



# Challenges of Arabic – English Translation

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DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.47134/jpbi.v1i3.616>

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Received: 01-06-2024

Accepted: 07-06-2024

Published: 14-06-2024



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**Abstract:** Arabic language is a rich language with a vast vocabulary, including terms that may not have direct equivalents in other languages. Translation is a field of contrastive linguistics since it is associated with at least two languages and their cultures. It is the process of conveying the text by transferring from one system of language to the other and often need to employ creative techniques to convey the richness of the original text in the translated version. In this article the focus will be on the problems of translating from Arabic language or into Arabic and will give several solutions.

**Keywords:** Modern Standard Arabic, cultural nuances, Arabic expressions, idioms, CAT (Computer-Assisted Translation), quality assurance, use of technology, pronunciation and phonetics, grammar and syntax, complex grammar, collaboration, contextual ambiguity, cultural references, specialized training

## Introduction

Arabic is unique and challenging language at the same time with its complex grammar including verb conjugations, noun cases, and different dialects. Arabic has distinct pronunciation rules, expressions, idioms. Also, cultural references which may not have direct equivalents in other languages, requiring translators to find suitable alternatives that convey the intended meaning.

In translation, we do not translate a word, sound, style or grammar but meaning. Meaning can be defined as a knotty arrangement or a product of different linguistic elements such as vocabulary, grammar, style, phonology and usage. Usually, anything which is not relevant to meaning is not considered as translation but at times, we may have some exception where sounds are more important than meanings for example, poetry. Meaning can be made out from a single word or a group of words so that something can be understood independently. Hence, a word is the smallest and a sentence is the largest unit of meaning. Translation needs to be viewed as an act of communication governed by consideration of comprehensibility and readability, rather than an act of prescription informed by dogmatic and obsolete views about correctness. So, translation is the exchange of the meaning of a source-language text by means of an equivalent target-language text (Akan et al., 2019).

Translating from Arabic into other or working as an interpreter involves translating spoken language in real-time between two or more parties. This can be done in various settings such as conferences, legal proceedings, medical appointments, and business meetings. It is a dynamic and rewarding career that requires a blend of linguistic skills, cultural understanding, and the ability to perform under pressure. Problems in translation can be various depending on the specificity of that language, for example translating from Arabic into other language or from another foreign language to Arabic.

## Analysis And Methods

### Complex grammar

Verb conjugations, noun cases, and sentence structure, can be intricate and differs significantly from many other languages, making accurate translation a complex task. Some Arabic words or phrases may have multiple meanings depending on the context in which they are used. Translators must understand the context thoroughly to ensure accurate interpretation.

### Lexical Differences

Words can have different meanings or usages across distention. Arabic is a rich language with a vast vocabulary, including terms that may not have direct equivalents in other languages. This can lead to misunderstandings if the dialect-specific context is not considered.

Some Arabic expression:

- منذ نعومة أظفاره - the literal translation of this stylistic expression is “ since the softness of my nails” but we can use this phrase for continue prolonged. Process أنا أعرفه منذ نعومة أظفاري - I know him since my childhood.
- بين يوم وليلة - (between day and night) – in a very short time or accidentally. بين يوم وليلة - كما تعرف هذا لم يحدث و ليلة
- الولد - ( the son is picture about his father ) like father, like son . الولد - الصورة عن أبيه لذلك اختار العسكرية مثل أبيه like father, like son he decided to choose the military.

## Multiple dialects

Arabic has numerous dialects spoken across different regions, each with its own unique vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. Translating between these dialects and standard Arabic or other languages requires expertise in both the source and target dialects. Arabic dialects are regional or social variations of the Arabic language, which can differ significantly from one another in terms of vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. There are numerous Arabic dialects spoken across the Arabic world, such as Egyptian Arabic: Predominantly spoken in Egypt, it's one of the most widely understood dialects due to the influence of Egyptian media and cinema. Also Levantine Arabic: Spoken in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Palestine, Gulf Arabic: Includes dialects from the Gulf states like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the UAE, and parts of Oman, Maghrebi Arabic: Encompasses the dialects spoken in North Africa, including Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya, Iraqi Arabic: Spoken in Iraq, this dialect also has its unique characteristics and variations within the country, Sudanese Arabic dialect has influences from both Egyptian Arabic and local languages, Yemeni Arabic includes a range of dialects with significant differences between the northern and southern regions. Each of these dialects serves as the mother tongue for speakers in their respective regions, while Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is used in formal contexts such as writing, news broadcasts, and formal speeches across the Arab world. Technical and specialized content: Translating technical, legal, or scientific content from Arabic requires specialized knowledge in those fields, as well as linguistic expertise, to ensure accurate and precise translation. Words can have different meanings or usages across dialects. For example, a word that is common in Egyptian Arabic might be unfamiliar or mean something different in Moroccan Arabic. This can lead to misunderstandings if the dialect-specific context is not considered.

The people who study Arabic as a foreign language may not understand the regional dialect during their first visits to Arab countries, and the process of communication with the native population may not be observed at once. Even those who have been working in the field of translation for several years or who have been learning Arabic for many years in educational processes may not be free from such difficult situations. Taking into account the fact that educational institutions do not have samples of subjects related to dialects or lesson processes that include certain literature, even if there are sources, they are extremely scarce, and the degree of need for some methodical approaches, the Arabic language is considered a foreign language (Tojiyeva, 2023).

## Grammar and Syntax

Arabic language have different grammatical structures and rules. A sentence structure in one dialect may not be grammatically correct or may convey a different meaning in another. This requires translators to be adapt at switching between these structures while maintaining the intended meaning. Dialects also often carry unique cultural references and connotations that might not be apparent to speakers of other dialects. It demands being sensitive to these cultural nuances to ensure accurate and contextually appropriate translations. Since dialects are primarily spoken, their written forms can be inconsistent. Translators may encounter difficulties in accurately interpreting and translating informal written texts, such as social media posts, which often use non-standard spelling and grammar.

For example:

- على وجه التفصيل -in detail, at great length  
عطى الزائر محاضرة رائعة ووقف على وجه التفصيل على إيجابيات وسلبيات العولمة – the visitor gave the amazing lecture about of advantage and disadvantage of globalization in detail.

## Result

At that time, the Arabic language became known to the world as an international language of science. Muslim scholars, regardless of the field of scientific research, and regardless of their nationality, ethnicity, and native language, created in Arabic. This language has witnessed many events in the history of the enrichment of its lexicon as a language of humanitarian sciences. In particular, great work has been done in the field of lexicology. The lexicon of the Arabic language is one of the most important achievements of the Arabic language (Komilovich, 2024).

Translators should have a deep understanding of both the source and target cultures to accurately convey cultural nuances. They can achieve this through cultural immersion, extensive reading, and collaboration with native speakers. Translators should receive specialized training in Arabic language and translation techniques to handle the complexities of Arabic grammar, vocabulary, and dialects effectively. Continued education and professional development are essential to stay updated with linguistic developments.

## Use of technology

Translation tools and software, such as CAT (Computer-Assisted Translation) tools and machine translation engines, can aid translators in the initial stages of translation by providing suggestions and references. However, human oversight and editing are necessary to ensure accuracy and cultural appropriateness.

## Collaboration and consultation

Translators can consult with subject matter experts, linguists, and native speakers to clarify ambiguous terms, verify cultural references, and ensure accuracy in translation. Collaboration with a diverse team can bring different perspectives and insights into the translation process.

### **Adaptation and creativity**

Translators may need to adapt the text creatively to convey the intended meaning effectively while maintaining cultural authenticity. This may involve paraphrasing, using analogies, or finding culturally appropriate equivalents in the target language.

### **Quality assurance**

Implementing rigorous quality assurance processes, such as proofreading, editing, and peer review, helps to identify and correct errors, inconsistencies, and inaccuracies in the translated text before final delivery. By combining these solutions, translators can overcome the challenges posed by Arabic translation and ensure high-quality, accurate, and culturally sensitive translations that effectively communicate the intended message to the target audience. Understand the context: Before starting the translation, familiarize yourself with the context of the text. Understand who the audience is, the purpose of the text, and any cultural references or nuances that may impact the translation. Developing a strong command of both the source and target languages. This includes grammar, vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and stylistic conventions. Continuously improve your language skills through reading, writing, and practice. Research unfamiliar terms, concepts, or cultural references to ensure accurate translation. Use reputable dictionaries, glossaries, and reference materials to aid your understanding and verify translations.

### **Consider the audience**

There are adaption of the translation to suit the target audiences linguistic and cultural preferences. Use language and expressions that resonate with the audience while remaining faithful to the original meaning of the text.

### **Maintain clarity and accuracy**

Striving for clarity and accuracy in translation by conveying the intended message faithfully while avoiding ambiguity or misinterpretation. Use precise language and structure sentences logically to ensure comprehension. Reflection of the tone, style, and register of the original text in the translation. Whether it's formal, informal, professional, or creative, match the tone to the context and purpose of the text. After completing the initial translation, review and revise the text for accuracy, consistency, and coherence. Check for grammatical errors, mistranslations, and any discrepancies between the original and translated texts.

Addressing these challenges requires translators who are not only proficient in both Arabic and the target language but also possess cultural understanding and subject matter expertise. Additionally, advancements in translation technology, such as neural machine translation, are helping to improve the accuracy and efficiency of Arabic translation. Translators often need to employ creative techniques to convey the richness of the original text in the translated version.

## **Discussion**

Translation is an act of interlingual interaction which engages the cultural, religious, political etc. components of language. Translation has been used by humans for centuries, beginning after the appearance of written literature. Modern-day translators use sophisticated tools and technologies to accomplish their work, and rely heavily on software applications to simplify and streamline their tasks. However, problems of translation are mainly caused by syntax (grammar), lexis or vocabulary (word), stylistics (style), phonology (sound) and usage of the source language (SL) which is Arabic and its translation into the target language (TL) being English in our current study.

Arabic-English communication can involve several challenges, including linguistic, cultural, and contextual differences.

### **Vocabulary and Idioms**

Direct translations of words or idioms may not carry the same meaning in both languages, leading to confusion or misunderstanding.

### **Communication Styles**

Arabic speakers may use a more formal or elaborate style compared to the more direct and concise style often used by English speakers. This can affect the tone and perceived intent of a conversation.

### **Non-verbal Communication**

Gestures, body language, and facial expressions can vary significantly between Arabic and English cultures, potentially leading to misinterpretation.

### **Contextual Meaning**

The same word or phrase can have different meanings depending on the cultural and situational context. Understanding these nuances requires cultural awareness and sensitivity.

### **Formality Levels**

The level of formality in language use can differ, with Arabic often having more rigid distinctions between formal and informal speech compared to English.

### **Language Proficiency**

Varying levels of proficiency in English among Arabic speakers (and vice versa) can impact the clarity and effectiveness of communication.

### **Technological and Translational Challenges**

#### **Machine Translation**

Automated translation tools may not always capture the nuances of both languages, leading to errors and misunderstandings.



## Code-Switching

Bilingual speakers may switch between Arabic and English within a conversation, which can be confusing for those not fluent in both languages. Understanding and addressing these challenges requires patience, cultural sensitivity, and often, a willingness to learn and adapt from both sides of the conversation.

## Word-for-Word Translation

A word-for-word translation is the way of transferring meaning of each and every word of the source language into the target language with its equivalent words. This means to translate individual words. It is a bit risky method since it may upset meaning. So, it is not recognized as a mature translation practice because it does not take structural mismatches such as differences in word order, modification etc. between languages into consideration. It thoroughly ignores the target language and the context. Here, each and every word or item is translated into TL with an equivalent and similar meaning. e.g.

## Conclusion

Translation is challenging task of linguistics. It has always been a complicated job, specially transferring the characteristics and properties of two languages belonging to different origins. "Translation is not a matter of words only: it is a matter of making intelligible a whole culture. So, translating Arabic texts into English necessitates a huge bilingual expertise. Moreover, the cultural and religious influences are very strong in both the languages. It has been shown that though lexical problems are greater in number, grammatical, stylistic, usage and phonological problems are not insignificant. For instance, Arabic has more inflexion than English. Translation program at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels have become a common feature of universities and academic institutes due to the increasing demand in the job market. Therefore, the charge of translation teaching is often assigned to bilingual academics specializing in literature and/or linguistics. Translation is not merely about conveying meaning, it is something more. Although to resolve the challenges of translating Arabic into English or finding any straightforward means is in no way an easy task, a comparative study will benefit the translators, readers, practitioners, learners and teachers in this field with clearer.

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