

Morpho-Syntactic Complexity in the Translation of the Seven Suspended Odes

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Abstract

This paper attempts at bringing a new degree of precision into the analysis of the translation problems encountered in Arberry's Translation of the Seven Suspended Odes, i.e. morpho-syntactic complexity. Because the pair of languages under investigation is genetically and thus typologically different, it calls into question how to tackle complexity in morphology and syntax in translation. The paper brings into focus Arabic inflections which indicate '*emphasis, duality and gender*', and how they may be properly approached. Additionally, the syntactic constituents of Cognate Accusative Object, Causative Object, Accusative of State and Substitute are examined in Arabic and how they can be overcome in translation. Evidence from the Holy Quran has been adduced for illustration and elucidation purposes as necessity demands. Last but not least, pleonasm and paronomasia have been linguistically pulled apart, to be followed by an approach to grappling with such phenomena in translation. Some strategies have been referred to, or devised in cases of the above constituents and the like.

Keywords: Al-Muallaqat, Arberry's Translation, inflections, morpho-syntactic complexity, pleonasm

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1. Introduction

This paper aims at investigating and analyzing some of the most salient syntactic and morphological features that have posed problems for the translator. Due to space limitation, I have thoroughly gone over A. J. Arberry's translation of the seven Odes and selected the features that are recurrent across the poems translated. The present paper examines the identification, categorization and accounting for the syntactic problems Arberry encountered in his translation of Al- Muallaqat. Due to the disparity in the languages of the source and target texts, it is expected that many syntactic mismatches will be found. English and Arabic descend from totally different language paradigms; the former belongs to the Semitic languages while the latter belongs to the Indo-European languages. At its simplest form, the word order and succession of words in a string of sentences differ in the two languages. One may notice at some points that some syntactic constituents are literally missing in the counterpart language and no one-to-one relationship between many of the syntactic components, as shall be shown later, are found.

One reason for examining this part of language is the high complexity of the Arabic system in its construction and for the purpose of exploring how they are approached and dealt with in translation. Emphasis is placed upon the verb group and its inflections. Arabic is an agglutinative language, whose syntactic structures may include different morphemes as opposed to English which is not considered a synthetic language. One example is 'استطعما'. Though it is perceived as one word in Arabic, in English it cannot be expressed in one word. In English it is rendered into 'they both asked for food'.

Language is often viewed as a system of communication for serving such several functions as expressing one's thoughts and ideas, building a bridge of communication with others, etc. However, languages differ in structure and constituents. For example, Arabic is made up of three major word classes, i.e. verb, noun and conjunction; English categorizes its parts of speech into far more classes. No wonder that both languages are paradigmatically different in that each belongs to a different language family with no common root between them.

While English mainly has nominal constructions of statements in structure, Arabic enjoys two distinct constructions, i.e. nominal and verbal. An Arabic sentence may start with a noun or verb, depending on the function to be served. The system of orthography is also different in that Arabic is written from right to left with a cursive script in which the letters of a single word are normally linked by ligatures as in English handwriting (Beeston, 1968). In the same regard, English is characterized by a left-to-right attribution.

The most complicated part of any language is the 'verb' (Palmer, 1965), probably because it is the constituent which carries the tense, and is prone to morphological process by means of which new shadows of meanings can be produced. The Arabic verb is characterized by the fact that it can internally embed the pronoun as either a subject or object, a feature that English misses.

2. Arabic inflections

English is known to have a morphological feature by means of which a word has an inflection. The inflection in English is categorized as either inflectional or derivational. The former signals grammatical relationships such as past or present tense, plural and possession with the inflected

word unchanged in terms of the word class. On the other hand, a derivational inflection changes the word class of the original word.

Arabic as a language is morphologically different from its counterpart, i.e. English. It is classed as ‘fusional’ or ‘inflectional’, because the inflectional forms of a word can represent several morphological compositions (Crystal, 2010). This section discusses the functions of the salient features, mirrored by An Arabic inflection across the seven odes. Efforts will be made to shed light particularly on such functions as ‘emphasis’, ‘duality in pronouns’, and ‘gender’.

2.1 Emphasis-carrying inflections

English seems to be more relying on phonology in showing emphasis by means of ‘loudness, pitch, etc. In rare cases, an auxiliary is inserted before the main verb for emphasis-related reasons. An example is ‘He did attend yesterday’. At others, an adverbial is used usually at the outset of the sentence such as *verily* or *indeed*, really, etc. Arabic, whose main emphasis typologies are verbal and moral, lays emphasis through many means such as adding certain reflective particles (نفس، عين كل، جميع) for the moral typology of emphasis, and by repeating the same emphasized word as the verbal type of emphasis. One example could be (I met the teacher himself) قابلت المدرس نفسه. Another example is (The astronaut reached the moon itself) وصل رائد الفضاء إلى القمر عينه.

In addition to the main types of emphasis in the Arabic language, Arabic has many other conjunctions of emphasis; some are used as independent ones such as *أما وأن* and *إن* while the rest are inflected and attached to the end of the words such as *نن، نك، نل*. After a careful examination of the Odes, it was clear that the seven odes lay emphasis by other means such as ‘the emphasis heavy or light’.

In Ode 1, line 1 it was obvious the word *قفا* has caused much to be said in its regard. Al Anbari and IbnAnnahas consider the last letter of it a tool of emphasis, adducing an example from the holy Quran ‘ألقياً في جهنم كل كفار عنيد’. Contrary to all the translations given so far, the *ا* at the end of the verb *قفا* is not meant to address two of the poet’s companions. Rather it was a tool of verbal emphasis. Implicitly it means *قف قف*.

In line 6 of the same Ode, an independent conjunction of emphasis and another inflected one were found. The line reads *إن شفائي لعبرة مهراقة* where *إن* and *لـ* are used to lay emphasis on the words *شفاء* and *عبرة* respectively. However, the translation given is the same as if the conjunctions have not been used. English does not seem to be able to keep itself at pace with the Arabic conjunctions.

Ode 3, line 27 exhibits a new emphasis conjunction, i.e. *نن*. The translation is ‘do not conceal from Allah’, a translation that includes no element to show all forms of emphasis inherent in the source text. Another example from the holy Quran is “إن الذين كفروا بعد إيمانهم...” (3:90). The use of the emphasis particle *إن* gives more weight of emphasis to the sentence if it was used without it. For example, the statement *محمدٌ مجتهدٌ* is less emphatic than the same statement if preceded by the emphatic article *إن*, and therefore the sentence goes as follows: *إن محمداً مجتهداً*.

One example from the Odes is found in Ode 1 which reads *وإن شغائي عبرة مهراقة*. Arberry translates the hemistich as 'Yet the true and only cure of my grief is tears'. It is obvious that Arberry notices the emphatic particle in Arabic for which he uses 'only'. However, his choice of using 'only' is prone to lengthy discussion. The use of 'only' puts a spotlight on the word(s) that follow it, and accordingly, the focus of the sentence changes according to where it occurs. An example is 'The secretary only received the letter'. This implies that the secretary did not open it for example or hand it over to someone else. Peters (2004) says that the usage of 'only' smacks too much of conversation to be suitable for formal writing. It was rejected by 85% of the Harper–Heritage usage panel. That is why people tend to replace it with 'except that' or 'but'. This emphatic particle can be expressed by using a cleft-sentence in which the normal sequence of subject/verb/object is interrupted and even rearranged, to spotlight one of them in particular. Thus, it becomes 'it is my tears that best dissipate my sorrow'.

2.2 Duality and Gender

This section discusses inflections that indicate a pronoun of duality, as opposed to English which does not have a pronoun to reflect duality. Rather, English expresses the fact of two things by using a cardinal number as determiner followed by a plural noun (two teachers).

The same way English uses 's' as a plural marker in the vast majority of plural nouns, Arabic uses *ا* at the end of verbs or nouns to indicate dual pronouns. Thus, the verb in its own can tell that the subject is a dual pronoun. Elaborating further on this, the *ا* that is inflected to the end of the verb shows that the subject is 'a dual pronoun'. An example from the holy Quran is *وظفقا يخصفان عليهما من ورق الجنة* (20: 121). (and they began to stick on themselves the leaves from Paradise for their covering).

Ode 6, line 29 displays an example of the use of inflection, indicating a dual pronoun. It reads *”رجعا بأمرهما”*, where an inflection is vividly seen at the end of the verb and noun. The English translation does not show any trace of duality. The English translation reads, 'They returned'. This morphological mismatch is not mended in the translation. While there is a way to single out the 'duality' case in English, it is by no means expressed in one word or inflected pronoun as in Arabic. The only way is to say 'they both' in an attempt to indicate the 'theme' is dual, rather than plural.

Ode 3, lines 18 and 10 show further examples of dual pronouns. They read *لنعم السيدان* 'لنعم السيدان' and *’تداركتما عيباً* and *’وجدتما على كل حال* respectively. The first case is translated as 'you have proved yourselves to be fine masters', while the second as 'you alone mended the rift'. Both translations have failed to show the dual pronouns existent in the source text, replacing that with a normal plural form. The translation does not show the duality in pronouns; rather the target text displays a plural form of the noun. The English and Arabic system of plurality is different. English considers plural any number that exceeds one, whereas Arabic considers plural any number that exceeds two.

English inflectional morphemes show simple past and present tenses, plurality and possessive case. In addition to the previous functions, Arabic verb and noun inflections may show gender. Ode 2, line 10 reads *’كان الشمس ألفت رداءها’*, where the *ت* attached to the verb *ألقى* indicates the feminine gender. The *ا* attached to the noun *رداء* shows an

anaphoric relationship with reference to الشمس. In the translation that reads ‘A face as though the sun had loosed his mantle upon it’ clearly shows that the verb is stripped off any gender marker. An interesting point here to make is regarding the noun الشمس which Arabic perceives as a feminine noun, while English deals with it as a masculine noun. This is clear through the use of ‘his’. There obviously seems to be a radical difference in the way nouns are categorized in the two languages in terms of gender.

Taking Jakobson's statement as a point of departure for our analysis of the use of الشمس as a feminine noun in Arabic while it is referred to as a masculine one in English, Jakobson (1959) points out that cross-linguistic differences center around obligatory and lexical forms. كأن الشمس كَأَنَّ الشمس is an example of difference in lexical form. Going deep further, one can notice that the difference here occurs at the level of gender (Jakobson, 1959). As shown in the example and its translation above, الشمس (the sun) is dealt with as a feminine noun in Arabic while it is masculine in English. This difference at the level of gender is common among languages. For example, the word 'house' is feminine in Romance languages whereas it is neuter in English and German, referring to it respectively as 'the house, das Haus' (Munday, 2001).

Ode 3, lines 3 and 4 exhibit a distinct type of gender inflection. They read ‘ينهضن’ and ‘وضعن’ for which the translation goes as ‘spring up out’ and ‘they cast’. In the translation, no trace of the feminine gender inherent in the source text was found. The ن at the end of the two verbs used indicate talking of absent feminine pronouns. The same gender-carrying inflections can be found in Ode 5, line 87 and 89, which read ‘إذا ما رحن يمشين’ and ‘إذا لم نحمهن’.

Ode 4, line 35 shows another inflection that carries feminine gender but with a new function. It reads ‘إن تغدفي’ where the ي at the end of the verb تغدف indicates the feminine noun being addressed as opposed to talking of ‘absent feminine pronoun’ as above. The translation here is ‘if you should lower your veil’, where the pronoun is not gender specific.

3. Cognate Accusative Object and Causative Object (المفعول المطلق والمفعول لأجله)

The cognate accusative object in Arabic is a syntactic constituent whose name suggests it is not restricted to any other subsequent constituent in the sentence, and is considered the real object of the subject of the verb (Babity, 2004). Syntactically speaking, this constituent is an infinitive that comes after the verb, and is always in the accusative case. One more condition is that this component should be derived from the same stem or root of the verb it follows. One example is كَتَبَ كِتَابَةً where one can vividly notice that the second component is the cognate accusative object which is made up from the same root of the main verb. This constituent is usually used for the purpose of putting emphasis on the verb that precedes it, specifying its type, or sometimes for the purpose of replacing the explicit verb. Two examples from the holy Quran are ‘ورتلناه ترتيلاً’ and ‘فدمرناهم تدميراً’ (25: 32 and 36).

In English, we do not tend to have this one-to-one match at all, with English sufficing itself with the verb that comes before. In a strict sense, English could produce the second type of this type of Arabic object, i.e. the cognate accusative object that specifies the number, whereas the other two types are overlooked, namely that putting emphasis and specifying the type (Addihdah, 2013). The seven Odes are packed with examples of this type of object. Arberry tackled this Arabic-specific constituent differently as we shall see. Ode 1, line 8 displays one

example of the cognate accusative object. It reads نسيم الصبا. The translation is 'sweet as the zephyr's breath'. The significant implication realized here is that this type of object is expressed through a stylistic device, called 'simile'.

Ode 3 exhibits further examples of the occurrence of cognate accusative object. Line 13 reads بكن بكن بكوراً whose translation is 'with the dawn they rose', which clearly shows that Arberry uses a prepositional phrase to give an equivalent. Line 31 of the same Ode reads 'فتعركم عرك' 'الرحى' which Arberry translates as 'then in grinds you as a millstone grinds'. Here Arberry uses a simile to reflect the source-text cognate accusative object. An in-depth scrutiny would reveal that Arberry tries to unearth the implicit connector there between the verb and its cognate object. He recoverably understands it as "تعركم كعرك الرحي" which is absolutely right, a strategy best adopted for the translation of the type of cognate accusative object whose function is to show the type of the verb itself.

Ode 5 lines 34 and 65 exhibit further examples of the cognate accusative object. Line 34 reads نشق بها رؤوس القوم شقاً. The translation of this is 'with these we split the heads of the warriors'. There is a clear overlooking of the source-text constituent. Line 65 reads فصالوا صولة. Arberry translates it as 'they loosed a fierce assault' which again seems to have made use of an adjective modifying a noun.

In all the examples listed above, both the main verb and the cognate accusative object occur explicitly. However, in some other context, the context is further complex where the main verb is NOT explicitly mentioned, but would be recoverably understood. One example from the Odes comes in Ode 1, line 6 which reads وقوفاً بها صحبي. It is vivid that the main preceding verb is not there while the cognate accusative object stands there. In this context, the main verb is recoverably understood as وقف, but it is not as explicit as it is in the other examples. Arberry translates it as 'there my companions halted their beasts awhile'. It is noticed that Arberry fully understands the missing main verb and uses it explicitly. The implication here is that when the main verb is not explicitly mentioned, the translator needs to deduce it from the cognate accusative object and uses it accordingly.

In the absence of a clear-cut syntactic equivalent to the cognate accusative object, it is necessary to find an alternative to this structure, while maintaining the meaning. Here it is convenient to point out that 'grammar' in general, realized here as 'cognate accusative object' is but a means to convey the semantic message, and a vehicle to transfer the meaning. Arberry's enormous efforts to find a way to replace the source text structure with a different, but equivalent one, should not be underestimated. I evaluate his varying attempts to find a solution to the different types of this type of object. Once he uses a prepositional phrase of time, at others he uses a simile or an epithet modifying the verb. Interestingly enough, he overlooks this component altogether when there was no need to bring further complications to the reader or message recipient.

The causative object in Arabic is an infinitive in the accusative case, and shows the reason or the purpose for which the verb has occurred. Arabic grammarians argue (Al Dihdah, 2013) that this component must be an intrinsic infinitive, in that it expresses a state of mind through non-action verbs rather than action verbs. Ode 1, line 9 exhibits an example of the

causative object. It reads *ففاضت دموع العين مني صيابة*. Arberry translates the causative object, i.e. *صيابة* as 'of passionate yearning'. Ode 7, line 42 exhibits another example. It reads *حذر الخون والتعدي*. Arberry translates it as 'in fear of injustice and aggression'. In the both examples, Arberry has recourse to the prepositional phrase to reflect this constituent. It is vividly noticed that both infinitive forms *صيابة* and *حذر* are not derived from action verbs; rather they express a state of mind, and their respective verbs cannot be perceived with naked eyes as opposed to such action verbs as 'to walk' or 'to write'.

In the first example listed above, Arberry most probably recoverably understands the source text as 'the eye tears overflowed OUT OF or 'OWING TO' passionate yearning'. That is why he renders the causative object using the inherent device meant, i.e. 'of passionate yearning'. He uses a prepositional phrase to transfer the syntactic component of causative object. In the second example, Arberry adopts the same strategy in transferring the syntactic structure of 'causative object'. He uses a prepositional phrase 'in fear of ...'. I believe that the strategy adopted by Arberry is appropriate. Hypothetically, if the infinitive was not 'intrinsic' *مصدر قلبي*, it would be better to be translated using the purpose structure of 'in order to' or 'for the purpose of' or simply 'to + V1'. An illustrative example is *جئت مبكراً لأجلس في الصف الأمامي*. We could translate it as "I came early (in order) to sit in the front row'. Here *لأجلس* is an action verb, making it possible to use different successful strategies as 'in order to', 'for the purpose of + v1 + ing' or 'to + V1'. On the other hand, encountering an intrinsic infinitive necessitates rendition by using a prepositional phrase as shown by Arberry in the above two listed examples.

3.2 Accusative of State and Substitute *الحال والبدل*

The accusative of state is a constituent in Arabic that is in the accusative case, redundant in nature, and it functions as a modifier of the subject of the verb. This syntactic component comes in the accusative case and is meant to describe the doer of the action at the moment of the occurrence of the verb. An example from the holy Quran is *فكلوه هنيئاً مريئاً* (4:4). Both *هنيئاً* and *مريئاً* are syntactically dubbed as 'accusative of state', because they describe the people in question at the moment of eating. One more example from the holy Quran is *فَأَلْقَى السَّحَرَةُ سَاجِدِينَ* (26:46). The word *ساجدين* is accusative of state because it describes the sorcerers when they fell down. English tends to express it in different ways depending on the grammatical context. One way is to use an adjective. Another is to use a gerund or prepositional phrase. Therefore, possible translations of the above accusative state in the Quranic verse could be 'prostrate', 'prostrating' or 'in prostration position'.

Ode 6, line 80 brings us one example of an accusative of state as it reads *فضلاً وذو كرم*. Arberry renders it as 'for the general good, generous'. A lengthier string of words can be used in an attempt to give the referential meaning. Ode 7, line 74 reads *وحملناهم على حزم تهلان شلالاً*. Arberry translates it as 'and we drove them against helter-skelter'. Based on the translations given above, it is clear that Arberry is not consistent in using a certain structure to reflect Arabic accusative of state. Sometimes he uses a prepositional phrase; other times, he uses an adverb of manner. Because the linguistic function of the accusative of state is to describe how the doer of the action looks like at the time of the verb occurrence, I believe that adjectives and adverbs of manner best serve to meet the requirement of this syntactic component. An illustrative example could be *استلم سالم الشهادة فرحاً*. The accusative of state *فرحاً* can be translated here as 'happily' which is an adverb of manner. It is common of Arberry to translate a certain part of speech by opting

for a different one in the target language. There are examples of this type in every line because of the difference between the word order of the two languages. This is referred to as 'structural shifts' (Catford, 2000). Catford (2000) argues that this type of shifts is the most common form of shift.

The substitute is a noun constituent characterized by following a previous noun with the same reference. It is divided into 3 types: comprehensive, partial and identical. An example from the holy Quran is اهدنا الصراط المستقيم صراط. The word صراط is considered an absolute substitute, because it refers exactly to the word الصراط that precedes it. There are other types of substitutes in addition to the absolute substitute. Partial substitute is a substitute that refers back to ONLY part of the noun that precedes. An example is أعجبت بالكتاب غلافه. The word غلافه is a partial substitute of the noun الكتاب. An interesting point here to make is that partial substitute is always a noun that is material or a concrete noun and can be touched. Contrary to the partial substitute is the inclusive substitute whose condition is that the substitute must be emotional or an abstract noun. An example is أحببت القائد شجاعته where شجاعته is an inclusive substitute, which cannot be touched as غلاف الكتاب in the previous example. In the types of partial and inclusive substitutes, there must be an inflected pronoun in Arabic to refer to the preceding noun.

Ode 6 presents many examples of partial substitutes. Lines 1, 3, 4 and 30 show examples of substitutes. Line 1 reads عفت الديار محلها فمقامها. Arberry translates the partial substitutes as 'the abodes are desolate, halting-place and encampment too'. The translation shows no connection with the previous constituent, i.e. the subject الديار. In Arabic, the partial substitute is coherent because an anaphoric pronoun is inflected, whereas in English it does not. Line 3 reads حجج خلون حلالها وحرامها. Arberry gives the translation as 'many years have passed over, months unhallowed and sacrosanct'. The addition of 'months' on the translator's part gives the sense that it is a new sentence, rather than partial substitutes as meant in the source text.

Lines 4 and 30 read as ريح المصايف سومها وسهامها and ودق الرواعد جودها فرهامها. All these examples are partial substitutes. Arberry's translation of the above substitutes is 'great deluge and gentle following rain' and 'the summer winds swelling and swirling about them in scorching blasts'. It is clear that the partial substitutes implicated in Arabic could not be maintained in English. Arberry's strategy of translating partial substitutes through gerunds obliterates the syntactic structure existent in the source text; therefore, it is not as appropriate as the strategy listed above.

It can be argued that Arberry should have adopted the 'servitude strategy' when translating partial and inclusive substitutes. Servitude (Vinay and Darbelnet, 2000) is a term used to refer to obligatory transpositions due to a difference in the syntax of the two languages. This entails a change in the word order and thematic structure. Catford (2000) gives his voice to Vinay and Darbelnet (2000) when he sheds light on the translator's attempt to shift from one source text part of speech into a different one in the target text. Catford calls it a 'class shift'.

Arabic syntax necessitates that whenever partial or inclusive substitutes occur, they must have an inflection referring to the preceding noun. English, on the other hand, does not allow such addition of inflection to the nouns. English inflections whether derivational or inflectional do not carry the same sense carried by the inflections at the end of partial or inclusive substitutes.

Therefore, translating absolute substitutes is possible and that is by re-mentioning the substitute as it is in Arabic. For example, قابلت القاضي خالدًا is translated as I met Judge Khaled where 'Khaled' is the absolute substitute.

By contrast, translating partial and inclusive substitutes cannot be done in the same way as translating absolute ones. English grammaticality and acceptance oblige us to drag the substitute ahead, and use a genitive case or 'of-structure'. An example is حطَّ الطائر على الشجرة غصنها. This can be better translated it as 'The bird perched on the tree bough', rather than 'The bird perched on the tree, its bough'.

Following the above analysis, one can disagree with Arberry on translating the partial and inclusive substitutes for the reasons mentioned above. Therefore, strategy of using a genitive case or an 'of-structure' can be employed instead of the way the way Arberry translates partial and inclusive substitutes.

3.3 Pleonasm and paronomasia

Paronomasia is the use of words in similar in sound to achieve a specific effect or euphony. In Arabic, this phenomenon looks more common, acceptable and natural. The forced attempt at rendering Arabic paronomasia into English in the same way results in awkward structure. The first example is encountered in Ode 5, line 54 (نعم نخر الذائرنا). Arberry translates it as 'A dine treasure indeed to treasure'. While he forcibly tries to maintain the pleasing effect of rhythm and euphony created by the Arabic text, the result is not as natural and acceptable as the source text is. Another example can be encountered in Ode 5, line 60 (رفدنا فوق رفد الرافديننا). Arberry translates it as 'We gave our succor beyond every other succor'. The last example of paronomasia can be seen in the same Ode, line 96 (فنجهل فوق جهل الجاهلينا). Arberry translates it as 'we shall exceed the folly of the foolhardiest'. When cognates are easily in one language, this does not necessarily mean the same should be found in the target language. Pleonasm is the use of more words than is needed for a clear expression. It is considered a manifestation of tautology. Some examples are 'black darkness' and 'burning fire'. Pleonasm can be divided into two types: syntactic and semantic. The examples used throughout the Odes belong to semantic pleonasm.

The first example of pleonasm to review comes in Ode 4, line 5 (أقوى وأقفر). The use of two verbs in the past tense with the same meaning is a redundancy which is referred to as 'prolixity' which describes the occurrence of two words that add nothing in core to the original message. Arberry renders the two verbs into two adjectives (empty and desolate). Arberry's translation shifts from the Arabic pleonasm into giving two adjectives which are not the same. The Odes includes many examples where Arberry translates one part of speech for another without changing the sense or the message. This procedure is called 'transposition' and it belongs to the oblique translation strategy. Vinay and Darbelnet (1995) state that transposition is probably the most common structural change undertaken by translators. One more example is وجيد كجيد الرئم. Arberry translates it 'she shows me a throat like the throat of an antelope'. Arberry adopts 'transposition' by constructing a full grammatical sentence for the Arabic phrase that keeps hidden the subject and the verb, brought to light in the translation. Arberry believes and deep at heart believes in Nida's dynamic equivalence in that the translation should be target text-oriented. In other words, he believes he should express the source text thoughts, using the target text structure and system of language.

While one reason for using pleonasm in Arabic is to lay emphasis and sometimes to create euphony or complete a balanced rhyme, the use of pleonasms in English seems to be not as natural or normal as it is in Arabic. Arberry's attempt at translating this linguistic phenomenon manifests itself differently. He uses two near synonyms, rather than absolute synonyms to bridge this gap. One more example can be seen in Ode 4, line 17 (سحاً وتسكاباً). Arberry translates this pleonasm as 'deluging and decanting'. Pleonasms in Arabic seem more acceptable than in English. An Arabic native speaker gets pleased with a text that is opulent with pleonasms because they add elements of euphony. However, on the other hand, an English speaker would find it bizarre to come across two absolute or near absolute synonyms in a row. Such a phenomenon in modern English writing brings to question the writer's style employed. This phenomenon forces the translator to dive in language to look for approximates semantically. This often ends up in deviating from the original spirit in the source text.

It is believed that translating Arabic paronomasia the same way as in the source text is a futile job because it is hard in English to use the same words of the same roots. Meaning is sacrificed while manipulating morphology. Arabic morphology is much more flexible in terms of making up scores of words from the same trilateral root. Arabic has plenty of infixes while English infixes are very limited. All these factors make paronomasia translation a very hard task, if not impossible. An illustrative example is the trilateral root ع ل م, and the scores of words one may get from those letters (علم- knowledge علم- flag- عالم scientist- علم he taught, etc. In comparison to English, one cannot get all these words from a simple root; rather we have completely different words from different roots. One more important point to make here is that all Arabic words belong to 3 or 4-letter roots, while this is not systematic in English. When forced, meaning is usually sacrificed. It is recommended that meaning should be sought regardless of the source text euphony or rhythm.

Conclusion

As we have noted earlier, Al Muallaqat translation has been a bone of contention over the past two decades, simply because they are all written in a classical and complicated form of poetry. The absence of exactly one-to-one correspondence between English and Arabic syntax and morphology have led to rugged terrain to explore in the field of translation.

To sum up, this paper attempts to explore the problems related to morpho-syntactic problems found in Al-Muallaqat. A lens of focus has been on certain inflections with specific functions and syntactic constituents like cognate object, pleonasm, etc. A comparison has been made between the source and target texts, followed by a brief discussion along with new insights as to how erroneous translations can be modified, if not corrected. This paper concludes its discussion by providing applications and implications for future studies.

Notes

This paper was written under my Advisor, Prof. Said M. Shiyab at Kent State University (US). It would not have come to fruition without his constant follow-up, illuminating comments and astute criticism.

Al-Muallaqat is a term which refers to the seven greatest qasidas from the pre-Islamic period, were hung upside down from the Kaaba, a structure in Mecca that became later the holiest site of Islam. The legendary male bards of this period include Imru al-Qays, Tarafa, and Labid.

Al-Muallaqat are tackled here according to the following order: Imr Al-Qais, Tarafa, Zuhair, Labid, Antara, Amr Bin Kulthoum and Al Harith.

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