Difficulties in Translating Compound Nouns From English Into Arabic Case Study: Jordan University /Aqaba Branch

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to explore difficulties in translating compound nouns from English into Arabic at the University of Jordan /Aqaba Branch. This qualitative research included 15 Jordanian 4th year students in the department of English, Faculty of Languages, the University of Jordan /Aqaba Branch. The findings reveal that cultural differences between both Arabic and English languages are some of the obstacles that face students to translate compound nouns from English to Arabic. Also, the findings reveal that the students are unfamiliar with this kind of compound nouns in Arabic, especially when they give different meaning.

Key words: Compound noun; Cultural differences

INTRODUCTION

New words in English are invented almost daily, and a great part of these new words tend to be compounds. Compounds normally have two parts. First part usually tells about what kind of object or person is it, or what its purpose is. The second part indentifies the object or person in question. For instance, a friend zone is compound noun consists of two parts "friend' and "zone". Compound nouns often have a different meaning when they combined together. Compound nouns are usually written as one word, with or without a hyphen and also can be written closed (Jakobsen, 1992, p.33). They are usually (noun + noun), (verb + noun), (adjective +noun), (noun+ verb), (verb+ preposition), (noun+ prepositional phrase) (preposition + noun) or (noun + adjective). This creates some intriguing issues when it comes to translation as the more complicated compound nouns will typically require some kind of change when they are translated. Even though long compound nouns can simply be made with a string of separate words in English.

Therefore, the current study attempts to investigate the problems of translating compound nouns among students in Jordan University /Aqaba branch. One of the main problem faces Arab students is translating compound nouns from English into Arabic. Compound nouns often have a different meaning when they combined. For example, "pineapple" is a compound word consist of two words pine and apple, when pine and apple combined together, they give a different meaning not related with pine and apple. Arabic students face problems in translating this kind of compound nouns. For example:

Pineapple ⟹ صنوبر التفاح
Or
Pineapple ⟹ صنوبر
Or
Pineapple ⟹ تفاح

Beginner's Arabic students could translate it literally, or translate first or second part of the word. Whereas students who know English well will translate it as " اناناس "

Generally, the meaning of a compound noun is a specialization of the meaning of its head. The modifier limits the meaning of the head. This is most obvious in descriptive compounds, also known as endocentric compounds, in which the modifier is used in an attributive

or appositional manner. A whitefish is a particular kind of fish which is white, for instance. In determinative compounds, however, the relationship is not attributive. For example, a footstool is not a particular type of stool that is like a foot. Rather, it is a stool for one's foot or feet. (It can be used for sitting on, but that is not its primary purpose.) In a similar manner, the office manager is the manager of an office, an armchair is a chair with arms, and a raincoat is a coat against the rain. These relationships, which are expressed by prepositions in English, would be expressed by grammatical case in other languages. Compounds of this type are also known as exocentric compounds.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Translation had been used since the beginning of life following descendants of Noah, after the huge flood. Since then people began to use and develop meaning and conceptions of translation. For a formal definition, Dubois et al (1973, p.22) says "translation is the expression in another language (or target language) of what has been expressed in another source, language, preserving semantic and stylistic equivalences". But it has already been suggested by many translation scholars such as Baker (1992) and Newmark (1988, p.91) that the notion of equivalence is problematic in the study of translation, and to overcome this problem, various translation strategies have been suggested by various authors within the field of translation.

When it comes to the compounds, In English compounding is highly creative and innovative, and often used as a means of introducing new phrases or coining new words into the lexicon. In contrast, Arabic is less resourceful. Arabic does not possess similar multiword expressions as an integral linguistic mechanism that merges language items to form a unit of language that can be broken down into single words and display idiosyncratic features. (Sag et al., 2002).

Amer (2004) pointed out many English compound nouns are rendered either by original nouns that Arabic already has in its stock as: sun-in –law صهر /sihr/, he-goat تيس /tays/, or by one –word nouns (or adjectives / participles functioning as nouns).

Traditional grammarians believe that such Arabic compounds are derived from the trilateral verb form or from one of its derived forms, e.g. goldsmith صائغ / sa?igh/

(from the verb /sagha/), onlooker متفرج /mutafarrij/ from the verb /tafarraja/

(b) Some are rendered in Arabic by the structure N+Adj (+Adj) (the normal order in

Arabic),e.g. The Red Sea البحر الأحمر /al bahr al-ahmar /

Although there is no one criterion to be used for a general definition of compounds in English as Quirk (1973, p.444) puts it, compounding can be defined as the process of adding two bases together to form a new lexical item. For example, when adding the bases "road" , "warning" , and "child" to bases "Lock", "light" , and "like" , we can have new elements: road lock, child like, warning light.

Dressler (2005) echoes and supports the view that compounding is widespread and common across linguistic processes and novel compounds can easily be constructed. Dressler (2005) classifies compounds into two types, based on the semantic properties of the head, as exocentric and endocentric compounds. Endocentric compounds have their heads within the compound itself, such as 'Bluetooth', while the heads of exocentric compounds must be inferred e.g. 'hard headed.

On the other hand, Jerema's (2005) study is particularly pertinent to this present paper as it stresses the need for a multilingual approach to achieve a full understanding of compounds. Jerema (2005) indicates that compound information processing is best achieved through analyzing and finding out how compounds operate across a variety of languages.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Influence of the mother tongue and linguistic differences are considered the most difficulties that they face during the translation process. Translators must be aware of the SL and the TL. They encounter obstacles in translating compound nouns from English into Arabic because compounding does not play such an important part in Arabic. Consequently, this research is concerned with investigating the difficulties facing students in Jordan University.

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

This research attempts to achieve the following research objectives:

i. To investigate problems in translating compound nouns from English into Arabic.

ii. To analyze the causes behind the problems of translating compound nouns from English into Arabic.

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study addresses the following research questions:

i. What are difficulties in translating compound nouns from English into Arabic?

ii. What are the causes behind the difficulties in translating compound nouns from English into Arabic?

5. METHODS OF THE STUDY

In this study, the researcher followed the qualitative

descriptive method. The population of this study consists of 15 fourth year BA English language and Literature students at Jordan University/ Aqaba branch for the academic year 2016-2017. The sample of the study is selected randomly that included 15 informants both males and females. This made about 80% of the overall population of the study. The researcher designed a test to collect data about the difficulties facing students in translating compound nouns. It is used to state two significant goals; the first is to make certain that the students make mistakes in translating compound nouns. The second is to determine the reasons behind these mistakes that are based on analyzing the answers of the students. The students were requested to translate 11 compound nouns into Arabic. They were also requested to mention the reasons for being able and unable to translate each compound noun. The results of the test were analyzed and studied to detect the reasons that stand

behind difficulties in translating compound nouns. The researcher analyzed the test by using (SPSS) program in addition to textual analysis which discusses the results and mentions the factors that affect them.

6. DISCUSSIONS AND FINDINGS

Having discussed the literature review and past studies on translation of compound words, this section discusses the analysis of the elicited data. The analysis of the data views the participants' performance in translating compound nouns from English into Arabic. The data were analyzed based on different criteria as followings: i) translating first part, ii) translating first and second part literally, iii) translating second part, iv) irrelevant translation which contains unrelated translation, and no translation to the provided compound nouns. Table (1) displays the frequencies and percentages of translated compound

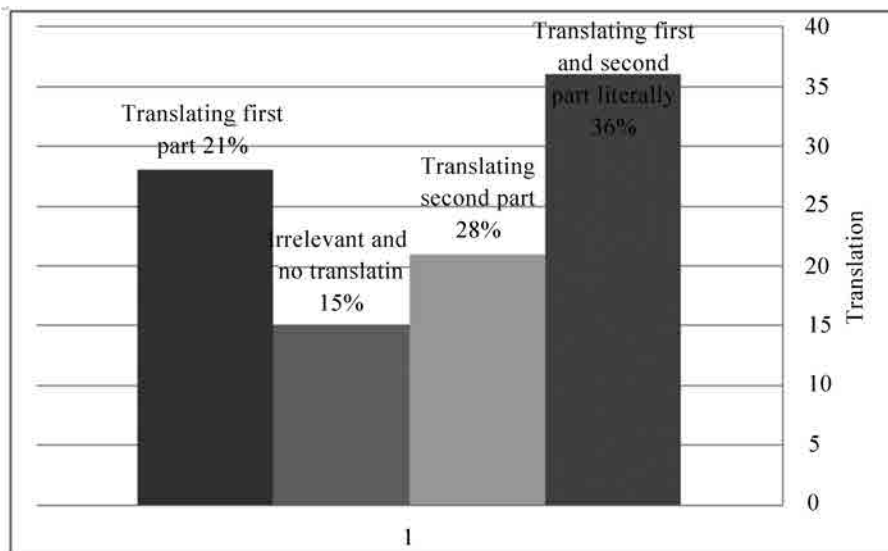nouns based on the four criteria.

Figure 1

The Performance of the Translators in Translating Compound Nouns from English into Arabic.

As shown in figure (1), the participants were provided with a number of compound nouns and they asked to translate them into Arabic. Figure (1) shows that 15% of the participants provided irrelevant and no translation to the given compound nouns, 21% provided translation for the first part of compound nouns, 36 % translated of the first and second part literary, and 28% provided translation for second part of the compound nouns. The next section provides a discussion on the translation of the idioms separately shown in frequencies and percentages for the translation of each idiom in English language as discussed below:

Compound Noun 1: Small Talk

This compound noun is formed by adjective "small" and noun "talk". It means a conversation about things that

are not important. 10 students (50%) translated it as كلام صغير conversation about things that are not important, often between people who do not know each other wellconversation about things that are not important, often between people who do not know each other well " they translated the first and second part literally. 5 students (25%) translated the second part such as " حديث conversation about things that are not important, often between people who do not know each other well . 3 students (15%) translated first part "صغير". 2 students (10%) provided unrelated translation such as "كلام غير واقعي"

Compound Noun 2: Bellboy

This compound noun used to refer a person whose job is to carry people's cases to their rooms in a hotel. 12 students (60%) provided a literal translation for the first

and second part of the compound noun as جرس الولد which is meaningless. 4 students (20%) provided translation for the first part " جرس because they think a bellboy is a kind of bell. 2 students (10%) translated the second part "ولد" when they asked about the reason of translating second part, they answered a bell is one of the personal characters. Only 2 students (10%) did not translation this compound noun.

Compound Noun 3: Seashore

16 students (80%) translated first and second part literally" شاطئ البحر. 2 students (10%) translated the second part "شاطئ".Only 2 students (10 %) provided unrelated translation such as " ثمين". Because this compound noun means exactly what they say, most of the students translated it correctly.

Compound Noun 4: Deadline

It means a point in time by which something must be done. 10 students (50%) translated it "الموعد النهائي", when they asked about the reason for this translation, they replied that they are familiar with this translation. 4 students (20%) translated the first and second part literally " الخط الميت أو المتوفى. 2 students (10%) provided unrelated translation such as " ممنوع الاقتراب".Only 4 students (20%) did not provide any translation for this compound noun.

Compound Noun 5: Butterfly

It is used to refer a flying insect with a long thin body and four large. None of the students translated it correctly because it has meanings that have nothing to do with the meanings of the individual words involved. 6 students (30%) translated it "زبده, they thought it could be kind of butter, they translated just the first part. 7 students (35%) translated the second part as "برغوث".

Compound Noun 6: Toothpaste

This compound noun means a paste for cleaning the teeth. Many students translated it correctly as"معجون اسنان". 14 students (70%) translated it correctly. When they asked about the correct translation, they said we are familiar with this compound noun and we learnt in many compound nouns, the first word usually describes or modifies the second word, giving us insight into what kind of thing an item is, or providing us with clues about the item's purpose. The second word usually identifies the item. Two students (10%) translated the first part "معجون ". Three students (15 %) translated it as " اسنان". Only one student provided no translation.

Compound Noun 7: Deadlock

Compound nouns could be written one word as "deadlock" or close words. It means a complete failure to reach agreement or settle an argument. 6 students (30%) translated the first part such as "فارق الحياه/ توفى. 5 students (25%) translated the second part only as " مقفل/ مغلق " 3 students(15%) translated the first and

second part literally " متوفى مقفل عليه " 3 students (15%) provide unrelated translation like "مقبض الباب" 3 students (15 %) did not provide any translation. None of the students translate it correctly because they are unfamiliar with it, and this compound noun has meaning that has nothing to do with the meanings of the individual words involved.

Compound Noun 8: Mother-in-Law

A compound noun is a noun made up of two or more words. Each word makes up part of the meaning of the noun. Mother-in-law is a compound word composed of three words. It means the mother of one's spouse. 6 students (30%) translated every word such as "ام في القانون. 3 students (15%) translated first part only " ام ". 5 students (25%) translated it correctly " حماه /ام الزوج او الزوجه. 4 students (20%) provide unrelated translation, for example, "ام حقيقية "," ام شرعيه",and "مرضعه". Only two students (10%) provided no translation.

Compound Noun 9: Garden Rocket

It means a plant lacking a permanent woody stem; many are flowering garden plants or potherbs; some having medicinal properties; some are pests. 13 students (65%) translated first and second part literally. For example, "صاروخ الحديقة،. 3 students (15%) translated first part "حديقة". 2 students (10%) translated second part only " صاروخ" 2 students (10%) provide unrelated translation. None of the students provide correct translation.

Compound Noun 10: Hanger - on

A person who remains in a place or attaches himself or herself to a group, another person, etc. Hanger –on is composed of a noun and a preposition. It is translated into Arabic in different ways. 12 students (60%) translated the noun hanger, such as "معلق", "مشنوق". 7 students (35%) translated it correctly "متطفل". Only one student (5%) provided unrelated translation.

Compound Noun 11: Bookworm

Bookworm is a person who likes reading very much. Because the students learned the first word usually describes or modifies the second word and the second word usually identifies the item, 13 students (65%) translated it as " دودة/فايروس الكتاب" 3 students (15%) translated the second part only "دوده". 2 students (10%) provided unrelated translation. 2 students (10%) did not provide any translation.

CONCLUSION

By way of concluding, it can be said that there are several difficulties face Arab students in translating compound nouns from English into Arabic. Linguistic differences is one of the main difficulties in translating process

because students translate compound nouns literally and do not know when they combined together they give different meanings sometimes. Most of English students at the University of Jordan / Aqaba when they asked to translate compound nouns from English to Arabic, they did not translate correctly because cultural and linguistic differences.

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