

A Linguistic Contrastive Analysis Case Study: Out of Context Translation of Arabic Adjectives into English in EFL Classroom

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Abstract

This linguistic contrastive analysis study aims to vet and spell out the probable problematic differences in meanings between some Arabic adjectives and their possible equivalents in English (Strong version of CA) that may get to the surface when Jordanian students produce a piece of out of context translation of Arabic adjectives into English in EFL Classroom.

The results of study showed that the process of finding and choosing the correct right equivalents of Arabic adjectives in English language when TEFL students translate out of context adjectives is difficult and misleading in most cases because of the probable problematic differences between some Arabic adjectives and their possible equivalents in English so they should pay their attention to a) context, b) parts of speech and c) collocations.

Keywords: linguistics, Contrastive Analysis, Case Study, Translation, Equivalent, Arabic, English, Adjectives and EFL Classroom.

1.1. Introduction

*"Get the habit of analysis - analysis will
in time enable synthesis to become your*

habit

of

mind".

Frank

Lloyd

Wright

Contrastive analysis is known amongst linguists and educationist as a study used to predict the errors language learners may make in the second language production. In fact, they mostly agree that it is systematic study of a pair of languages with a view to identifying their structural differences and similarities.

Abdi (n.d) explained that contrastive analysis is helpful for teachers in: a) designing teaching and learning materials. b) Engaging learner in activities to be a good user of target language. c) Evaluating text books. d) Paying attention to the structure of the texts beyond sentence level. e) Paying attention to conversation in its regular pattern in different situations. f) Paying attention to complex areas like intonation. g) Paying attention to different underlying rules

which differ from culture to culture and h) helping methodologists to pay attention to the whats of teaching and hows of teaching.

Gorjian and Molonia (1999) insisted that the closest equivalents in both languages cannot be reached so the translator should do his best to arrive at particular circumstance and achieve an appropriate equivalent while Duff (1989) insisted that if there is not an appropriate equivalent in target language, the translator should not force it into the translation.

Vinary and Darbelnet (1995) explained that the equivalents in the target language should "replicate the same situation as in the original, whilst using completely different wording." Tytler (1907) showed three levels of the translation adequacy: a) The translation should give a complete transcript of the ideas of the original work. b) The style and manner of writing should be of the same character of the original and c) the translation should have all the ease of original composition. Nida (1969) explained the requirements of a translation: a) Making sense. b) Conveying the spirit and manner of the original. c) Having the natural and easy form of expression and d) Producing a similar response.

In English sentences, adjectives are words acting to modify nouns. They play an important main role in many languages. English is not an exception. English adjectives may take two main roles in a sentence: First, acting as a predicative adjectives where they modify a preceding noun as a predicate, linked by a verb. An example of a predicative adjective is the following:

A Fish is spotted.

The adjective spotted is linked the subject of the sentence, Fish, by use of the copula verb to be in this form. Second, acting as an attributive adjective where they modify a noun by being linked directly to the noun as part of the noun phrase. An example of an attributive adjective is the following:

The spotted fish moved

The adjective spotted is directly connected to the subject of the sentence, Fish. In English, most attributive adjectives precede the nouns they are going to modify, while in many Romance languages: Spanish, Portuguese, French, Italian, Romanian and Catalan, the adjective comes after the noun. So while in English we might say: The beautiful woman. In French we would say:

Le femme jolie.

It is may be literally translated as: The woman beautiful.

Also, in Arabic Language which is not one of the Romance Languages we say:

أمرأة جميلة /Emrah Jamelah/

Also, it is may be literally translated as: The woman beautiful.

1.2. Statement of the problem

When Arab TEFL students translate from Arabic to English that means that they need to build English sentences meaning that that they must use different types of words. Each type of word has its own Parts of Speech. In parallel, each word has its own function. English adjective is one of the important parts of speech that describe nouns. The process of finding the correct right equivalents of Arabic adjectives in English language by TEFL students when they translate from Arabic to English is considered a highly charged issue.

From the professional personal experience of the researcher who worked and still works as a TEFLER and taught English for students from first class level to the fourth year university level in his home country Jordan and in some of the Arab countries where Arabic is the first language and English language is considered a foreign one, he found that the process of finding and choosing the correct right equivalents of Arabic adjectives in English language when they translate out of context adjectives is difficult and misleading in most cases.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

Sinclair (2003) insisted that "A word may have several meanings, and dictionaries present the meanings without giving much guidance as to how they may be differentiated from each other".

The final aim of this study is to shed the light on the probable problematic differences between some Arabic adjectives and their possible equivalents in English (strong version of CA) to clear and explain the differences in meanings when students translate Arabic adjectives to English ones without considering the general context.

1.4. Significance of the study

The findings of the study will be important in the EFL field in Jordan and the Arab countries in making significant contributions to understanding of English language teaching and learning for group of people: a) Teachers of English: They may make use of the findings in being aware of the role of Arabic as a first language in the teaching/ learning process in teaching English as a target language.

b) Teacher educators: They may make use of the findings in reexamining their foreign language teaching methodology of teacher training and centers of development. c) Material writers and syllabus designers: They may make use of the findings in preparing teaching materials and designing the syllabus. d) Teaching methodology researchers: They may make use of the findings in conducting more studies in the area which could be helpful in developing a new English language teaching methods and techniques and finally e) Arab students of English as a foreign language: They may make use of the findings to develop their translation abilities. Not to mention their ability in translating Arabic adjectives.

2. Background

2.1. Contrastive Analysis

"To use two languages familiarly and without contaminating one by the other is very difficult".

Samuel Johnson (1975)

Contrastive analysis (CA) or Contrastive Linguistics is considered as a part of applied linguistics which its main final aim is establishing the similarities and differences between the learner's native language and the foreign language being learned. It was developed and practiced in the 1950s and 1960s as application of structural linguistics to language teaching.

Gast (n.d.) explained that:

"Contrastive linguistics can be regarded as a branch of comparative Linguistics that is concerned with pairs of languages which are 'Socio-culturally linked'. Two languages can be said to be socio- Culturally linked when (i) they are used by a considerable number of bi- or multilingual speakers, and/or (ii) a substantial amount of 'linguistic output' (text, discourse) is translated from one language into the other". He added that:

"The term 'contrastive linguistics' is also sometimes used for comparative studies of (small) groups (rather than just pairs) of languages, and does not require a socio-cultural link between the languages investigated. On this view, contrastive linguistics is a special case of linguistic typology and is distinguished from other types of typological approaches by a small sample size and a high degree of granularity. Accordingly, any pair or group of languages (even Latin and Dyirbal) can be subject to a contrastive analysis."

Consequently, Contrastive analysis is seen as an attempt to predict where learners may have difficulties and as a result making mistakes. A well known example is that some languages like Japanese, Korean, and Mandarin do not have articles "the" and "a". Dependently, it can be predicted by the teachers and lectures of those languages that speakers of these languages will encounter some difficulties in learning articles when they learn English.

Gast (n.d.) presented the method of contrastive linguistics in a diagram:

Diagram 1

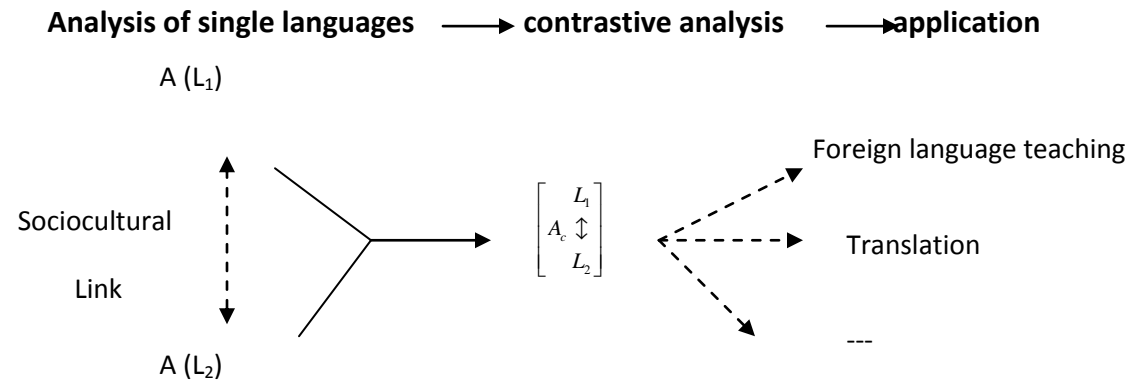


Diagram 1: Contrastive linguistic between language – particular analysis and application (Gast, n.d.).

Gast explained that A (L n) stands for the analysis of a language L n and 'Ac (L1 L2)' for the contrastive analysis of two languages L1 and L2.

Contrastive analysis is of two kinds: a) Intralingual. It includes: 1) Analysis of contrastive phonemes. 2) Feature analysis of morphosyntactic categories. 3) Analysis of morphemes having grammatical meaning. 4) Analysis of word order. 5) Componential analysis of lexemes and 6) Analysis of lexical relations. b) Cross-linguistic. It includes: 1) Comparative analysis of morphosyntactic systems. b) Comparative analysis of lexical semantics. c) Analysis of translational equivalence and d) Study of interference in foreign language learning.

Abdi (n.d) showed that:

- " Contrastive studies find similarities and differences between languages in:
- a) Grammatical structures(pronouns, articles, verbs, consonants and vowels)
 - b) Sentences and constructions (interrogatives, relatives, negatives , normal Phrases, syllables, diphthongs...)
 - c) Rules of the compared languages (interrogative, passivization and etc.)."

2.2. Adjectives in English

Thomson and Martinet (1960) explained that there six kinds of adjectives: a) Qualitative (e.g. beautiful, excellent). b) Quantitative (e. g .some, no, few, any). c) Demonstrative (e.g. this, that, these, those). d). Distributive (e.g. every, each, either, neither). e) Interrogative (e.g. what, whose, which). f) Possessive (e.g. my, his, your).

Adjectives which modify the nouns and pronouns are classified into:

Descriptive: they describe quality of the noun.

For example: long journey

Limiting: they limit the noun they modify.

For example: his house

Descriptive adjectives are of two types:

a. Attributive adjectives: they come directly before the noun to attribute a quality to the noun they modify. The same noun can be modified by more than one adjective.

Example: They live in the white house.

b. Predicative adjective: they form a part of the predicate and appear after the verb to modify the subject of the sentence.

Example: This boy is clever

2.3. Adjectives in Arabic

Lamtabbet (2010) explained that adjective in Arabic is called /Na't/ نعت or /Sifah/ صفة singular of /Sifat/ صفات. He added that an adjective is a word describes a noun such as (house, car, boy.....) called /Man'oot/ منوعات or /Mawsoof/ موصوف. He explained that unlike in English, adjectives in Arabic language come after the noun they qualify and should agree with it in gender, number and sometimes even in definiteness. The following example are useful:

English	Arabic Translation	Literal Translation	Arabic
A big tree	/shajraton kaberah/	Tree big	شجرة كبيرة
A nice girl	/tiflaton lateefah/	Girl nice	طفلة لطيفة
A clever man	/rajolon thakyon/	Man clever	رجل ذكي

3. Review of related literature

*"Science and literature give me answers. And they ask
me questions I will never be able to answer".*
Mark Haddon

Scanning literature, it is very easy to notice that studies conducted about contrastive analysis are noticeable quantitatively and qualitatively. Following are some theoretical studies and empirical ones, as well, presented chronologically.

3.1. Theoretical Studies

Stern (1983) insisted that the aim of contrastive analysis is not to present a new method of teaching. He showed that it came on purpose of describing across two languages which can be useful in solving learning problems. Beressa (2003) explained that the first language is like a scaffold for building up the second language. Consequently, translation is considered a tool to fill the gaps.

Karimi (2006) conducted a study and listed a group of examples of equivalents in English and Persian. He insisted that making good equivalents and translation is dependent on group of factors: syntactic, semantic, pragmatic and cultural systems of the two languages.

Gholami (2009) explained that one of the problematic areas of learning a language is vocabulary. She showed that some of the problems are as result of polysemy, or what it is called multiplicity of meaning for one word. In addition, she explained that teaching that is dependent on translation is less likely to bring about good communication. On the contrary, it may lead to some semantic mistakes.

Hayati and Shahriari (2010) explained that when beginners of English language start to produce English, they may ask a word in their mother tongue and want their teacher to give its equivalent in English and that demands their teachers entering the realm of translation which can be to some extent problematic because some words may have more than one meaning or even different parts of speech in different contexts.

Hobi (2011) highlighted the similarities and differences of attributive adjective which is considered the most common type of adjectives in English and Arabic in a study entitled as "A Contrastive Study Of Attributive Adjectives In English And Arabic". The findings of the study revealed that: a) Attributive adjectives are more complicated in Arabic than in English because Arabic ones belong to the class of nouns and they are of different types .b) Both in English and Arabic attributive adjectives function as modifiers of the head noun either directly or indirectly. c) In English, attributive adjectives are positioned before the noun but they are positioned after the head noun in Arabic. d) In English, adjectives are with no special form, but some adjectives are characterized by certain suffixes , and some of them are considered to be irregular past participle forms of verbs while in Arabic , they are derived from certain verbs and nouns .

3.2. Empirical Studies

AL-ashoor (2004) conducted a study about problems of adjective sequencing in English –Arabic translation. The study hypothesized the following: a) translation of adjective ordering poses some serious problems for translators as well as learners of English, b) there are no one-to-one correspondence between the modification systems in English and Arabic, c) there is no one-to-one correspondence between adjective ordering in both languages.

Twenty different patterns of adjective ordering from different books of English grammar were chosen. The examples were given to five subjects of assistant lectures at the Department of Translation, College of Arts in University of Mosul for rendering them to test the validity of the hypotheses. The findings of the study showed the following: a) there is no one-to-one correspondence between adjective ordering in English and Arabic. In English, this ordering is governed by some syntactic and semantic rules, whereas in Arabic, it is governed by speaker's intuition, emphasis shift and language usage. This results in inadequate and inaccurate renderings. b) all subjects used both semantic and communicative translations with varying percentages. 24 instances 24% were translated semantically, whereas 76 instances 76% were

translated communicatively .c) in English, the use of articles (definite and indefinite) are mutually exclusive with the use of demonstrative pronouns. In Arabic the definite article 'ال' is not mutually exclusive with the demonstrative pronouns. As for the indefinite article, it does not exist in Arabic.

Mansour (n.d.) conducted a study entitled " Appraisal Emotional Adjectives in English/Arabic Translation: A Corpus Linguistic Approach" to argue that some of the Arabic translations of appraisal adjectives found in Arabic-English-Arabic dictionaries are misleading because they do not reflect the full information about the word. She listed and explained enough clear groups of examples that spell out the main differences between English and Arabic powerful/less adjectival appraisal synonyms. The findings of the study revealed the following some facts: a) even big well famous dictionaries are not enough guarantees to have the full information of the word. Although AMMD and EMD are considered well known and trusted dictionaries for Arabic learners and researchers, the analysis showed some limited, missing, misleading and even wrong translations of appraised adjectives under discussion. b) The data provided about the powerless adjective weak as well as the powerful adjective strong is the different and somewhat contradicting information presented by the monolingual dictionaries; AMMD and EMD as well as the monolingual dictionaries; LASD, COED and WCD. c) The study proves that synonymous words like the powerful Arabic adjectives: jabar, qawi and qas are not necessarily collocationally interchangeable as the meaning can be entirely different and even contradicting.

Amer (n.d.) studied the main differences between compounds in Arabic and English and identified areas of difficulties in compounding that are difficult to be understood by Arab learners of English. The study showed that there are numerous differences. As a result, errors are expected to be caused because of the difficulty in constructing English compounds and the negative interference between Arabic and English.

Khudhayer (2010) investigated the Iraqi EFL university students' performance in using adjectives modifiers order in English and the causes of the students' errors and types of such errors. Dependently, finding some solutions to help students overcome the problems they encounter in using adjectives modifiers. The study hypothesized that Iraqi EFL university students do not have the mastery of the rules which govern the use of the order of adjective modifiers in English and they encounter difficulty in their performance.

Depending on the results of the test, it was found that the total number and percentage of the incorrect responses are (943, 0.66%) and that are more than of correct responses (497, 0.34%). Consequently, the result of the study indicated indicate that the students face difficulty in using adjective modifiers order in English and the results confirm the hypothesis of the study. The researcher insisted that the results can be attributed to group of strategies according to the errors ascribed to each: a) Intralingual transfer. b) The effect of context of learning. c) The students' use of communicative and d) Interlingual interference.

4. Methodology

4.1. Adjectives Selection and procedures

In the textbook of fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh grade, new vocabulary are presented isolated in what it is called "word box" at the beginning of each unit. Adjectives are main important part of that vocabulary. Unfortunately, students use the dictionaries or let the others help them to translate the new vocabulary out of context. Consequently, the process of finding and choosing the correct right equivalents of Arabic adjectives in English language when they translate out of context adjectives is difficult and misleading in most cases.

The researcher got back to the word box given in fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh grade EFL textbooks and listed those adjectives which seem that they have more than two equivalents in Arabic. Then he translated them into Arabic depending on their existence in the text itself. In other words he found the equivalents of those adjectives in Arabic as they must be translated in the context. The following is a list of some theses adjectives and their equivalents in Arabic as they must be translated depending on the text:

English Adjectives	Arabic Adjectives
1-Old	/ Kadeem/ قديم
2-Strong	/ khawe/ قوي
3-Outdoor	/ Fi elkalaa/ (/Karji/). في الخلاء (خارجي).
4- Perfect	/Mithali/ مثالي
5-Phisical	/ jismani/ جسماني
6-Tidy	/ Moratab/ مرتب
7-Special	/ Kas/ خاص
8-Late	/ Motaker/ متأخر
9-Cold	/Barid/ بارد
10-Dangerous	/ khateer/ خطير

To spot the light on the probable and misleading problems that may occur because of translation and finding equivalents of the given Arabic adjectives mentioned above when they translated in isolation and out of context, the researcher asked the students to translate these Arabic adjectives into English ones or to find their equivalents in English directly without referring to the context using monolingual dictionary. Then he used a bilingual dictionary to discuss the probable problems that may occur as a result of that process of using different translations of the adjectives and examples. Paying attention that the researcher's prototype is the first one.

5. Findings and discussion of results of the Study

/ Kadeem/ قديم¹

Arabic Adjective	Suggested equivalents adjective in English	An example in English
/ Kadeem/ قديم	1.Classic	A classic example of poor communication
	2.Hoary	A hoary old joke
	3.Superannuated	A Superannuated rock stars
	4.Outdated	An outdated equipment
	5.Obsolete	An obsolete technology
	6.Timeworn	A timeworn car

As shown above, the bilingual dictionary gives more than one equivalent for the adjective in Arabic. Suppose that a student wants to use the given Arabic adjective / Kadeem/ but he is not sure what or how to say, he may ask the teacher" What is the / Kadeem/ in English?".When the teacher inadvertently gives only one of the suggested equivalents adjectives without asking about the context which the student wants to use the adjective in, problems of adjectives may occur.

Well, we suppose that the teacher answers the student about his above question with "outdated". Substituting the examples shown above with "outdated", we can notice how translation troubles would be:

An example in English
An outdated example of poor communication
A outdated old joke
A outdated rock stars
An outdated technology
A outdated car

It is clear cut that "An outdated example of poor communication" cannot get across the meaning of "A classic example of poor communication". It is obvious that the teacher's translation where

/ Kadeem/ translated into outdated is problematic because the meaning completely is not conveyed at all.

/ Khawe/ قوي²

Suggested equivalent in English	adjective	An example in English
1. Stiff		A stiff neck
2. shrewd		A shrewd businessman
3. Gory		A gory accident
4. Stout		A stout pair of shoes
6. Rude		A rude comment

Again, giving one equivalent for the Arabic adjective / Khawe/ without paying attention to the context can be a source of problems when the students translate from Arabic to English. Substituting the examples shown above with "stiff ", we can notice how translation troubles would be:

An example in English
A stiff businessman
A stiff accident
A stiff comment

Depending on the online Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2013), some the definitions of "stiff" are:

1. Firm and difficult to bend or move
2. When a person is stiff, their muscles hurt when they move them
3. Thick and almost solid; difficult to stir

Dependent on these meanings, it is clear that it is an odd to use the adjective "stiff" before businessman, accident and comment.

3 في الخلاء (خارجي). (/Karji/). / Fi elkalaa/

Suggested equivalent in English	adjective	An example in English
1. Outermost		The outermost planet
2. Outer		The outer layers of the skin
3. External		The lotion is for external use only (= only for the skin and must not be swallowed).
4. Outward		Mark showed no outward signs of distress
5. Foreign		A foreign accent

Replacing the adjective "outermost" in the first three above sentences, we may have the following possible meanings:

An example in English
The outermost layers of the skin
The lotion is for outermost use only (= only for the skin and must not be swallowed).
Mark showed no outermost signs of distress

It is very easy to be noticed that the adjective "outermost" does not function well in these sentences because most of the new meanings are odd and sometimes funny.

4 مثالي. /Mithali/

Suggested equivalents adjective in English	An example in English
1. Seasonable	Seasonable temperatures
2. Convenient	The house is very convenient for several schools.
3. Consistent	A pattern of consistent growth in the economy

Using the adjective "seasonable" in the other two sentences, we may have the possible sentences:

An example in English
The house is very seasonable for several schools
A pattern of seasonable growth in the economy

"Seasonable" as an adjective means "expected at or suitable for a particular time". The meaning of the first sentence is not fully meaningful whereas it is meaningful in the second one.

5 جسماني. /jismani/

Suggested equivalents adjective in English	An example in English
1. Corporal	Corporal punishment
2. Corporeal	His corporeal presence
3. Fleshy	A large fleshy man

Inserting the adjective "corporal" in front of the nouns in the other above sentences we have the following sentences as follows:

An example in English
His corporal presence
A large corporal man

It seems that the first sentence with the adjective "corporal" is meaningful but is not meaningful in the second one because the conveyed meaning is odd and strange.

/ Moratab/ مرتب6

Suggested equivalent in English	adjective in English	An example in English
1. shipshape		They had to rush to get everything shipshape before the official opening.
2. regular		A regular pulse/heartbeat.
3. methodic		A methodical approach/study.
4. prissy		She was a prissy little girl.

Placing the adjective "shipshape" in the other three above sentences, we may have the following ones:

An example in English
A shipshape pulse/heartbeat
A shipshape approach/study.
She was a shipshape little girl.

"Shipshape" is an informal English adjective means "tidy and with everything in its correct place". Using this adjective in front of the nouns in the above sentences is odd and strange. Simply, the informal adjective "shipshape" is not the suitable one to be put in the front of the English nouns pulse, heartbeat, approach, study and the girl.

/ Kas/ خاص7

Suggested equivalent in English	adjective in English	An example in English
1. sacred		A sacred image/shrine/temple.
2. particular		There is one particular patient I'd like you to see.
3. private		The sign said, 'Private property. Keep out.'
4. relative		The relative merits of the two plans.

The definition of the English adjective "Sacred" is "considered to be holy and deserving respect, especially because of connection with a god". When it is placed in the other sentences instead of the other adjectives we may have the following sentences:

An example in English
There is one sacred patient I'd like you to see.
The sign said, "sacred property". Keep out.
The sacred merits of the two plans.

It is very clear that the English adjective "sacred" cannot replace the English adjectives particular, private and relative. Simply what it is "sacred" is not particular, it is not private and it is not relative.

/ Motaker/متأخر8.

Suggested equivalents in English	adjective in English	An example in English
1. Tardy		The law is often tardy in reacting to changing attitudes.
2. behindhand		They were behindhand in settling their debts
3. overdue		Her baby is two weeks overdue

"Tardy" is an English adjective which means "slow or late in happening or arriving". Inserting it in the other sentences we may have the following sentences:

An example in English
They were tardy in settling their debts
Her baby is two weeks tardy

It is clear that the adjective "tardy" cannot replace the adjectives "behindhand" and "overdue" fully and completely although the general meaning can be understood.

/Barid/بارد9.

Suggested equivalents in English	adjective in English	An example in English
1. silly		a silly idea
2. bleak		a bleak outlook/prospect
3. meaningless		a meaningless existence
4. Flat		dull; lacking interest or enthusiasm

"Silly" is an English adjective which means "showing a lack of thought or judgment". Replacing the adjective "silly" in the other sentences we may have:

An example in English
a silly outlook/prospect
a silly existence

Although the adjective "silly" can replace the adjective bleak, meaningless and flat but still the complete fully meaning is not conveyed.

/ khateer/خطر10.

Suggested equivalents adjective in English	An example in English
1. significant	a highly significant discovery
2. heavy	She was struggling with a heavy suitcase
3. acute	acute pain
4. eventful	an eventful day/life/journey

The definition of the English adjective "significant" is "important or noticeable". Replacing this adjective in the other sentences we may have the following sentences:

An example in English
She was struggling with a significant suitcase
significant pain
an significant day/life/journey

There is no doubt the meaning of the adjective "significant" is completely different from the adjectives heavy, acute and eventful used in the above sentences.

6. Conclusion

"A word may have several meanings, and dictionaries present the meanings without giving much guidance as to how they may be differentiated from each other".

Sinclair (2003)

The function of adjectives in Arabic and English is very important in the process of describing nouns and giving meanings in sentences. Finding the correct right equivalents of Arabic adjectives in English language by TEFL students when they translate from Arabic to English is considered a highly charged issue especially when it comes to the point of "Out of Context Translation".

Based on the methodologies employed, the major result that the process of finding and choosing the correct right equivalents of Arabic adjectives in English language when TEFL students translate out of context adjectives is difficult and misleading in most cases because of the probable problematic differences between some Arabic adjectives and their possible equivalents in English so they should pay their attention to a) context, b) parts of speech and c) collocations.

7. Recommendations

In the light of the results of the study, the researcher recommends conducting studies on: First, the fruitfulness of using the bilingual and monolingual dictionaries in the process of translation from Arabic to English and visa versa. Second, the effect of the cultural knowledge on choosing the right equivalents in translations. Third, the differences between finding equivalents of adjectives in Arabic and English and the other parts of speech such as nouns, verbs and adverbs.

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