



**Problems Involved in the Translation
of Cognate Object Constructions
from Arabic into English and
Suggested Solutions**

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Abstract:

The so-called cognate object constructions (COCs) in Arabic and English have not received much attention in previous studies. Few contrastive studies concerning the translation of COCs from Arabic into English have been conducted. This paper attempts to define COCs in both Arabic and English. An investigation of the main types of COCs in both Arabic and English is provided and elaborated. The aim of this paper is to investigate the problems involved in translating COCs from Arabic into English. The present paper provides an analysis of the translational gaps between Arabic and English COCs that were investigated by noted researchers. It also provides the suggestions and solutions proposed in previous studies for overcoming the translational gaps between Arabic and English COCs. It is assumed that Arabic speakers and learners are more aware of COCs than their English counterparts. This is because COCs are more productive in Arabic than in English. This paper seeks to prove the productivity of Arabic COCs and to provide guidance for translators.

Key words: Cognate object constructions, verbal noun, English, Arabic, translational gaps.

Introduction

COs exist in every language, but they may have different syntactic and semantic features. This paper aims at investigating the main types and functions of COCs in both Arabic and English. Many contrastive studies have been conducted on COCs in different languages. Contrastive analysis serves as an important tool to highlight the main similarities and differences between languages. Firbas (1992, p.13) views contrastive analysis as a contrastive method that "proves to be a useful heuristic tool capable of throwing valuable light on the characteristic features of the languages contrasted." Thus, it is important to contrast COCs in Arabic and English in order to find out the main similarities and differences between them. The present paper explores some of these similarities and differences and shows that such differences result in translational gaps.

Among those who investigated COCs and their translation from Arabic into English is Abdul Muttalib (2018). In his study, he focused his analysis and discussion on the translation of COs from Arabic into English in the Holy Quran. Chapter thirty of the Holy Quran translated by Picktall & Ali has been chosen to be studied because of its simple and short Suras, and also because it contains some Arabic verbal nouns and adjectives. Both translators are Muslims but Pickthall's mother tongue is English and Ali's is not. It was concluded that the Arabic verbal noun, i.e. the CO, corresponds to the English verbal noun. In his study Abdul Muttalib (2018) shows that COs in Arabic are more

productive than in English. There is some difficulty in translating the CO from Arabic into English as it causes redundancy in English. He also shows how translators rendered certain verses in the Holy Quran that included COs of different types.

Cognate object constructions in Arabic and English

The term COCs is defined in a similar way in both Arabic and English. COCs in both languages also function in a similar way. Arabic COCs are defined by Abdul Magid (2019) as follows:

The CA (Cognate Accusative) in Arabic, which has traditionally been known as the absolute object among Arab grammarians, is actually a verbal noun (المصدر). It is an accusative noun that comes after a verb to confirm the action, or to show its kind or number.

Thus a cognate object (CO) in Arabic is considered a verbal noun that is root identical to the main verb in a sentence. Some Arab scholars and researchers assigned the term absolute object to the CO. Thus, a CO is considered a true object in the sentence and is unrestricted (i.e. the CO does not have to occur with a preposition). According to the above definition, a CO has three functions in a sentence which are to show emphasis, the number or type of action. Consider the following examples:

(1) a. أشرقت الشمس إشراقاً (Emphatic CO)

'*The sun rose rising.' / 'The sun did rise.'

b. زرت والدي زيارتين (Number-identifying CO)

'I visited my father two visits (twice).'

c. غنى أحمد أغنية جميلة (Type-identifying CO)

'Ahmed sang a beautiful song.'

The CO in (1a) is called an emphatic CO that seeks to emphasize the action depicted by the main verb. In (1b) the CO is called a number-identifying CO which shows the number of actions that took place. The CO in (1c) is known as a type-identifying CO that shows the type of action depicted by the main verb.

English COCs are defined in a similar way as Sweet (1891) describes COs as follows:

Sometimes an intransitive verb is followed by a noun in the common form which repeats the meaning of the verb as in 'sleep the sleep of the just', 'fight a good fight', where the noun is simply the verb converted into a noun, and in 'fight a battle', 'run a race', where the noun repeats the meaning but not the form of the verb.

(Sweet 1891: 91, cited in Ken-ichi 2010: 2)

It can be observed that COs in English have three types. Consider the following examples of English COCs:

(2) a. She danced a dance. (Emphatic CO)

b. She visited her father three visits.

(Number-identifying CO)

c. He smiled a beautiful smile. (Type-identifying CO)

To sum up, COs in both English and Arabic are morphologically related to the verb. They are verbal nouns that repeat the form of the verb and they seek to perform three functions in sentences: to emphasize, show number or type.

Problems Involved in the Translation of Cognate Object Constructions from Arabic into English

It is not always easy to translate COs from Arabic into English. Thus, some structures are hardly translated from a source language into a target language. In this case a translator will seek alternatives in order to render the desired meaning. In the processes of seeking equivalence some data might be lost. Nida (1964) suggests that, 'all types of translation involve loss of information, addition of information and/or skewing of information.'

The present paper shows how the CO might be lost in translation in order to produce an acceptable translation. Translational gaps exist between Arabic and English COCs due to the fact that COs are more productive in Arabic. It is natural in Arabic to have a verbal noun (in the objective case) morphologically related to the verb that precedes it. However, in English such a repetition is not always acceptable. Sometimes repeating the verb form in English seems redundant and odd. This paper aims at investigating the translational gaps between Arabic and English COCs with the purpose of finding solutions. Consider the following Arabic example and its English translation:

(3) أكل أحمد أكلاً

'*Ahmed ate eating.'

It is natural to find such a construction in Arabic as repeating the verb form, which shows more emphasis and is acceptable. However, the Arabic CO 'أكل' is translated into 'eating' in English. The translated CO seems odd and unacceptable in English. Such a gap results in confusion and incorrect translation during the process of translation.

(4) قال القاضي قولاً فاصلاً

'*The judge said a final saying.'

In some cases, repetition in English is acceptable as in (4). Here the repetition of the CO does not cause unnaturalness in style. The repetition aims at emphasizing the meaning of the action denoted by the main verb (i.e. to emphasize that the judge is certain of his saying and will not give any further sayings concerning the case.)

In a study conducted by Aqel (2018) thirty students specialized in the field of translation were chosen to translate thirty sentences of different kinds of objects taken from Yahya Hakki's novel 'The Lamp of Umm Hashim'. The aim of her study was to show how the translators handled the different types of objects in translation. Her study is consistent with the fact that COs pose the greater difficulty in translation. Aqel (2018) maintains that "the cognate object is the most to pose difficulty for students as the cognate object in English is not used frequently as in Arabic." Thus, it represents the highest percentage of non-translated objects. Students make different errors while translating COs such as ignoring the context, providing ungrammatical structures, giving wrong choice of terms, and missing the intended meaning. Aqel (2018) states that some of the translators adopted literal translation in their attempt to render the CO in the following examples. However, such a translation is not adequate and sounds odd.

(5) a. ولا يعامل إلا معاملة الرجال

'*and was treated as a man's treatment.'

b. ويدفعهن دفعاً إلى الخارج

'*and pushes them strongly outside.'

(Aqel 2018: 1297)

In a study conducted by Abdul Magid (2019), thirty-five female undergraduate students at Hurimilla College of Science and Humanities, Shaqra University, KSA were randomly chosen to translate five Arabic COCs into English. Her study showed that some of these students had difficulty translating the Arabic CO as they were confused, some others did not translate the CO at all (i.e. they did not give any translation), and others sought a literal translation of the Arabic CO. The five Arabic sentences were as follows:

(6) a. يتأثر الطلاب تأثراً شديداً بالمدرسة.

'* Students are affected a great effect by school.'

b. قاتل الجنود قتال الأبطال لحماية الوطن.

'The soldiers fought the fighting of champions to protect their homeland.'

c. تحصد الحروب الأرواح حصداً وتدمر البلاد تدميراً.

'*Wars collect souls collection and destroys countries destroying.'

d. دار اللاعبون حول الملعب خمس دورات.

'*Players ran around the playground five runnings.'

e. يشرب الطفل الحليب شرباً.

'*The child drinks the milk drinking.'

(Abdul Magid 2019: 195)

Farghal (1993) conducted a study that points out the difficulties faced in translating Arabic COs into English. According to his analysis, both emphatic COs and type-identifying COs pose greater difficulty in translation. Consider the following:

(7) a. ضرب الشرطي اللص ضرباً

'*The policeman beat up the thief beating.'

b. ضرب الشرطي اللص ضرباً مبرحاً

'*The policeman beat up the thief a severe beating.'

(Farghal 1993: 81)

Based on Farghal's (1993) analysis, the renderings of the above examples are incorrect and they produce ungrammatical sentences. This is due to the repetition of the verb form which seems odd and unnatural in English.

In a study conducted by Yasin (2014), the issue of translating COCs from Arabic into English was investigated and solutions were pointed out. He designed a questionnaire of 39 Arabic sentences containing COs of different types to B.A. senior students majoring in the English language and its literature at the University of Jordan. The findings of his questionnaire revealed that students found the CO redundant in English. Thus, they assumed that COs do not exist in English. Consider the following examples:

(8) a. سرت أحسن السير

'*I walked the perfect way of walking.'

b. ضربته ضرباً بالسوط

'*I hit him hitting with a whip.'

c. قعد قعدة القرفصاء

'*He sat the sitting of a frog.'

(Yasin 2014: 7)

English and Arabic belong to two different language families. This means that they are different in many ways: in phonology, syntax, semantics, etc. Such differences lead to translational gaps among the two languages. Arabic COCs can appear in passive constructions while English ones cannot. Arabic COs can also appear with unaccusative verbs. English COs, on the other hand, do not appear with all unaccusative verbs. This is consistent with Al-qurashi's (2020) study which shows that Arabic COs appear with almost all types of verbs including passive verbs and unaccusative verbs. Observe the following Arabic examples and their English counterexamples:

(9) a. انكسر الباب كسراً كبيراً

b. انكسر كسراً كبيراً

c. *The door broke a great breaking.

d. *Broken a great breaking.

In some cases Arabic COs appear with weak determiners and they seem to be acceptable. However, when translated into English redundancy strikes. An odd translation would be produced. Consider the following:

(10) أهتزت المزهريّة بعض الاهتزازات

'*The vase shook some shakes.'

(Alqurashi 2020: 134)

Based on the data provided by Al-qurashi (2020), Arabic COs appear with genitives in sentences and they are acceptable as grammatical sentences. English COs, on the other hand, might seem unacceptable due to redundancy. The following example shows that the literal translation of a CO in a construct state is unacceptable:

(11) مشّت الفتاة مشية الغزال

'*The girl walked the deer's walk.'

(Alqurashi 2020: 134)

As pointed out by Al-qurashi (2020) Arabic COs can appear with both monotransitive (one direct object) verbs and ditransitive verbs (two direct objects). English COs might produce redundancy and they must be omitted in this case.

(12) a. أكل الرجل الطعام أكلاً (Monotransitive)

'*The man ate the food eating.'

b. سلب المعلم الطالب كتابه سلباً (Ditransitive)

'*The teacher deprived the student of his book deprivation.'

Translational gaps might also exist between Arabic and English COCs because of the fact that English COs are similar to manner adverbials while Arabic COs express manner through the repetition of the verb form. It could be noted that English COs are like adverbs that modify a verbal phrase. The translation of the following example does not only sound odd but also mystifying:

(13) a. ضرب أحمد الولد ضرباً قوياً

'*Ahmed beat up the boy a strong beating.'

Suggested solutions for the problems involved in the translation of COCs from Arabic into English

In the light of the foregoing, alternatives should be sought in order to avoid translating the Arabic CO literally into English. Some noted researchers, who have concerned themselves with the translation of the CO from Arabic into English, adopted some tools or methods of compensation. The purpose of using alternative tools or methods of compensation is to avoid confusion and unnaturalness in translation. Such tools are used to replace the Arabic CO and render the same meaning. For instance, Farghal (1993) proposes that evaluativeness markers as tools of compensation can be used instead of the CO to perform its function. These evaluativeness markers are classified into three

types; namely, lexical correlates 'LC' (emphatic words that refer to the CO such as adverbs), grammatical correlates 'GC' (emphatic verbs such as 'did' and 'does') and syntactical correlates 'SC' (structures that could replace the CO and perform its function).

Abdul Magid (2019) suggests that to overcome the problem of repeating the verb form, which may result in redundancy in English, an emphatic verb or an adverb that identifies the degree of the verb action may be used. She also points out that a number-identifying CO can be translated by using the word 'times' instead of repeating the verb form or by using words that refer to numbers (e.g. once, twice, etc.).

Yasin (2014) proposes that COs can be translated from Arabic into English by using methods or tools of compensation. Using such methods means that the CO is deleted and an alternative is used instead to perform its function. The tools or methods of compensation adopted by Yasin (2014) are considered pro-agents such as: the verbal noun's synonym (قعد - جلوس), an adjective that describes the verbal noun, a number referring to the verbal noun (times, once, etc.), the manner of the verbal noun (e.g. حارب محاربة الأبطال), the tool used to perform the action of the verbal noun (e.g. ضربته عصا) and the words 'كل' and 'بعض'.

Bader-Eddin (2017) offers solutions in his study for the translation of Arabic COCs into English. He uses examples from the 'Seven Suspended Odes' that contain COCs of different kinds. Bader-Eddin (2017) suggest that COs that show type and

emphasis are the most confusing types in translation. Methods of compensation addressed by Bader-Eddin (2017) are similies, prepositional phrases and adjectives. Consider the following examples:

(14) a. بکرن بکوراً (Ode 3, line 13)

'with dawn they rose.'

b. فصالوا صولة (Ode 5, line 65)

'they loosed a fierce assault.'

(Bader-Eddin 2017:157)

In (14a) a prepositional phrase is used instead of repeating the CO to avoid repetition and unnaturalness. In (14b) an adjective 'fierce' is used to specify the noun and to render the intended meaning of the deleted CO. As pointed out earlier, meaning can be lost in an attempt to find an equivalent from the source language into the target language but the methods of compensation used in (14 a & b) are acceptable and they render the meaning effectively (i.e. the meaning is maintained).

Consequently, the problems found in the translation of Arabic COs in examples (15-35) can be solved based on the information obtained from previous studies on the translation of COCs from Arabic into English. The following shows how methods of compensation are adopted to solve the problem of redundancy:

(15) أكل أحمد أكلاً

'*Ahmed ate eating.'

This COC can be translated by omitting the CO 'أكلاً' and replacing it with an emphatic verb or a LC (e.g. Ahmed did eat/Ahmed indeed ate).

(16) ولا يعامل إلا معاملة الرجال

'*and was treated as a man's treatment.'

Aqel (2018) suggests that the CO in (16) should be translated using a simile instead of repeating the verb form (e.g. and was treated like a grown man.).

(17) ويدفعهن دفعاً إلى الخارج

'*and pushes them strongly outside.'

Some translators opt for an adverbial modifier in 17 which may affect the meaning of the sentence. When one tries to back translate this sentence, he/she might ignore the fact that the original Arabic sentence has a CO (e.g. ويدفعهن دفعاً قوياً إلى الخارج). A better translation of this sentence is 'and pushes them outside.' This proves that COs are frequently used in Arabic. The repetition of the verb form is acceptable in Arabic.

In the following examples (18-22) Abdul Magid (2019) suggests that redundancy could be avoided by using emphatic verbs or adverbial modifiers that show the degree of the action that took place:

(18) يتأثر الطلاب تأثراً شديداً بالمدرسة

'Students are greatly affected by school.'

(19) قاتل الجنود قتال الأبطال لحماية الوطن

'The soldiers did fight like champions to protect their homeland.'

(20) تحصد الحروب الأرواح حصداً وتدمر بالبلاد تدميراً

'Wars do [truly] collect souls collection and destroy countries.'

(21) دار اللاعبون حول الملعب خمس دورات

'Players ran around the playground five times.'

(22) يشرب الطفل الحليب شرباً

'The child does drink the milk.'

In (18 & 20) an adverb (greatly and truly) is used to show the extent to which the action is performed. In (19 & 20 & 22) an emphatic verb is used to perform the function of the deleted CO (i.e. to show emphasis). In (21) the word 'times' is used to show the number of times the eventuality took place instead of repeating the verb form. Thus, sometimes the Arabic CO has no equivalent in English and an alternative must be used instead of repetition.

Following Farghal's (1993) suggestions, the examples in (23 & 24) can be translated using a GC (to perform the emphatic function), an LC (to show the type of action performed) or an adverbial modifier as follows:

(23) ضرب الشرطي اللص ضرباً

'The policeman did beat up the thief.'

(24) ضرب الشرطي اللص ضرباً مبرحاً

'The policeman beat up the thief severely/hard.'

The CO in (23) is replaced by an emphatic verb 'did' to emphasize the action denoted by the main verb, while the CO in (24) is replaced by an adverbial modifier that show to what extent the action took place.

Examples (25-27) can be translated using methods of compensation offered by Yasin (2014) as follows:

(25) سرت أحسن السير

'I walked perfectly.'

(26) ضربته ضرباً بالسوط

'I hit him with a whip.'

(27) قعد قعدة القرفصاء

'He sat squatting.'

In (25) an adverbial modifier is used to show how that action took place while (26) employs a pro-agent that stands for the deleted CO (i.e. the tool with which the action took place). The CO in (27) is deleted and replaced by an adverbial manner that shows how the agent performed that action.

In the following examples, a translator can opt for a nonliteral translation. An adverbial modifier can be used to show to what extent the door broke instead of repeating the CO.

(28) انكسر الباب كسراً كبيراً

'The door broke greatly.'

(29) انكسر كسراً كبيراً

'The door broke greatly'

In (30) the CO can be omitted and the adverb 'a little' can be used instead to show the degree of action that took place.

اهتزت المزهريّة بعض الاهتزازات

'The vase shook a little.'

The CO 'الاهتزازات' is preceded by a weak determiner. A characteristic of Arabic COCs is that they can occur with strong and weak determiners. This feature is sometimes unacceptable in English. Translating this sentence literally would cause unnaturalness. In (31) the CO 'غلياً' is followed by the adverb 'سريعاً' to show how the action was performed. When this sentence was translated by repeating the verb form an unnatural translation was given. An adverb can be used to emphasize that fact that the action was performed to some extent.

(30) غلى الماء غلياً سريعاً

'*The water boiled a fast boiling.'

The CO in (32) can be omitted in translation and be replaced by a simile (a method of compensation) that would perform its function.

(31) مشت الفتاة مشية الغزال

'The girl walked like a deer.'

The COs in (33 & 34) seek to emphasize the action depicted by the main verb. Repetition of the verb form in Arabic is acceptable. However, the literal translations of these examples are not acceptable. Thus, other alternatives can be used such as an emphatic verb or an LC. Consider the following renderings:

(32) أكل الرجل الطعام أكلاً

'The man did eat the food.'

(33) سلب المعلم الطالب كتابه سلباً

'The teacher indeed deprived [or did deprive] the student of his book.'

English COs express manner through an adverbial modification. Thus, the CO in (35) is omitted and replaced by a manner adverbial. The adverbial 'strongly' is semantically similar to the CO.

(34) ضرب أحمد الولد ضرباً قوياً

'Ahmed beat up the boy strongly.'

To conclude, there are translational problems between English and Arabic COCs. The two languages are not genetically related and this leads to translational gaps. The present paper investigated such problems from the point of view of previous studies to show how they handled these translational gaps between Arabic and English COCs. The different methods of compensation and approaches they adopted to overcome such gaps in translation were pointed out and elaborated.

Conclusion and Discussion

The current paper identifies COCs in English and Arabic. It provides a clear definition of the term CO in both English and Arabic. The findings of this paper show that COs in both languages are quite the same. COs are morphologically related to the main verb. They may be root-identical or derived from the main verb. The results also show that Arabic and English COs are classified into three types: emphatic COs that show emphasis, number-identifying COs which show the number of occurrences of the eventuality and type-identifying COs which show the type of action denoted by the main verb.

The present paper investigated the problems involved in the translation of COCs from Arabic into English. It is found that although Arabic and English have much in common concerning COCs they also have some differences that lead to translational gaps. However, such gaps could be handled by resorting to methods of compensation or alternatives as adopted by Farghal (1993), Abdul Magid (2019) and Yasin (2014). Thus, the CO can be deleted and replaced by an alternative (e.g. LC, GC, adverbial modifier etc.) to perform the same function.

To the researcher's knowledge, few contrastive studies have been conducted on the translation of COCs from Arabic into English. Further research is required to investigate the translational gaps between Arabic and English COCs. Suggestions for the translation of COCs from Arabic into English should be further investigated.

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