

Literary Translation

الترجمة الأدبية

University of Mustansiriyah
College of Arts
Translation Department
Lecturer: Farah Abbas Abo Al-Timen
4th stage/ Morning & Evening classes

Lecture 4: Prose Translation

Time: 10:30 – 3:30

Date: 11, Oct, 2022

ST and TT Samples

1- الرحمة يا إلهي. و العفو يا أبانا في السماوات. ارحمني و اعفُ عني, فإني
كما تعلم ضعيف. يا إلهي الرحيم, إن يدي ترتعشان رهبة و خيفة. تعلم أنني
اقتنيت هذه الرقوق قبل سنين, من نواحي البحر الميت, كي اكتب فيها
أشعاري و مناجاتي لك في خلوتي, و كنت قد نويت أن أدون فيها ابتهالاتي
التي تقربني إليك, و قد تكون من بعدي صلوات يتلوها الرهبان و أهل
الصوامع الأتقياء في كل زمان و مكان.

I beg your mercy, O God. I beg your mercy and pardon, O
father in Heaven have mercy on me and pardon me, for as you
know, I'm weak. O compassionate God, my hands tremble with
fear. You know that I obtained these parchments some years ago
from the region surrounding the Dead Sea. In order to record my
poetry and my secret conversations with you in times of
solitude. I had intended to write down in these parchments the
supplication by which I draw nearer to you, in the hope that
after I pass away, my prayers might be recited by monks and
devout hermits in every time and place.

2- من أين ابدأ تدويني؟ .. البدايات متداخلة و محتشدة برأسي. و لعل البدايات كما كان أستاذي القديم سوريانوس يقول: ما هي الا محض أوهام نعتقد بها, فالبداية والنهاية إنما تكونان فقط في الخط المستقيم, ولا خطوط مستقيمة إلا في أوهامنا أو في الوريقات التي نسطر فيها ما نتوهمه. أما في الحياة و في العالم كله, فكل شيء دائري يعود الى ما منه بدأ. ما هذا الذي اكتبه؟ إن الدوائر كلها تدور برأسي الآن.

Where shall I begin my writing? The beginnings overlap in my head and crowd in on one another. Perhaps beginnings- as my old professor Siyranus used to say – are nothing but illusions we believe in. After all, beginnings and endings are only found on straight lines, and straight lines are found nowhere but in our illusions, or on the little pieces of papers on which we write about things we imagine. In real life and in the entire world, everything is circle, and returns to that from which it began from. What is this that I'm writing? All the circles are spinning in my head.

3- لماذا انطفئ كل شيء؟ نور الايمان الذي كان يضيئ باطني, شموع السكينة التي طالما آنست وحدتي, الاطمئنان الى جدران هذه الصومعة الحانية.. حتى شمس النهار, صرت أراها اليوم مظفأة, و موحشة.

Why was everything extinguished? The light of faith that used to illuminate my inner being, the Church candles that kept loneliness at bay for so long, the peace and comfort I derived from this cell's protective walls.. even the sunshine during the day.. I now see it as extinguished and forlorn.

4- صومعتي هي الدائرة الصغرى من عالمي المحسوس, تحيط بها دائرة اكبر, هي هذا الدير الذي هويته يوم دخلته أول مرة, قبل سنين, و نعمت فيه بالسكينة التي طالما تمنيتها قبل مجيئي الى هنا.

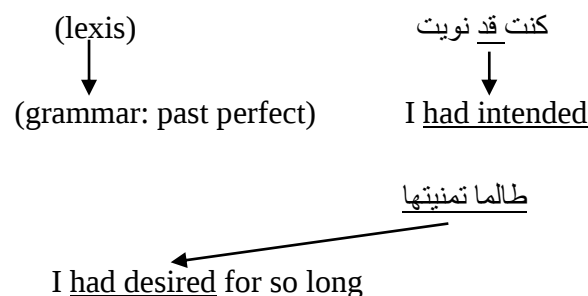
My cell is the small circle within my concrete world. It is enclosed within a larger circle which is this monastery, and which I fell in love with the first time I entered it some years ago. From that day forward, I remained here, blessed with inner peace which I had desired for so long before coming here.

5- يا الهي, أسمعني؟ أنا عبدك المخلص, الحيران: هيبا الراهب و هيبا الطبيب و هيبا الغريب.. على ما يدعونني به الناس في بلاد غربتي! و انت وحدك يا الهي تعرف اسمي الحقيقي, انت و الناس في بلادي الاولى التي شهدت مولدي. يا ليتني لم أولد اصلا, أو ليتني مت في طفولتي من دون آثام, حتى اضمن عفوك و رحمتك.

O my God, do Thou hear me? I am Thy faithful, but perplexed servant: Hiba the monk, Hiba the physician, Hiba the stranger, as people are calling me in my land of exile! Thou alone, O God, knowest my true name, Thou and the people in my land of origin, the land that witnessed my birth. Would that I have never been born. Or would that I had died in infancy, without sin, that I might be assured of Thy pardon and mercy!

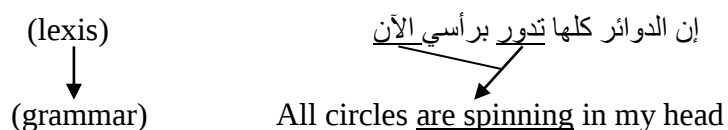
Analysis of Catford's Shift

Since translation between Catford's levels is totally governed by translation equivalence, then, shifts from grammar to lexis and vice-versa are the only possible level shifts in translation; and such shifts are, of course, quite common. These texts reflect many examples of level shifts which are sometimes encountered in the translation of the aspects of Arabic and English seen most clearly in the past (past perfect tense):



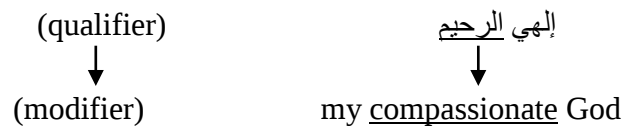
These examples reflect a most completed event which is completed in an unspecified time before another complete event. It is preceded by the lexis: [كان] + [قد], or the past verb [طال] + [ما]. The Arabic past perfect tense has no tense-to-tense equivalent in English. However, some translators suggested translating it as: [had] + [past tense verb].

Also there is an important difference between the two aspect systems (present continuous) of both languages. In Arabic, the lexical item [الآن] refers to the *continuous* aspect of the event. In English, the *development of the action of the verb* is referred to by using the grammatical items: [verb] + [-ing] instead of a lexical item. The following example shows this:

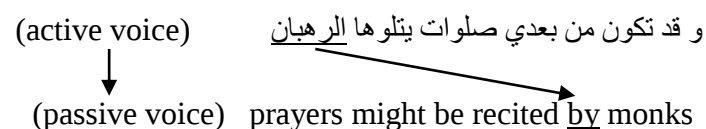


Such cases of shift from lexis to grammar are quite frequent in translation between these languages. Hence, the SL lexical item [تدور الآن] has as its TL equivalent the grammatical tense [are + -ing].

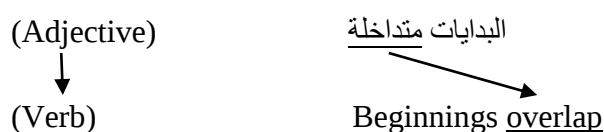
Category shifts, on the other hand, as mentioned earlier can occur at all ranks (structural, class, unit, or intra-system) such as the following examples:

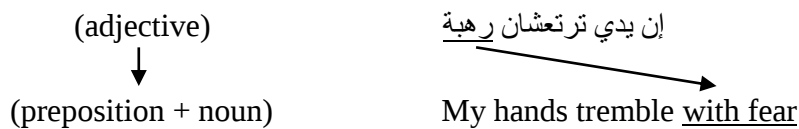


The SL [qualifier] structure may have a different TL structure, that is, a [modifier] as a translation equivalent. Since a [qualifier] is a word or phrase that qualifies, limits, or modifies the meaning of another word or phrase and a [modifier] is a word or group of words that describes a noun phrase or restricts its meaning in some way (Crystal, 2003: 297-382), it is an optional shift to use one of them instead of the other. Hence, there is no harm in this choice. Another example of structural shifts is the active voice and passive voice. The translator chose to transfer the active voice structure into a passive voice structure:



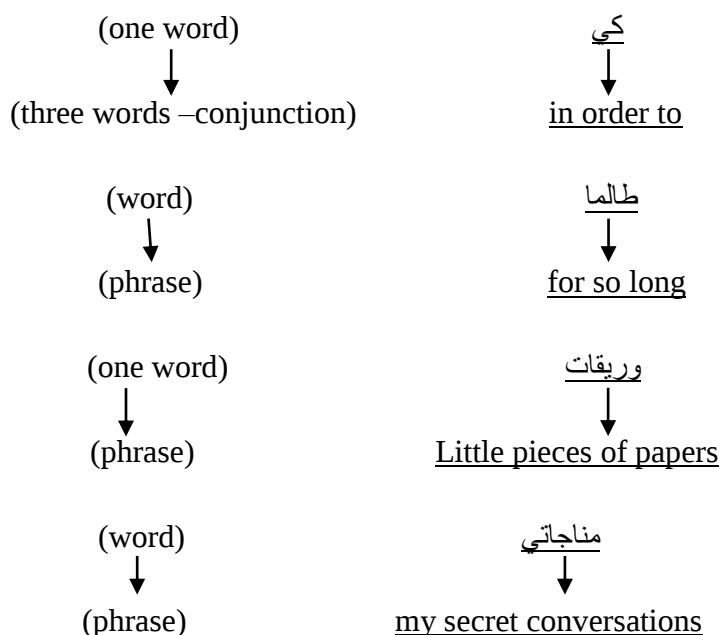
The active voice here is optionally transferred into passive voice since English language tends to use passive voice more frequently than it is in Arabic. The writer didn't use active voice to stress some important information so the translator did not affect the style in changing it into a passive voice. The same thing is for an [adjective] to be transferred into a [noun] or transferred into [preposition + noun] as it is shown below, which is a change of class:





Class-shift, then, occurs when the translation equivalent of an SL item [e.g. Verb] is a member of a different class from the original item [e.g. Adjective]. It is clear from the above examples that structure-shifts usually entail class-shifts for example, in the examples given above, the Arabic nominal structure is transferred into English as a [Subject + Verb] structure or an [Adjective] structure is transferred into a [Preposition + Noun] structure.

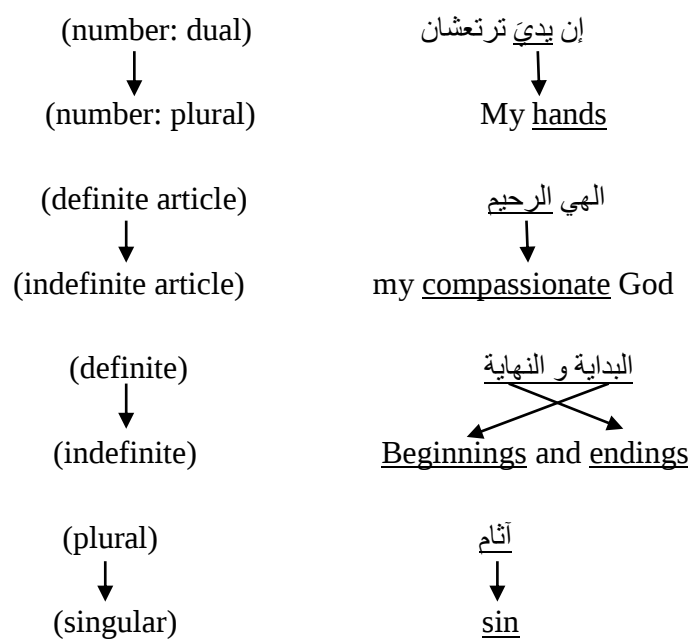
As for Unit-shift, the changes are in rank, i.e., departures from formal correspondence in which the translation equivalent of a unit at one rank in the SL is a unit at a different rank in the TL. Changes of rank (unit-shifts) are by no means the only changes of this type which occur in translation:



The type of unit-shifts that is detected in the above examples is a shift from [one word] to a [phrase/ or more than one word]. In all these examples the shifts are 'obligatory' since all the source words' meanings have more than one word in the TL except for that of [ورقات] which has a one word meaning in the TT: [leaflet] but the translator 'optionally'

chooses to use the phrase [little pieces of papers] and since it is a synonymy for [leaflet], this choice does not affect the style.

As for intra-system shifts, the shift occurs internally, within a system; i.e., for those cases where SL and TL possess systems which approximately correspond formally as to their grammatical constitution [articles and number]. For example, Arabic and English possess different formally corresponding systems of number and articles:



It is found that the English translations preserved the meaning and sustained the quality of the ST message. It is with changes of these types, which is referred to as 'category-shifts', are assumed to achieve some degree of formal correspondence between SL and TL; indeed this is the main justification for the recognition of formal correspondence in this theory. Category-shifts are departures from formal correspondence in translation.

Analysis of Baker's Model

Another pair of translation shift procedures is Baker's omission vs. addition. Both are a frequent phenomenon in translation that occur with (connectives). Omission is occurred depending on whether the

information in the SL can or cannot be retrieved from the TT context as shown in the following examples:

إن يدي ترتعشان رهبة و خيفة
(omission) My hands tremble with fear

The translator preferred to omit the two words above with one word. This choice is optional and it shows that the translator here kept the original style preserved since both words in Arabic mean a "source of fear". While in the next examples, the translator chose to make some additions of lexical markers of connective ties to explain the original by providing more information that are not present in the ST. These additions are understandably justified in order to avoid stylistic lexical repetition in the TL to make the translation readable smoothly and uninterrupted:

الرحمة يا إلهي
I beg your mercy, O God

[I beg your mercy] instead of saying: [O mercy, O God]

فالبداية و النهاية، إنما تكونان في الخط المستقيم
After all, beginnings and endings are only found on straight lines.

باطني
my inner being
-
إبتهالاتي التي تقربني إليك
the supplication by which I draw nearer to you

و قد تكون من بعدي صلوات..
In the hope that after I pass away, my prayers might be..

Translating Arabic coordinate connectors into English, which favors subordinate structures ([after all], [being] and [in the hope that]), would result in unavoidable unnaturalness and make the sentences more cohesive and stylistically more elegant. Also the use of the particle [would that I] for [يا ليتني] in an interrogative rather than mere modulation is another lexical marker of addition:

يا ليتني لم أولد أصلاً, أو ليتني مت في طفولتي من دون آثام
 Would that I have never been born. Or would that I had died in infancy, without sin,

Obviously, the degree of accuracy requires the translator to add these connectives and the English readership is expected to appreciate them.

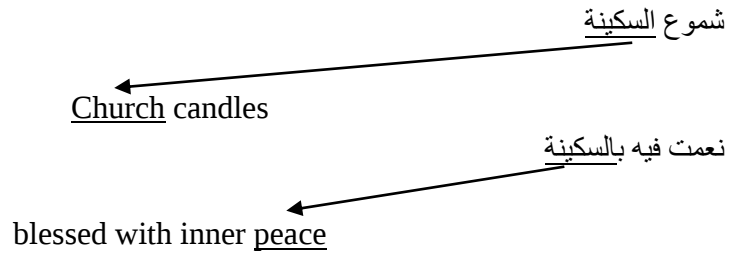
The last shift analyzed is the semantic shift. This shift in style has been rated first in the translation of these paragraphs in which the translator opted for giving priority to the style of the SL and chooses a style as close as possible to that found in the ST:

يا الهي، أسمعني؟
 O my God, do Thou hear me?
 أنا عبدك المخلص
 I am Thy faithful

A higher formality is adopted by lexical selection of [Thou, Thy] instead of [You, Your]. This substitution leads to render the same level of importance of the prayer found in the ST and the translation sounds acceptable. The same holds true for أبانا, سموات that are rendered into [Father, Heavens]:

يا أبانا في السموات
 O Father, in Heaven

In the third paragraph, the translator rendered the word [سكينة] into [church] while in the fourth paragraph she renders it into its original meaning [peace]:



Both renderings reflect the translator's optional smart choice since the translator's choice has to be built upon specific goals and dimensions; type of text, focus point and interest and the possibility of similar syntactic system between the ST and the TT.