vocabulary, so they translate the word into '*ظفحى' [jaħfadʕ].

To conclude, table 8 shows that most of the students encounter problems in translating polysemous words. The sentences in the table No 8 are arranged according to their difficulty. The arrangement shows that sentence No.3 with a percentage of (93.3%) comes at the top of the list, this can be attributed to the fact that students know the core meaning and they lack knowledge of using the second meaning which may choose according to the context of Business English. Sentence No.12 with a percentage of (70%) comes in the second rank. Sentence No.13 with a percentage of (63.3%) takes the third rank in the list. Sentence No.20 with the percentage of (40%) gets the fourth in the list while sentence No.9 with a percentage of (56.7%) has the last rank in the list, which is the least difficult one; students succeed in translating this sentence. It seems that students depend on the surrounding words which help them to provide the exact meaning. A huge number of English words are polysemous which has several meanings; students need to bear this in mind when translating these words into Arabic.

## Discussion

The major finding obtained of the study indicates that lexical problems are one of the most difficulties which students of business English encounter during the translating process. Looking at the results of the test and questionnaire most students of business English face problems in translating polysemous words. Such problems appear with students who know the denotative meaning of the word and do not know the connotative meaning. So they translate the words as they know its common meaning. Students depend on the meaning of the isolated words rather than the meaning of the phrase, clause and sentences as a whole (i.e. meaning in context).

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