

# Lexical Departure from Formal Correspondence in Translation: Semantic and Pragmatic Justification

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## Abstract

This paper aimed at justifying the lexical departure from formal correspondence by means of omission, addition or substitution in translation from English into Arabic. A classification of four linguistic (semantic or pragmatic) relationships was developed; such relationships were considered as grounds of justification of lexical departure from formal correspondence in translation. This classification was applied to the Arabic translations of a number of extracts taken out of sociopolitical speeches delivered by Martin Luther King. The acts of lexical omission, addition and substitution were found to be translational strategies based upon the referential, collocative, connotative or situational relationships between the SL/TL omitted, added or substituted lexical units of language and the SL/TL context.

**Keywords:** Lexical departure (omission, addition and substitution), Formal correspondence, Semantic and pragmatic justification, Translation (English, Arabic)

## 1. Introduction

Formal correspondents in translation are the target language (TL) units of language that are formally seen to be the regular and conventional equivalents to the given source language (SL) units of language. According to Catford (1965: 27), a formal correspondent is any TL category that can be said to occupy (as nearly as possible) the same place in the economy of the TL as the given SL category occupies in the SL. It is also described as the word-for-word translation (Nida, 1964), the formal equivalent of a SL word or phrase (Nida and Taber, 1969) and the formal correspondent (Nida and Taber, 1982). Departing from a formal correspondent by means of omission, addition or substitution should result in textual equivalents. According to Catford (1965: 27), such equivalents are any TL texts or portions of texts that are observed (on particular occasions) to be the equivalents of given SL texts or portions of texts. They are also referred to as the sense-for-sense translations (Nida, 1964; Nida and Taber, 1969; 1982).

Departing from formal correspondence in translation at the lexical level of language has been seen as controversial. It is considered either as a right of the translator or as a kind of disloyalty or even betrayal to the author's ideas. It is a right as long as the translator keeps the real sense of the SL text intact as every SL word is taken into account but not necessarily to be rendered (Newmark, 1988: 80). Furthermore, the translator's right of omitting, adding or substituting material should not be in disagreement with the fact that translation is just an activity that is inferior to creation and the translator is only a copywriter (Salines, 1999: 27; Chesterman, 1997: 39) who should be always subservient to the SL text. To translate is not to create; however, it to put every SL unit of language into its own TL place (Newmark, 1982: 137) in a creative manner (Chesterman, 1997: 28; Shunnaq, 1998: 33; Dollerup, 1998: 185). Formal correspondents are not always the true translational choices and lexical departure from formal correspondence thus comes to achieve the intactness of the SL real sense and the adherence to the linguistic form that only belongs to the TL.

Deemed also as an error of translation or unjustifiable act of translational treatment, departure from formal correspondence is classified by Altman (1994) into omission, addition, inaccurate rendition of individual items and distortion of longer phrases. The same classification is mostly adopted by Barik (1994); however, departure herein is considered to be either constructive or destructive. Barik subcategorizes omission into skipping, comprehension and compounding omission; addition into qualifier, elaboration and relationship addition; and substitution into mild semantic error, gross semantic error, mild phrasing change, substantial phrasing change and gross phrasing change. On the other hand, to be restricted to formal correspondence or to have erroneous departures from it primarily arises from the failure of the translators to interpret the meaning of the given SL text (Abu-Ssaydeh, 2004). The lack of cultural equivalence is not seen to be an obstacle to Abu-Ssaydeh's subject translators as they can adopt several strategies such as paraphrasing, literal translation, semantic equivalence, omission and compensation. To lexically depart from formal correspondence is justifiable; in this respect, Davies (2007) considers omission as a valid and useful solution to the untranslatable elements such as metalinguistic references or context-specific or culture-specific contents; the content that is unacceptable to or leaves negative effects on the way it is received by the TL audience; and the unnecessary or

redundant elements.

## 2. Problem and Purpose

The usage of formal correspondents in translation is sometimes risky and causes serious implications to the TL readership. It becomes more misleading as such two completely different linguistic typologies and cultural backgrounds as English and Arabic are addressed. Besides, equivalent and creative translations are expected to be produced; translators should show respect to the TL as much as they shown respect to the SL (cf. Hatim and Mason, 1990: 9-10). Being restricted to formal correspondents or set free from using them is to produce Arabic lexis but in English grammar or to loosely follow the English real sense. In this respect, lexical departure from formal correspondence becomes a solution *only if* it is justifiable and helps develop textual equivalents in order to attain as nearly as possible the same effect on the TL readers in the way that the author intends the text (cf. Newmark, 1982: 10; Newmark, 1988: 5; Shunnaq, 1998: 33).

The relationships between the units of language whose formal correspondents are departed from on the one hand and the context including the preceding and/or succeeding units on the other hand can be grounds for such justification. Such relationships are either semantic or pragmatic; they are respectively seen as rule-governed and principle-controlled (Leech, 1983: 5), semantic and communicative in terms of sense and value (Bell, 1991: 162) and the sentence- and utterance-meanings (Lyons, 1995: 79). Based upon the fact that are the three general forms of lexical departure from formal correspondence, the present paper aimed at justifying the lexical departure from formal correspondence (by means of omission, addition or substitution) in translating Martin Luther King's English sociopolitical speeches into Arabic.

## 3. Method

### 3.1 Pilot Study

A pilot study was initially applied to a number of Arabic-native translators who were found, by means of an initial proficiency test, as much proficient as to produce high-quality translations. They were asked to translate into Arabic a number of extracts taken out randomly of sociopolitical texts. In general, it was found that the TL version departs lexically from the author's version by deleting some information, presenting new information or adjusting the existing information. It was also found that this lexical departure occurs for either language- or culture-associated reasons on the basis of either semantic or pragmatic relationships between the lexical units of language whose formal correspondents were departed from on the one hand and the preceding/succeeding units in the SL text or the preceding/succeeding units in the TL text on the other hand.

### 3.2 Instrumental Development

Based upon the pilot study above and in light of the previous taxonomies of meaning in translation—particularly Newmark (1982) and Baker (1992), a classification of linguistic relationships between lexical units of language (the "Instrument") was developed for the

purpose of this paper (see the Figure below). In this respect, meaning in terms of translation can be divided into two major types as follows:

1. The **linguistic meaning** as little choice is provided to the translator to formulate his words (Newmark, 1982: 134). This type should refer to the *semantic relationships* that are either referential as literal denotations or collocative as lexical associations. Furthermore, it mostly entails the following two levels of meaning set by Baker (1992: 13-14):
  - a) The propositional meaning that arises from the relation between the given word and what it refers to in a real or imaginary world. It is the strictly literal definition of a word that is devoid of any emotion, attitude or color and stands for what a linguistic item points to in the world (Aziz, 1998: 122). For the purpose of this paper, this type of meaning was called as a **reference**.
  - b) The presupposed meaning that arises from the co-occurrence restrictions being either selective or collocative. It is a semantically arbitrary restriction that does not follow logically the propositional meaning of a word (Baker, 1992: 14; Lyons, 1995: 124-125). According to Firth (1957: 196), a word can be perceived by what it associates of other words. For the purpose of this paper, this type of meaning was called as a **collocation**.
2. The **referential meaning** as the translator can have a large number of linguistic variations to use (Newmark, 1982: 134). This type should refer to the *pragmatic relationships* that are either connotative as cultural implications or situational as circumstantial significations. Furthermore, it mostly entails the following two levels of meaning set by Baker (1992: 14-15):
  - a) The evoked meaning that arises from dialect and register variation. It is an idea suggested by or associated with a word along with its straightforward dictionary meaning. It is any additional associations (Aziz, 1998: 122) or emotive surroundings of sense (Hassan, 2001: 42) which a lexical item may signify. For the purpose of this paper, this type of meaning was called as a **connotation**.
  - b) The expressive meaning that is related to the speaker's feelings and attitudes rather than to what the given word(s) refers to. It is mostly the set of factors that surrounds and/or affects the given text. It involves a sender and a receiver as well as a place, time, theme, topic, diction, and goal (Hassan, 2001: 157). For the purpose of this paper, this type of meaning was called as a **situation**.

Based upon the Figure 1 below, lexical departure from formal correspondence in translation could be divided into six (6) types as a result of the multiplication of the three acts of lexical departure (omission, addition and substitution) by the two (semantic and pragmatic) grounds of justification. Furthermore, since each ground of justification included two (2) linguistic relationships, twelve (12) classes of lexical departure from formal correspondence were then obtained. To be a valid tool of research, the Instrument was judged by two professors of Linguistics and Translation Studies in two different Jordanian universities. It was also applied by three highly qualified Jordanian translators.

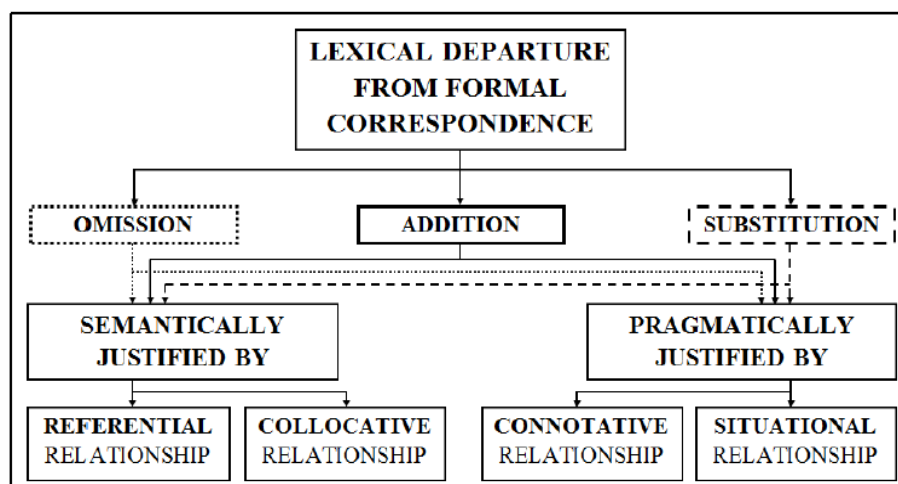


Figure 1. The Classification of Linguistic Relationships as Grounds of Justification of Lexical Departure from Formal Correspondence

### 3.3 Text-Type and Participants

Nine of Martin Luther King's sociopolitical speeches were selected. Mostly with a religious background, such speeches generally address the question of civil freedom and human rights. (Such speeches were "Birth of New Nation" in Dexter, 1957; "Give Us the Ballot" in Washington D.C., 1957; "Progress in Race Relations" in St. Louis, 1962; "Great March on Detroit" in Detroit, 1963; "I Have a Dream" in Washington D.C., 1963; "Eulogy for Martyred Children" in Birmingham, 1963; "Nobel Prize Acceptance" in Oslo, 1964; "Our God Marching On" in Montgomery, 1965; and lastly "Question beyond Vietnam" in New York, 1967). Fifty seven extracts were selected out of such speeches. Regarding the linguistic and contextual features, the subject texts were of an interpersonal language (cf. Nunan, 1993: 18). They were mainly intended to fulfill social purposes and more humanly-oriented than any other text-types. In addition, they could be assessed in some way or another as freer and more evaluative (cf. Hatim, 1997: 63) and readership-oriented, mass-appealing and concerning the social and personal relationship between the writer and the reader (cf. Newmark, 1988: 41-42).

The subject extracts above were translated by three English-Arabic translators. Being either employees or freelancers, such translators were considered to be proficient on the basis of two factors. Firstly, corporate recommendations about the translators were obtained from the owners and/or managers of licensed translation offices in Jordan. After that, the translators were given an initial proficiency test that composed of some general theoretical considerations on departure from formal correspondence in translation along with two representative English paragraphs to be translated into Arabic.

## 4. Findings

In light of the main goal of this paper and in agreement with the Instrument as having been applied to the Arabic translations of the subject English sociopolitical texts, the lexical omissions, additions and substitutions encountered were found to be **semantically justified**

(SJ) and pragmatically justified (PJ) lexical departures from formal correspondence. The SJ lexical departures from formal correspondence were found either **referential or collocative** whereas the PJ lexical departures were found to be either **connotative or situational**. The grounds of such justification were the **(semantic or pragmatic) linguistic relationships** between i) an omitted SL lexical unit of language and a preceding/succeeding SL unit, ii) an added TL unit of language and a preceding/succeeding TL unit and iii) a substituted SL unit of language and a preceding/succeeding TL unit.<sup>1</sup>

#### 4.1 SJ Lexical Departure from Formal Correspondence

##### 4.1.1 Referential Lexical Omission

The translator omitted the SL lexical units of language 'imperialism' and 'negative' in Examples (a) and (b) respectively on the basis of the referential relationship between the former and the SL unit 'colonialism' and between the latter and the SL unit 'devoid of any positive meaning'.

(a) I came out merely with the determination to free my people from the colonialism and *imperialism* inflicted upon them by Britain.

فما خرجت إلا عازماً على تحرير شعبي من الاستعمار الذي فرضته عليهم بريطانيا.

(b) The peace which existed at that time was a *negative*, obnoxious peace devoid of any positive meaning.

إن السلام الذي قام في ذلك الوقت كان سلاماً بغیض الدافع مجرداً من أي معنى إيجابي.

##### 4.1.2 Referential Lexical Addition

The translator added the TL lexical units of language 'أرقى' and 'ارشاد' in Examples (c) and (d) respectively on the basis of the referential relationship between the former and the TL unit 'أعظم' and between the latter and the TL unit 'حكمة'.

(c) No greater tribute can be paid to you as parents, and no greater epitaph can come to them as children, than where they died and what they were doing when they died.

فما من صفة تمنح لك كأب، وما من قيمة تحققها كابن أرقى ولا أعظم من المكان الذي مت فيه والشيء الذي كنت عليه قائماً حينما مت.

(d) As I have called for radical departures from the destruction of Vietnam, many persons have questioned me about the wisdom of my path.

و بمجرد أن دعوت إلى العدول الكامل عن دمار فيتنام، سألني الكثير عما في مساري هذا من حكمة وارشاد.

##### 4.1.3 Referential Lexical Substitution

The translator substituted the SL lexical units of language 'most essential' for 'أخطر' and 'eternal' for 'التام' in Examples (e) and (f) respectively on the basis of the referential relationship between the former and the TL unit 'أخطر' and between the latter and the TL unit 'التام'.

(e) To rob a man of his freedom is to take from him فأن تسلب رجلاً حريته يعني أن تأخذ منه أخطر

<sup>1</sup> Wherever a word/phrase in Examples (a) to (x) comes in *Italic*, underlined or in **bold**, this means that the word/phrase is omitted, added or substituted, respectively.

the **most essential** basis of his manhood.

(f) Our only hope today lies in our ability to... go out..., declaring **eternal** hostility to poverty, racism, and militarism.

أسس الرجولة.  
وإن أملنا الوحيد اليوم يكمن في قدرتنا على... الخروج...، معلنين العداة التام في وجه الفقر والعنصرية والعسكرية.

#### 4.1.4 Collocative Lexical Omission

The translator omitted the SL lexical units of language 'gradually' and 'trustful' in Examples (g) and (h) respectively on the basis of the collocative relationship between the former and the SL unit 'gave way' and between the latter and the SL unit 'give and take'.

(g) The Negro's rural plantation background *gradually* gave way to urban, industrial life.

(h) Life and history give testimony to the fact that conflicts are never resolved without *trustful* give and take on both sides.

فالخلفية الريفية الزراعية للزنجي تمهد الطريق لحياة مدنية صناعية.  
فتثبت لنا الحياة ويثبت لنا التاريخ الحقيقة القائلة بأن الخلافات لا تحل أبداً دون أخذ ورد من كلا الجانبين.

#### 4.1.5 Collocative Lexical Addition

The translator added the TL lexical units of language 'المشترك' and 'الإقامة' in Examples (i) and (j) respectively on the basis of the collocative relationship between the former and the TL unit 'التفاهم' and between the latter and the TL unit 'العدل'.

(i) To make possible a coming together of white people and colored people on the basis of a real harmony of interest and understanding.

(j) They have something to say to every Negro... who has stood on the sidelines in a mighty struggle for justice.

لتمكين التقاء البيض مع إخوانهم على أساس الانسجام الحقيقي في المصالح والتفاهم المشترك.  
فإن لديهم ما يقولونه لكل زنجي... ممن قد وقف على جانبي الكفاح العظيم لإقامة العدل.

#### 4.1.6 Collocative Lexical Substitution

The translator substituted the SL lexical units of language 'criminals' for 'ارتكاب' and 'speak' for 'الصراخ' in Examples (k) and (l) respectively on the basis of the collocative relationship between the former and the TL unit 'أعمال خاطئة' and between the latter and the TL unit 'من أعماق قلبي'.

(k) In the process of gaining our rightful place, we must not be **criminals** of wrongful deeds.

(l) As I have moved to break the betrayal of my own silences and to **speak** from the burnings of my own heart.

وفي سياق الحصول على مكاننا الصحيح، لا يجب علينا ارتكاب أية أعمال خاطئة.  
وبمجرد أن تحركت لكسر ما اعتراني من صمت وللصراخ من أعماق قلبي.

### 4.2 PJ Lexical Departure from Formal Correspondence

#### 4.2.1 Connotative Lexical Omission

The translator omitted the SL units of language 'meaningless' and 'betrayal' in Examples (m) and (n) respectively on the basis of the connotative relationship between the former and the

SL unit 'chaos' and between the latter and the SL unit 'silence'.

(m) If we succumb to the temptation of using violence in our struggle..., and our chief legacy to the future would be an endless rain of *meaningless* chaos.

فإن نحن استسلمنا إلى الإغراء باستخدام العنف في كفاحنا...، وسيكون جَلّ ما ورثناه للمستقبل سبيل لا ينتهي من الفوضى.

(n) I have moved to break the *betrayal* of my own silences and to speak from the burnings of my own heart.

لقد تحركت لكسر ما اعتراني من صمت وللصراخ من أعماق قلبي.

#### 4.2.2 Connotative Lexical Addition

The translator added the TL units of language 'فطرة' and 'حكم' in Examples (o) and (p) respectively on the basis of the connotative relationship between the former and the TL unit 'الله' and between the latter and the TL unit 'الله'.

(o) To rob a man of his freedom is... to take from him his freedom is to rob him of something of God.

فإن تسلب رجلاً حريته يعني أن... تأخذ منه حريته هو أن تسلبه شيئاً من فطرة الله.

(p) Our ultimate aim is to live with all men as brothers and sisters under God.

إن أقصى غايتنا هي العيش مع الجميع كإخوان وأخوات تحت حكم الله.

#### 4.2.3 Connotative Lexical Substitution

The translator substituted the SL units of language 'meaning' for 'حكمة' and 'children' for 'أحباء' in Examples (q) and (r) respectively on the basis of the connotative relationship between the former and the TL unit 'الإلهية' and between the latter and the TL unit 'الله'.

(q) But it was an event with divine **meaning**, for it symbolizes something.

إنما كان حدثاً ذا **حكمة إلهية**، يرمز إلى شيء ما.

(r) Now is the time to open the doors of opportunity to all of God's **children**.

الآن حان الوقت لفتح أبواب الفرص أمام كل **أحباء الله**.

#### 4.2.4 Situational Lexical Omission

The translator omitted the SL units of language 'concentration' and 'the Negro' in Examples (s) and (t) respectively on the basis of the situational relationship between the former and the SL unit 'camps' and between the latter and the SL unit 'continued oppression and exploitation'.

(s) They move sadly and apathetically as we herd them off the land of their fathers into *concentration* camps where minimal social needs are rarely met.

فإنهم يتحركون بحزن وببأس شديدين ونحن نقودهم خارج أرض آبائهم إلى مخيمات قَلما يتم فيها تلبية أقل الحاجات الاجتماعية.

(t) The price that this nation must pay for the continued oppression and exploitation of *the Negro* is the price of its own destruction.

فالثمن الذي على هذه الأمة دفعه لقاء الكبت والاستغلال المستمرين هو ثمن دماره.

#### 4.2.5 Situational Lexical Addition

The translator added the TL units of language 'الحرية' and 'الزاميين' in Examples (u) and (v) respectively on the basis of the situational relationship between the former and the TL unit



'ضحايا للعنجهية' and between the latter and the TL unit 'كفاح'.

(u) If we succumb to the temptation of using violence in our struggle, unborn generations would be the recipients of a long and desolate night of bitterness.

فإن استسلمنا إلى اغراءات استخدام العنف في كفاح الحرية، فستكون الأجيال القادمة هي من سيشهد ليلاً طويلاً ومفقراً من الشقاء.

(v) We, again, fell victim to the deadly Western arrogance that has poisoned the international atmosphere for so long.

وقد وقعنا مرة أخرى ضحايا لزاميين للعنجهية الغربية القاتلة والتي قد سممت المناخ الدولي لمدة طويلة.

#### 4.2.6 Situational Lexical Substitution

The translator substituted the SL units of language 'humility' for 'العبودية' and 'majestic' for 'المنتصر' in Examples (w) and (x) respectively on the basis of the situational relationship between the former and the TL unit 'سيعاني أبناءنا' and between the latter and the TL unit 'نتحرك'. 'الآن بعزم ورفض'.

(w) If you stop now..., our children and our children's children will suffer all of the **humility** that we have lived under for years.

فإن أنت توقفت الآن...، سيعاني أبناءنا وأبناء أبناءنا من كل العبودية التي قد عشنا تحتها نحن لسنين طوال.

(x) I accept this award in behalf of a civil rights movement which is moving with determination and a **majestic** scorn.

فإني أقبل هذه الجائزة نيابة عن حركة الحقوق المدنية والتي تتحرك الآن بعزم ورفض المنتصر.

### 5. Conclusion

Encountered in the Arabic translations of the subject sociopolitical speeches, the lexical departures from formal correspondence were semantically or pragmatically justified. The SJ lexical departures appeared to be based upon the referential or collocative relationships between the omitted, added or substituted SL/TL units of language and the SL/TL context; however, the connotative or situational relationships appeared to be the basis of the PJ lexical departures. This outcome asserts that the acts of lexical omission, addition or substitution are not to be always considered as errors of translation (see Altman, 1994; Barik, 1994). In fact, they are sometimes necessary translational strategies.

Translators omit, add or substitute for preserving or reproducing the semantic and stylistic features of the SL text (cf. Bell, 1991: 5). The factual information contained in the SL text (Meethan and Hudson, 1969: 242) is retained and both the linguistic cohesion and conceptual coherence (Hatim and Munday, 2004: 48) of the SL text are ensured. At the end, this paper recommends that further studies examine the issue of lexical (or structural) departure from formal correspondence in translation from English into Arabic or vice versa. Other text-types can be used as the translator's right of going beyond the confines of literalness in translation and performing appropriate acts of departure from formal correspondence is to be taken into account.

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