A Configurational System-based Approach to Translating Tenses from Arabic to English

Ali Almanna
Associate Professor of Translation Studies,
Department of Translation and Interpreting Studies,
Hamad Bin Khalifa University, Qatar
Corresponding email: alialmanna9@gmail.com

ARTICLE DATA	ABSTRACT
	In this study, I seek to discuss the translation of tenses from Arabic, which does not have a grammatical category for 'aspect', to English, which has such a grammatical category. It is hypothesised that in order for the translators to produce an accurate translation and create a similar mental image in the minds of the target language readers, the 'contextual tense' should be given serious consideration at the expense of the 'morphological tense' or 'structural tense'. This study proposes a cognitive model for identifying the contextual tense where categories, such as 'point of emphasis', 'state of dividedness', 'state of boundedness', 'degree of extension', 'plexity', 'pace and time lapse' and 'extent of causation' are used. To demonstrate how adhering to the morphological tense or structural tense without figuring out the contextual tense may lead to inaccurate translations, ample authentic examples taken from a collection of 12 short stories titled *'Modern Arabic Short Stories: A Bilingual Reader'* (2008) are used. From the analysis of the primary data, it has been shown that failing to identify the contextual tense leads to an inaccurate translation, thereby creating different mental images in the minds of the target language readers.

1. Introduction

In this paper, special attention is paid to the properties that a finite verb carries, such as 'tense' and 'aspect' as paying less attention, or no attention, to those properties, through translation may change the intended meaning as they, in addition to other elements, contribute to constructing messages. My starting point is the observation that adhering to the grammatical form used in the source language without giving the context in which it is used adequate consideration may lead to an inaccurate translation, thereby affecting not only the message intended by the author, but also the mental image(s) conjured up in the target language readers' minds. To make what I have in my mind clear, let us consider these two simple sentences:

(1) لم يتسلّم والدي راتبَهُ أمس. (Lit. My father did not receive his salary yesterday)

(2) لم يتسلّم والدي راتبَهُ إلى أمس. (Lit. My father did not receive his salary till yesterday)

In these two simple sentences, the same grammatical form is used لم يتسلّم والدي راتبَهُ literally meaning 'My father did not receive his salary'. However, by virtue of the lexical item أمس 'yesterday', the emphasis in (1) is placed on the completion of the act of not receiving the salary at a specific point, thus reducing the act to being seen as a point on the timeline. In (2), however, by the effect of إلى أمس 'till yesterday', the emphasis is placed on the whole period that started in the past (unspecified as we cannot specify the starting point but we can predict it as it is in our scope of prediction) and is seen as relevant to another point in the

past (specified as we are able to specify the endpoint, which is yesterday). As such, these two simple sentences lend themselves differently in English and other languages.

In this paper, the context in which the text is used is given serious consideration while translating tenses from Arabic, which does not have a grammatical category for 'aspect', to English, which has both 'tense' and 'aspect' as grammatical categories. This is in line with Shamaa (1978: 32-3) who holds that what places an action, situation, or event in "its true temporal and aspectual perspective" is the context. This point is adopted by Gadalla (2006b: 51) who lays more emphasis on "the contextual clues that can assist a translator" to render tenses from Arabic into English. In this study, it is hypothesised that in order for translators to produce an accurate translation and create similar mental images in the minds of their readers, they should do their best to figure out the contextual tense rather than adhering to the morphological tense or structural tense. In what follows, tenses in Arabic are classified into three main types, namely morphological tense, structural tense, and contextual tense, but before that, it is of paramount importance to be clear about certain terms and issues, such as 'finite verbs', 'non-finite verbs', 'tense', and 'aspect'.

2. Verb, tense, and aspect

Syntactically, 'finite clauses' (also known as 'tensed clauses'), are usually divided into two main components: a noun phrase and verb phrase (also called respectively 'subject' and 'predicate' in traditional grammar). Unlike non-finite clauses which have non-finite verbs, finite clauses should have finite verbs, that is, verbs with certain grammatical properties, such as 'tense', 'aspect', and the like. When the finite verb, which is the heart of the verb phrase/predicate, is employed by the language users (be they speakers or writers), it is usually injected with such properties as 'tense', 'aspect', 'voice', 'mood', and the like, thus constructing messages—these messages change in meaning when those properties change. However, when the verb is used without those properties, then it is a non-finite verb. It is worth mentioning that those properties that the finite verb may carry depend on the linguistic system of the language at hand. This accords with Nida (1964: 199) who holds that one of the most important points that should be taken into consideration by translators while translating from language *A* to language *B* is that "no two systems are in complete agreement", irrespective of "the formal or semantic differentiations made in the tense system".

With this morpho-syntactic notion in mind, this study pays special attention to 'tense' and 'aspect' as they relate "the happening described by the verb to time in the past, present, or future" (Leech and Svartvik 2002: 66). They convey temporal information about a described activity, event, or situation. The difference between tense and aspect is that while the former refers to when it happens, the latter refers to how it happens (Kearns 2000/2011; Almanna 2016a, 2016b, 2018). Aspect, according to Quirk et al. (1972, 90; also discussed in Gadalla 2017: 30) "refers to the manner in which the verb action is regarded or experienced. The choice of aspect is a comment on or a particular view of the action". On this subject, Radwan (1975: 30) rightly comments that while tense "covers time reference', aspect "covers the semantic ranges of completion versus non-completion and continuation versus non-continuation".

Tense and aspect represent points of divergence between Arabic and English. Some grammarians (see Quirk and Greenbaum 1973) restrict the use of tense in English to a grammatical, marked form of a verb, thus having two tenses only, that is, 'past' and 'present'. 'Future' for them is not a tense but can be expressed by many constructions (for more details, see Quirk et al. 1972: 84; Gadalla 2017: 30). In this study, however, for the sake of clarity and consistency, tenses are divided into 'past', 'present', and 'future'. This view has been adopted by several scholars and researchers (see for example Biber et al. 2002; Coe et al. 2006; Freeborn 1987; among others). In this respect, Freeborn (1987: 149) states: "The statement that there are only two tenses in English […] seems puzzling, because it is quite clear that we can refer to 'past', 'present' and 'future' time, and that there should be at least three tenses to do this" (emphasis added). Arabic, on the other hand, has three basic tenses, namely ماض 'past', مضارع

'present', and أمر 'imperative'. The imperative, by nature, has a reference to the future, that is why some Arab grammarians call it 'future' (see Āl Sāqy 1977, Āl Syrāfī 1986, and Ḥārūn 1977).

As regards aspect, English has four types, namely simple, perfect, progressive, and perfect progressive (cf. Kreidler 1998; Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman 1999; Kearns 2000/2011; Griffiths 2006; Almanna 2016a, 2016b, 2018), as shown in these four sentences in the present tense.

Aspect	Example
Simple	*I usually study* [present simple] *for the exam in the evening.*
Perfect	*I have studied* [present perfect] *for the exam for two hours.*
Progressive	*I am studying* [present progressive] *for the exam right now.*
Perfect & progressive	*I have been studying* [present perfect progressive] *for the exam since morning.*

Conversely, Arabic has no grammatical category for aspect. Still, language users can exploit certain potential resources to emphasise, for example, the frequency and regularity of an action as a matter of routine, the duration of the action, the continuity of the action at a particular point of time, and the like.

In translating from Arabic to English it "is the aspectual rather than the temporal reference of an Arabic verb, that can lead to difficulties in translation". Therefore, to produce an accurate translation and create a similar mental image in the minds of the target language readers, it is of paramount importance "to determine whether a given action is completed or in progress, instantaneous or enduring, momentary or habitual, etc." (Shamaa 1978: 36-7). To put it differently, translators need to rely on the grammatical forms and content specifications available in a given clause or sentence to identify the contextual tense in Arabic as well as the aspect required for the verb in English. To make what I have in my mind clear, let us examine this example taken from our primary data collected for the purpose of this study (2008: 225):

(3) **واغرورقت عيناي بالدموع وأنا أروي لوالدتي ما جرى لي وكيف أن هذا المالك الوضيع الأصل لم يحترم ذكرى والدي ولا سمعة عائلتنا.**

Lit. *My eyes were filled with tears while telling my mother what happened to me, and how this lowlife landlord did not respect my father's memory or the reputation of our family.*

TT: *My eyes were filled with tears when 1 told my mother what had happened, and how that lowlife landlord had shown no respect for my father's memory or our family's reputation.*

Here, the act of what happened to the narrator and the act of not respecting his father's memory and his family's reputation occurred before the act of telling his mother although all of them occurred and were completed in the past. Further, his eyes being filled with tears occurred in the middle of telling his mother, thus indicating (1) the act of telling his mother is drawn out over a short period of time, and (2) there is no time lapse between the two acts. Apart from the act of telling his mother where the emphasis in the original text is shifted from the beginning and end of the act towards a middle phase in the past, thereby being seen as an ongoing activity, the translators managed to determine the aspectual rather than the temporal reference of the Arabic verbs employed in the original text. Now, let me move on to introduce my own classification of tenses in Arabic.

3. Morphological tense, structural tense & contextual tense

Traditionally, Arabic has two basic tenses, 'past' and 'present'. These two basic tenses are also referred to as 'perfect' and 'imperfect'. The perfect tense, according to Wright (1967), is used by language users (be they speakers or writers) to describe an action, situation, or event that occurred and was completed in the past, that is, it occurred and was completed in relation to other actions, situations, or events. The imperfect tense, by contrast, is used to describe an action, situation, or event, which is in the

present or future, that is, it is not completed. This classification is of little help for translators when translating from Arabic that has only two tenses into English that has 12 combinations of tense and aspect. Therefore, for the purposes of translation, in this study, tenses in Arabic are classified into three main types, namely 'morphological tense' زمن الصّيغة or الزّمن الصّرفيّ, 'structural tense' زمن التّركيب and 'contextual tense' زمن السّياق, as shown here:

الزّمن الصّرفيّ or زمن الصّيغة Morphological tense
زمن التّركيب Structural tense
زمن السّياق Contextual tense

To identify the morphological tense, the form of the verb is given full consideration; therefore, the morphological tense of زار *'visited'* is past while يزور *'visit'* is present according to their forms. However, to identify the structural tense, the structure itself is given serious consideration. To explain, while the morphological tense of أكتب *'write'* is present, the structural tense of the same verb in a structure of this kind لم أكتب *'did not write'* is past. Now, the question that rears its head here is: how can the contextual tense be figured out? To figure out the contextual tense, the current study proposes the following categories that need to be given adequate consideration before moving on to the second step which is activating the mechanism of equivalent search.

(1) 'point of emphasis' which refers to whether the emphasis is placed on the completion of the action, its continuity, duration, habituality, regularity or frequency,

(2) 'plexity' which refers to whether the quantity of the action is made up of one element or more than one element,

(3) 'extent of causation' which refers to whether the action occurred in the past, thus being part of reality[1],

(4) 'pace of events' which refers to whether the pace of events is sped up or slowed down,

(5) 'time lapse' which refers to whether there is a time lapse between the actions or not,

(6) 'state of dividedness' which refers to the internal segmentations that a quantity has whether it has breaks or interruptions in its internal composition or not,

(7) 'state of boundedness' which refers to whether the action has boundaries (bounded) or not (unbounded) and

(8) 'degree of extension' which refers to whether the action is reduced or extended on the timeline.

To explain, let us consider the tenses used in the first part of these two complex sentences:

(4) كُنتُ أُشاهدُ التّلفازَ عندما كُنتُ طفلاً. (Lit. *I was watching TV when I was a child*)

(5) كُنتُ أُشاهدُ التّلفازَ عندما جاءَ صديقي البارحة ليزورني. (Lit. *I was watching TV when my friend came last night to visit me*)

Here, as can be seen, the same grammatical form كُنتُ أُشاهدُ التّلفازَ literally meaning *'I was watching TV'* is used. However, the context is different. In (4) the process of behaving expressed by the verb *'to watch'* is drawn out over a long period of time – we talk about years (degree of extension). In (5), however, the process of behaving expressed by the verb *'to watch'* is drawn out over a short period of time – we talk about minutes or hours (degree of extension). In both examples, the process of behaving is characterised by having no boundaries as we are not able to specify the starting point or the endpoint (state of boundedness). Further, the act of watching in (4) is characterised by having breaks and interruptions, that is, we watch for a while and then we take a break and so on, but in (5), it is characterised by having no breaks or interruptions (state of dividedness). With this in

---

[1] Note that 'causation' in this study has nothing to do with causing somebody or something to do or to become something else, but rather it is used as opposed to 'scope of intention'.

mind, in (4), the process of behaving is characterised by multiplexity, that is, the quantity of the action is made up of more than one element/act of watching while in (5) it is characterised by uniplexity, that is, the quantity of the action is made up of one element/act of watching (plexity). In (5), the act of visiting occurred in the middle of the act of watching, thus indicating there is no time lapse between the two actions (pace and time lapse). Further, the emphasis in (4) is placed on the habituality in the past while the emphasis in (5) is shifted from the beginning and end of the action towards a middle phase, thus being seen as an ongoing activity in the past (point of emphasis). In terms of extent of causation, it is asserted in both sentences that the actor/watcher watched TV; therefore, the extent of causation is greater than the scope of intention (extent of causation). As such, these two sentences that have the same grammatical form in their main clauses, that is, they have the same morphological tense which is present أشاهد and structural tense كُنتُ أشاهد, have different contextual tenses, thus lending themselves differently in English. While sentence (4) can be rendered as *'I used to watch TV when I was a child'*, sentence (5) lends itself to *'I was watching TV when my friend came to visit me last night'*.

As stated earlier, in order for translators to produce an accurate translation and create a similar mental image in the minds of their readers, the contextual tense should be identified before activating the mechanism of equivalent search. To show how these two steps work hand in hand, let us discuss these three sentences that have the same grammatical form:

Example	Morphological tense	Structural tense	Contextual tense + equivalent search
(6) لم أزره أمس. Lit. *I did not visit him yesterday*.	Present	Past	Past $_{simple}$
(7) لم أزره إلى أمس. Lit. *I did not visit him till yesterday**.	Present	Past	Past $_{perfect}$
(8) لم أزره قطِّ. Lit. *I never visited him**.	Present	Past	Present $_{perfect}$

Here, in these three sentences, the same grammatical form, i.e. لم أزره, is used. However, the meaning is different as the emphasis in (6) by virtue of the lexical time أمس *'yesterday'* is placed on the completion of the process of doing expressed by the verb زار *'to visit'* in the negative; therefore, it is an equivalent to the past simple in English, i.e. *'I did not visit him yesterday'*. In (7), by the effect of the phrase إلى أمس *'till yesterday'*, the emphasis is put on the whole period that started in the past (unspecified as we cannot specify the starting point) and is seen as relevant to another point in the past (specified as we can specify the endpoint, i.e. yesterday); therefore, it is an equivalent to the past perfect in English, i.e. *'I had not visited him till yesterday'*. As regards the sentence in (8), by the dint of the word قطُّ, i.e. *never*, the emphasis is placed on the whole period that started in the past (unspecified but it can be predicted as it is in our scope of prediction) and is seen as relevant to another point in the present; therefore, it is an equivalent to present perfect, i.e. *'I have never (ever) visited him'*. As such, adhering to the morphological tense or structural tense may lead to ungrammatical sentences as in the translations of (7) and (8) stated in the table above and marked by *. To sum up, for the purpose of translation, the first step, that is, identifying the contextual tense, should be followed by the second step, which is activating the mechanism of equivalent search.

4. Theoretical framework

In this study, the configurational system, which is one of the imaging systems that every person has (Talmy 2000; Evans and Green 2006; Almanna & Al-Shehari 2019; among others) is used as a theoretical framework for identifying the contextual tense as shown in our response to the question raised in the previous section concerning how the contextual tense is identified.

The imaging systems, in general, are divided into four systems, namely (1) the 'configurational system' (referring to all forms of conceptualisation of quantity or relations between quantities, in dimensions like TIME and SPACE), (2) the 'attentional system' (referring to the distribution of attention over the aspects of the scene along with its participants), (3) the 'perspectival system' (referring to how people fix their mind's eye to look out upon a scene and its participants), and (4) the force dynamics (dealing with the forces that each element in the scene may exert on another element). These imaging systems, according to Talmy (2020), work hand in hand to structure a given scene, which is, in turn, expressed by virtue of certain grammatical forms (grammar) and content specifications (semantics). It is worth mentioning that each imaging system has certain features and categories that can be used to study the mental image(s) conjured up in the minds of the target language readers when we talk about translating from language *A* to language *B*. In this study, as stated earlier, the configurational system only is used; therefore, it is useful to remind the reader of the features and categories of this imaging system discussed in the previous section before embarking on analysing the primary data collected for the purpose of this study. In this imaging system, serious consideration is given to notions and categories, such as 'point of emphasis', 'plexity', 'state of boundedness', 'state of dividedness', 'degree of extension', 'pace of events', 'time lapse', and 'extent of causation' while the category 'scene partitioning' is paid less attention as it is of little help for identifying the contextual tense.

5. Methodology

5.1 Data collection & sampling

To demonstrate how adhering to the morphological tense or structural tense without figuring out the contextual tense may lead to inaccurate translations, thus creating different mental images in the minds of the target language readers, 449 finite clauses taken from a collection of 12 short stories translated to English in 2008 in a collection of short stories titled *'Modern Arabic Short Stories: A Bilingual Reader'* by Ronak Husni (a professor of Arabic and translation studies and a native speaker of Arabic) and Daniel Newman (a professor of translation studies and a native speaker of English). As it is not feasible to have a large number of examples in the current study, in this small-scale research, an exploratory sample was utilised with the potential to generate insights and information. As such, in selecting the finite clauses used in the current study, more emphasis was placed on the interesting and unusual examples that would illuminate the topic under discussion. However, this does not mean that usual examples were excluded, but both types of examples were used to have a good number of examples. Further, to facilitate the process of finding more examples representing different combinations of tense and aspect, the following structures were used:

	Structure	Number of examples found
(1)	Perfect	100 +
(2)	Imperfect	100+
(3)	لم + imperfect	28
(4)	لم + يكن + imperfect	1
(5)	لم + imperfect + قطَّ	0
(6)	لا + imperfect	36
(7)	لن + imperfect	3
(8)	لمَّا + perfect	22
(9)	لما + imperfect	5
(10)	ما/لا يزال + imperfect	2
(11)	سـ/سوف + imperfect	17
(12)	سـ/سوف + لا/ما يزال + imperfect	0
(13)	سـ/سوف + يكون + قد + perfect	0
(14)	سـ/سوف + يكون + لا/ما يزال + imperfect	0
(15)	قد + perfect	37
(16)	قد + imperfect	3
(17)	لقد + perfect	0

(18)	كان + imperfect	59
(19)	لا/ما يزال + كان + imperfect	2
(20)	كان + قد + perfect	5
(21)	عاد/مضى/استمر/راح/أخذ/شرع/بدأ + imperfect	8
(22)	وجد + someone + imperfect // perfect	1
(23)	وجد + قد + somebody + perfect	5
(24)	كاد/أوشك (أن) + imperfect	5
(25)	قام + prepositional phrase	0
(26)	منذ + و + pronoun + imperfect	0
(27)	Perfect + و + pronoun + imperfect	10
	Total	449

The 449 finite clauses extracted from the collection of the short stories were grouped into 20 groups as shown in following table. As regards the perfect and imperfect forms of the verbs, it is worth mentioning that the moment I found the first 100 finite clauses representing each type, I decided to stop looking for more examples, but the collection of the short stories has more examples of these two types.

(1)	100 finite clauses represent the use of the bare perfect form
(2)	100 finite clauses represent the use of the bare imperfect form
(3)	17 finite clauses represent the use of the construction سـ/سوف + imperfect
(4)	37 finite clauses represent the use of the construction قد + perfect
(5)	3 finite clauses represent the use of the construction قد + imperfect
(6)	5 finite clauses represent the use of the construction كاد (أن) + imperfect
(7)	1 finite clause represents the use of the construction وجد + imperfect
(8)	5 finite clauses represent the use of the construction وجد + قد + perfect
(9)	5 finite clauses represent the use of the construction كان + قد + perfect
(10)	8 finite clauses represent the use of the perfect form + imperfect
(11)	59 finite clauses represent the use of the construction كان + imperfect
(12)	10 finite clauses represent the use of the perfect form + و + pronoun + imperfect
(13)	36 finite clauses represent the use of the particle لا + imperfect
(14)	22 finite clauses represent the use of the construction لمّا + perfect
(15)	5 finite clauses represent the use of the construction لمّا + imperfect
(16)	2 finite clauses represent the use of the construction لا يزال + imperfect
(17)	3 finite clauses represent the use of the construction لن + imperfect
(18)	28 finite clauses represent the use of the construction لم + imperfect
(19)	1 finite clause represents the use of the construction لم + يكن + imperfect
(20)	2 finite clauses represent the use of the construction لا يزال + كان + imperfect

5.2 Method of analysis

The method of analysis employed in the current study to compare and contrast the finite clauses extracted from the original texts with their translations is Lindquist's (1989; also adopted as a method of analysis by Gadalla 2006a, 2006b) 'parallel reading technique' where the finite clause used in the original text and selected in the current study is read in parallel with its equivalent to highlight what is reflected and what is not.

5.3 Results

Out of the 449 finite clauses, 371 (i.e. 82.7 %) clauses were translated accurately by figuring out the contextual tenses, and 78 (i.e. 17.3 %) clauses were not translated accurately, thereby changing the mental images conjured up in the minds of the target language readers.
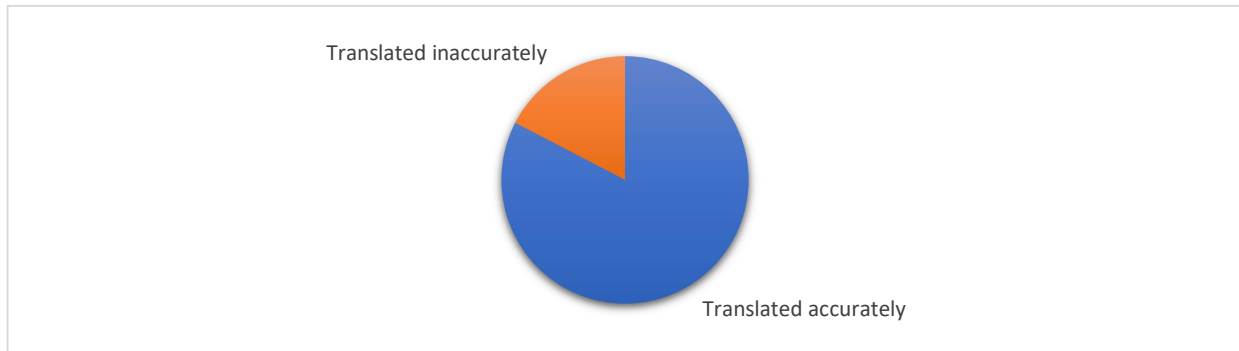
As in this study, it is hypothesised that translators should figure out the contextual tense rather than adhering to the morphological tense or structural tense if they want to translate accurately, I will not discuss how those tenses are best translated into English and what are the appropriate equivalents used by the translators. However, what is of concern to me is how failing to determine the contextual tense prior to activating the mechanism of equivalent search may or may not lead to an accurate translation.

6. Discussion

The discussion is divided into six categories, namely (1) 'point of emphasis' (referring to whether the emphasis is placed on the completion of the action, its continuity, duration, habituality, regularity, or frequency), (2) 'plexity' (referring to whether the quantity of the action is made up of one element or more than one element), (3) 'extent of causation' (referring to whether the action occurred, thus being part of reality), (4) 'pace & time lapse' (referring to whether the pace of events is sped up or slowed down on the one hand, and, on the other hand, whether there is a time lapse between the actions or not), (5) 'state of dividedness' (referring to the internal segmentations that a quantity has), and (6) 'state of boundedness & degree of extension' (referring to whether the action has boundaries (bounded) or not (unbounded) as well as whether it is reduced or extended on the timeline).

In the discussion of each category, due to space limitations, only two representative examples are analysed. While the first one labelled 'reflected' represents how the translators managed to produce an accurate translation, the second one labelled 'unreflected' or 'partially reflected' represents how the translators could not produce an accurate translation.

6.1 Point of emphasis

Reflected: example 1 (pp. 30-1)

ST	قام من سجوده وأدخل يده في الجراب فتناول بلغة من أجمل البلغات وأحسنها، وأبدعها ولعلها من أروع البلغات التي صنعتها مدينة فاس منذ تاريخ تأسيسها إلى اليوم.
Lit. T	*He rose from his prostration and inserted his hand into the bag and took one of the most beautiful, wonderful and best sandals, and perhaps one of the most wonderful sandals that the city of Fez made since the date of its establishment to this day.*
TT	*He rose from the ground, slipped his hand into the bag, and took out one of the most beautiful and best sandals that had ever been made in the city of Fes since its foundation.*

In the original text, four finite verbs are used namely قام *'to stand up'*, أدخل *'to insert'*, تناول *'to take'*, and صنع *'to make'*. The morphological tense of all of them is past, but the point of emphasis is different. To explain, in the first three finite verbs, as one may observe, the emphasis is placed on the completion of these acts, thus being seen as points on the timeline. In the fourth finite verb, however, the emphasis is placed on the whole period that started in the past (specified as we can specify the starting point: since the foundation of the city) and is seen as relevant to another point in the past (specified as we can specify the endpoint: the

day of narrating the story). This was taken into account by the translators when they gave the contextual tenses of these four finite clauses full consideration.

<u>Partially reflected</u>: example 2 (pp. 206-7)

ST	لقد اكتشفت أنها لا تعلّق صورها وصور عائلتها على الحائط فقط، بل إنها تنشر تاريخها العائلي في كل ركن من أركان بيتها.
Lit. T	*I discovered that she does hang her pictures and the pictures of her family on the wall only, but she spreads her family history in every corner of the corners of her home.*
TT	*I soon discovered that she had not only hung her and her family's pictures on the wall, but also that her family's history was to be found in every corner of her flat.*

In this example, three finite verbs are used, namely اكتشفت *'to discover'*, تعلّق *'to hang'*, and تنشر *'to spread'*. The morphological tense of the second finite verb تعلّق *'to hang'* is present, and its structural tense is present too. However, by the effect of the process of sensing expressed by the verb اكتشفت *'to discover'* occurred in the past, the process of doing expressed by the verb تعلّق *'to hang'* is drawn out over a period of time that started in the past (unspecified as the starting point cannot be figured out) and is seen as relevant to another point in the past (specified: the moment of discovering). Having taken into account the contextual tense rather than the morphological tense or structural tense, the translators opted for the past perfect, thereby creating a similar mental image in the minds of their readers. As regards the third finite clause, the translators could not figure out the contextual tense, thus resorting to past simple. By so doing, they failed to create a similar mental image in their readers' minds.

6.2 Plexity

<u>Reflected</u>: example 3 (pp. 44-5)

ST	ضحك الشيخ ضحكة قصيرة حادة ثم قال: "ستخسرين قليلاً ولكنك ستربحين زوجك. أتحبينه؟" غمغمت عزيزة بسخط: "لا أحبه".
Lit. T.	*The sheikh laughed a short, sharp laugh, then said, "You will lose a little, but you will win your husband. Do you love him?". Aziza murmured in exasperation: "I do not love him".*
TT	*The Sheikh grinned, and said: "You will lose a little, but you will regain your husband. Do you love him?" Aziza angrily muttered under her breath: "No, I don't".*

Here, although the translators managed to reflect the contextual tenses in the first two finite clauses, i.e. ضحك الشيخ ضحكة قصيرة حادة ثم قال, when opting for *'The Sheikh grinned, and said',* they failed to create a similar mental image in their readers' minds. To explain, by the effect of the grammatical form ضحكة *'a laughter'*, the act of laughing is characterised by uniplexity, that is, its quantity consists of one element: laughter. This was reflected by the translators when opting for past simple where the three paths (initial, medial, and final) of the act of grinning are reduced to being seen as a point on the timeline. However, the act of laughing ضحك in the behavioural process ضحك الشيخ ضحكة قصيرة وحادة employed by the writer evokes in the mind of the hearer or reader the *sound*-frame and *movement*-frame in addition to the other frames that may be evoked by the act of grinning, that is, to smile broadly, especially in an unrestrained manner and with the mouth open. Had the translators given the frames associated with the act of laughing adequate consideration, they would have suggested a rendering like this: *'The Sheikh let out a short laugh and said…'*.

<u>Unreflected</u>: example 4 (pp. 86-7)

ST	عاد من جديد يسترق النظر إليها عله يجد شيئاً في ملامحها يضيء ما اعتراه من حيرة وذهول.
Lit. T	*He returned looking at her hoping to find something in her features that illuminates what came over him from confusion and astonishment.*
TT	*Once again he glanced over at her, and noticed something in her features that shed light on what had baffled him.*

In the source text, sneaking a look is characterised by multiplexity, that is, the quantity is made up of several elements/looks; therefore, the verb ينظر or يسترق النظر is dawn out over a short period of time – it could be seconds or minutes, no more than this. In the target text, however, by virtue of the grammatical form opted for by the translators, the verb *'to glance'* is characterised by uniplexity as the emphasis is put on the completion of the act of glancing in the past. By so doing, the act of glancing in the target text is reduced to being seen as a point on the timeline, thereby affecting the degree of extension.

Further, in the original text, as one may observe, a clause of purpose introduced by عله is used. Here, it is not asserted that the in-text participant found something in her features; therefore, the scope of intention is greater than the extent of causation (see next section for more details). However, in the target text, the translators imposed different specifications on the scene when opting for the additive connector *'and'*, thereby emphasising the completion of the act of noticing at a specific point in the past. By doing so, they made the extent of causation greater than the scope of intention. Had they given adequate consideration to the scope of intention and extent of causation, they would have opted for something like '… *an attempt to notice something in her features…'*.

6.3 Extent of causation

<u>Reflected</u>: example 5 (pp. 144-5):

ST	قالت وهي ترمق سوارًا ذهبيًا في معصمها: ((سأدفع لك ما تريد)).
Lit. T	*She said while catching a glimpse of a gold bracelet on her wrist: "I'll pay you what you want".*
TT	*Staring at the gold bracelet on her wrist, she said: "I'll pay you what you want".*

In this example, the process of saying is expressed in the middle of the process of sensing expressed by the verb رمق *'to catch a glimpse'* without any time lapse. By the dint of the grammatical forms and content specifications used in the original text, the extent of causation in these two processes/clauses is greater than the scope of intention as it is asserted that the sayer said something and the senser stared at something; therefore, both of them are part of reality. Having taken into consideration these categories, the translators opted for a process of sensing in the form of a non-finite clause '*Staring at the gold bracelet on her wrist, she said'* followed by a process of saying in the form of a finite clause *'she said'* where the extent of causation is greater than the scope of intention, thus reflecting an accurate mental image.

<u>Unreflected</u>: example 6 (pp. 212-3):

ST	جريت إلى المطبخ لأناولها شربة ماء طلبتها لأن ريقها جاف، وما إن فعلت حتى جريت إلى الهاتف لأطلب لها طبيبًا من أقرب مستشفى.
Lit. T	*I ran to the kitchen to give her some water that she requested because her mouth was dry, and as soon as I did, I ran to the phone to ask for a doctor from the nearest hospital.*
TT	*I ran to the kitchen to get her some water, as she complained her mouth was dry. Soon after, I ran to the telephone and called a doctor from the nearest hospital.*

In this example, it is not asserted in the original text that the actor in the process of doing expressed by the verb جرى *'to run'* called the doctor as the process of saying expressed by the non-finite verb طلب *'to call'* functions as a circumstance answering the question 'for what purpose did the actor run to the telephone?'. With this in mind, the scope of intention in the non-finite clause لأطلب طبيا *'to call a doctor'* is greater than the extent of causation; therefore, it is part of irreality. However, by virtue of the additive connector *'and'* employed by the translators, the extent of causation is greater than the scope of intention as it is asserted that the actor/caller called a doctor.

6.4 Degree of extension & state of boundedness

<u>Reflected</u>: example 7 (pp.288-9)

ST	كان الناس يتفرجون على المطاردة وهم يضحكون، وحتى حين طار الشيخ علي وراءهم وهو يسبهم ويلعنهم كانوا لا يزالون يضحكون.
Lit. T	*People were watching the chase laughing, and even when Sheikh Ali flew after them reviling and cursing them they were still laughing.*
TT	*The bystanders were watching the chase, laughing. Even when the sheikh came after all of them, reviling and cursing them, they kept on laughing.*

By the effect of the grammatical form used in the original text كانوا يتفرجون, the process of behaving expressed by the verb يتفرج *'to watch'* is drawn out over a short period of time in the past. Added to this, it is characterised by unboundedness as neither the starting point nor the endpoint can be identified. These two characteristics were given adequate consideration by the translators when opting for the past continuous, i.e. *'were watching'*. In the last part of the text, by the dint of the grammatical form employed in the original text كانوا لا يزالون يضحكون *'they had been still laughing'*, the emphasis in the process of behaving expressed by the verb ضحك *'to laugh'* is placed on the whole period that started in the past and is seen as relevant to another point in the past. With this in mind, the translators opted for *'kept on laughing'* in place of the past continuous, thereby reflecting a somehow similar mental image.

Unreflected: example 8 (pp. 44-5)

ST	قال الشيخ سعيد وهو يرمي في وعاء الجمر نتفًا من البخور: "سيعود إليك زوجك ولن يتزوّج مرّة ثانية".
Lit. T	*Sheikh Said said while throwing into the coal container bits of incense: "Your Husband will return to you and he will not marry again".*
TT	*He threw bits of incense into the dish filled with live coal, and said: "Your husband will return to you, and he will not take another wife".*

Here, the translators failed to figure out the contextual tenses, thereby producing an inaccurate translation. To explain, in the original text, as one may observe, the process of saying expressed by the verb قال *'to say'* occurred in the middle of the process of doing expressed by the verb يرمي *'to throw'*. However, in the target text, the process of saying expressed by the verb *'to say'* occurred shortly before the process of doing expressed by the verb *'to throw'*, thus indicating there is a time lapse between the two processes. Added to that, the process of doing expressed by the verb يرمي *'to throw'* in the original text is characterised by multiplexity (more than one element/act of throwing) and having some breaks (state of dividedness) in addition to being drawn out over a short period of time (degree of extension). However, in the target text due to the past simple used by the translators, the process of doing lost all these characteristics; it is characterised by uniplexity (one element), without breaks (state of dividedness) and being reduced to being seen as a point on the timeline (degree of extension).

6.5 State of dividedness

Reflected: example 9 (pp. 148-9):

ST	خلع ملابسه ببطء. لما فك أزرار بنطلونه وجد نفسه فجأة ينظر إلى الصورة الموضوعة على تواليت الزينة.
Lit. T	*He off his clothes slowly took. When he undid the buttons of his trousers, he found himself looking suddenly at the picture placed on the dressing table.*
TT	*He slowly took off his clothes. When he undid the buttons of his trousers, he suddenly found himself looking at the picture on the dressing table.*

In this example, not only is the process of doing expressed by خلع *'to take off'* characterised by multiplexity, that is, the quantity consists of more than one element/piece of clothes, but it is also characterised by being internally discrete, that is, it has breaks and interruptions – the actor removed his pieces of clothes one after another. Similarly, the second process of doing expressed by the verb فك *'to undo'* is characterised by multiplexity (more than one element/button) and being internally discrete with breaks and interruptions – the actor undid the buttons one after another. Further, the act of finding himself looking at the picture occurred

at the moment of undoing the last button. This indicates there is no time lapse between the act of undoing his buttons and finding himself looking at the picture. Having identified the characteristics and categories of the processes expressed by the verbs discussed above along with the pace and time lapse, the translators opted for the complex sentence '*When he undid the buttons of his trousers, he suddenly found himself looking at the picture on the dressing table*', thereby reflecting the contextual tenses and creating similar mental images.

Unreflected: example 10 (pp. 48-9)

ST	وأبعد الشيخ سعيد يديه عن عزيزة ومضى يقرأ ويرمي البخور فوق الجمر المتقد في الوعاء النحاسي ثم قال ...
Lit. T	*And Sheikh Said took his hands away from Aziza and continued reading and throwing the incense over the burning embers in the copper vessel, then said ...*
TT	*Sheikh Said took his hands away from Aziza. He continued his reading, added some incense on the burning embers in the dish, and said:*

In this example, the process of doing in the third clause expressed by the verb يرمي '*to throw*' is drawn out over a short period of time by virtue of the verb مضى '*to continue*', thus being characterised by both (1) multiplexity, that is, the quantity of the process is made up of more than one element, and (2) having breaks or interruptions; therefore, it is internally discrete. In the target text, however, the act of throwing, by the effect of the past simple employed by the translators, is characterised by (1) uniplexity, that is, its quantity is made up of one element, and (2) having no breaks or interruptions as it is reduced to being seen as a point on the timeline. To reflect a similar mental image, one can suggest a rendering of the following kind '*He continued reading and throwing ...*' where the act of throwing is drawn out over a short period of time in the past, thereby being characterised by having breaks through its process of composition.

6.6 Pace & time lapse

Reflected: example 11 (pp. 260-1)

ST	سمعته ينشق نشقات متتالية سريعة كمن يبحث عن مصدر رائحة ما! أدركت أنه اكتشف رائحة جديدة.
Lit. T	*She heard him sniffing repetitive, fast sniffs, as if someone looking for the source of a particular smell. She realized he discovered a new smell.*
TT	*. . she heard him sniffing – fast, repetitive sniffs – like someone trying to ascertain the source of a particular smell. She realized that he had discovered a new smell.*

In the original text, the mental process expressed by the verb سمع '*to hear*' and the process of behaving expressed by the verb نشق '*to sniff*' occurred at the same time shortly before the mental process expressed by the verb ادرك '*to realize*', which occurred shortly after the mental process expressed by the verb اكتشف '*to discover*'. Further, the process of behaving expressed by the verb نشق '*to sniff*' is characterised by (1) multiplexity, that is its quantity is made up of more than one element/sniff, and (2) having short breaks, thus being internally discrete. Being fully aware of the pace of events and time intervals among the actions, the translators selected their grammatical forms and lexical items, ordered the events, and linked them in a way that reflected the contextual tenses, thereby creating a similar mental image in their readers' minds.

Partially reflected: example 12 (pp. 164-5)

ST	وضع الشاب القطعة النقدية في شقّ الحاكي. كفّت رفيقته عن النحيب. باسمها. لاطف شعرها ووجها ثم احتضن يده في يدها.
Lit. T	*The young man placed the coin in the slot of the jukebox. His companion stopped wailing. He exchanged smiles with her. He caressed her hair and face, then cupped his hand in her hand.*
TT	*The young man put a coin in the jukebox. His girlfriend stopped crying and smiled. He caressed her hair and face, and cupped her hand in his.*

In this example, five processes are employed. By virtue of the grammatical forms and content specifications used in the first two processes, the emphasis in the second process كفّت عن النحيب *'she stopped crying'* is placed on the last portion of the act of crying which started before the act of putting a coin and ended shortly after it. This was reflected in the target text. However, by the effect of the additive connector *'and'* utilised, the pace of events is sped up as there was no time lapse between the act of stopping crying and the act of smiling. Added to this, in the source text the process of behaving expressed by the verb باسم *'to exchange smiles'* is characterised by having a dyadic personation type, that is, two participants are actively involved. As such, the interaction between the two participants in this process is construed as bidirectional based on a reciprocal action schema where the flow of energy goes in both directions at the same time. In the target text, however, by the effect of the verb *'to smile'* employed by the translators, the interaction between the two participants is construed as unidirectional based on an asymmetrical action schema where the energy flows in one direction.

7. Conclusion

In this study, the translation of tenses from Arabic, which does not have a grammatical category for 'aspect', to English, which has such a grammatical category is illustrated. The data of the study were qualitatively analysed by focusing on the importance of context in determining the aspectual rather than the temporal reference of the Arabic verbs. Arabic tenses, which are traditionally classified into past versus present or perfect versus imperfect, are classified into three tenses in this study, namely the morphological tense, structural tense, and contextual tense. This study illustrates that in order for the translators to produce an accurate translation and create a similar mental image in the minds of their readers, the contextual tense should be determined prior to activating the mechanism of equivalent search. This indicates that there are two main steps that should be given adequate consideration by translators while translating tenses from Arabic to English. They are (1) determining the contextual tense and (2) activating the mechanism of equivalent search by falling back on one's translation competence that includes several competences, such as linguistic competence, contrastive competence, research competence, textual competence, and the like.

In response to the question raised in this study concerning how the contextual tense is determined, a cognitive model is proposed in this study where certain categories, such as 'point of emphasis', 'state of dividedness', 'state of boundedness', 'degree of extension', 'plexity', 'pace and time lapse', and 'extent of causation' are paid special attention.

From analysing the primary data used in the current study, it has been shown that adhering to the morphological tense or structural tense without figuring out the contextual tense may lead, depending on the grammatical form and content specification used, to inaccurate translations, thus creating different mental images in the minds of the target language readers.

References

Almanna, A. (2016a). *The Routledge Course in Translation Annotation: Arabic- English-Arabic.* London/New York: Routledge.

Almanna, A. (2016b). *Semantics for Translation Students: Arabic-English-Arabic.* Oxford: Peter Lang.

Almanna, A. (2018). *The Nuts and Bolts of Arabic-English Translation: An Introduction to Applied Contrastive Linguistics.* Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Almanna, A. & Al-Shehari, K. (2019). *The Arabic-English Translator as Photographer.* London/New York: Routledge.

Āl Sāqy, F. (1977). Āqsām āl Klām āl ʿarabī min Ḥaytu āl Šakl wa āl Waẓīfa [Arabic parts of speech. Their forms and functions]. Maktabat āl Ḫānǧī.

Āl Syrāfī, Ā. S. (1986). Šarḥ Kitāb Sybāwayh [Explanation of Sibawayh's book]. Āl Hayā āl MasRya āl ʿāma lilkitāb.

Biber, D., Conrad, S., and Leech, G. (2002). *Longman Student Grammar of Spoken and Written English*. Essex: Pearson Education Limited.

Celce-Murcia, M., and Larsen-Freeman, D. (1999). *The Grammar Book: An ESL/EFL Teacher's Course* (2nd edition). Boston: Heinle and Heinle Publishers Inc.

Coe, N., Harrison, M., and Paterson, K. (2006). *Oxford Practice Grammar*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Evans, V. & Green, M. (2006). *Cognitive Linguistics: An Introduction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Freeborn, D. (1987). *A Course Book in English Grammar*. London: Palgrave.

Gadalla, H. A. H. (2006a). Translating English perfect tenses into Arabic: a comparative study of two translations of Pearl Buck's novel 'The Good Earth'. *Babel*, International Journal of Translation, *52* (3), 243-261.

Gadalla, H. A. H. (2006b). Arabic imperfect verbs in translation: a corpus study of English renderings. *META*: Journal des Traducteurs (Journal of Translators), *51* (1), 51-71.

Gadalla, H. A. H. (2017). *Translating Tenses in Arabic-English and English-Arabic Contexts*. Newcastle upon Tyne, England: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Griffiths, P. (2006). *An Introduction to English Semantics and Pragmatics*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Ḫārūn, Ā. S. (1977). Kitāb Sybāwayh [Sibawayh's book]. Āl Hayā āl MasRya āl ʿāma lilkitāb.

Husni, R. and Newman, D. (2008). *Modern Arabic Short Stories: A Bilingual Reader*. London: Saqi Books.

Kearns, K. (2000/2011). *Semantics*. Basingstoke/New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Kreidler, C. W. (1998). *Introducing English Semantics*. London/New York. Routledge.

Leech, G. and Svartvik, J. (2002). *A Communicative Grammar of English* (3rd edition). London/New York: Routledge.

Lindquist, H. (1989). *English Adverbials in Translation: A Corpus Study of Swedish Renderings*. Sweden: Lund University Press.

Nida, E. (1964). *Toward a Science of Translating: with Special Reference to Principles and Procedures Involved in Bible Translating*. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.

Quirk, R., Greenbaum, S., Leech, G., & Svartvik, J. (1972). *A Grammar of Contemporary English*. London: Longman.

Quirk, R., and Greenbaum, S. (1973). *A University Grammar of English*. London: Longman Group Limited.

Radwan, R. (1975). *A Semantico-Syntactic Study of the Verbal Piece in Colloquial Egyptian Arabic* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of London, UK.

Talmy, L. (2000). *Toward a Cognitive Semantics: Vol. 1: Concept Structuring Systems*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Shamaa, N. (1978). *A Linguistic Analysis of Some problems of Arabic to English Translation* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Oxford: Linacre College, UK.

Wright, W. (1967). *A Grammar of the Arabic Language* (3rd edition). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.