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Multiplicity of Different English Functional Semantic Realizations of the Translation of the Arabic Preposition بـ

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Abstract

This paper throws a spotlight at an uncharted territory in the field of translation and grammatical analysis. The semantic functions of the preposition بـ in Arabic has been the cynosure of all linguists' and translators' and rhetoricians' eyes for decades. The paper channels efforts into establishing a meeting-ground as a point of departure for the topic. The paper devotes considerable efforts to explore the semantic functions, expressed by the preposition بـ, and then they are analyzed. The different realizations in English of the same preposition in Arabic are meant to enrich translators' and linguists' appreciation and critical understanding of the different semantic functions of the preposition بـ. Some alternative solutions are provided to put things in the right perspective. Failure to perfectly understand the semantic functions inherent in the preposition بـ in different contexts definitely washes away meaning, and causes translators to bog down in unanswered questions pertaining to the exact meaning intended. This paper tries hard to clear away any fog of long-standing misunderstanding in relation to this topic which has long been a bone of contention.

1. Introduction

Any language is said to be made up of units which are set off by spaces in orthography. These units, though can technically still be further broken down into smaller units known as morphemes, are known as 'words; or 'lexical items'. The words of any language or the stock of vocabulary must fall into one of its wider categories, known as 'parts of speech' or 'word classes'. While Arabic is, according to Ghalaiyeeni 2015, very limited in its parts of speech which consist of a noun, a verb and a particle (to be analyzed further below), English parts of speech outnumber their Arabic counterparts in number. English words belong to such parts of speech as verbs,

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nouns, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, pronouns, conjunctions and interjections (Leech & Svartvik 2003). However, it is worth noting that it is a misnomer to think that the Arabic tri-nomenclature of word classes excludes the 5 seemingly extra ones in English. It is a variation in classification. For instance, the English word class of nouns covers in Arabic the word classes of nouns, pronouns, adjectives and adverbs. So, the tri-classification of Arabic parts of speech does not mean that English has more parts of speech than Arabic does. By the same token, the Arabic word class of 'particles' includes English prepositions, conjunctions and interjections.

The present paper lens zooms in on the semantic functions carried by the 'Arabic particle ب. Arabic particles are considered an umbrella term because they include such English parts of speech as prepositions, conjunctions and interjections. The Arabic particles which lie within the scope of this paper are prepositions. Particles in Arabic, referred to as حرف, can be further divided into two types of particles, namely. حروف مبنى(alphabetical letters) and حروف معنى(prepositions). The former category help construct words, and are thus considered the bricks which words are made up of. One example is ك in كتاب. The letter ك is said to be حرف مبنى(an alphabetical letter) as it is one of the letters which make up the word كتاب. The difference between a sound and a letter lies beyond the scope of this paper. On the other hand, حروف المعنى are those which usually precede nouns and thus show the relationship holding between successive words (usually verbs and nouns). One striking example is 'he flew *to* Syria' where 'to' is the preposition which precedes the noun 'Syria' and is grammatically analyzed and dubbed as 'a locative complement' in the prepositional phrase 'to Syria'. In Arabic, the semantic content of 'to' in this example is transferred without an alteration into Arabic as إلى which indicates بلوغ الغاية or 'heading to or reaching the destination'. So, it is said that there is an exact correspondence between the locative complement 'to Syria' and its equivalent translation in Arabic, i.e. إلى. However, the correspondence is not always direct. For example, the preposition following 'to arrive' differs depending on the noun that follows, but in Arabic it remains the same. More strikingly, in Arabic sometimes we use a preposition إلى and at others, the verb 'arrive' admits an object without necessarily using a preposition (جاء إلى دمشق- جاء دمشق). When certain verbs admits a locative complement in Arabic in the accusative case, it is grammatically referred to as اسم منصوب بنزع الخافض, but when a preposition comes in between it becomes a noun in the dative case (اسم مجرور).

It is found that the semantic content expressed by the preposition 'to' in English is conveyed into Arabic through a direct already-existent equivalent, i.e. إلى. In other words, in this particular example there is a one-to-one relationship between the preposition in both languages. This paper scrutinizes the multiplicity of semantic functions carried by the same preposition in Arabic. This paper makes an attempt to vividly show how the same preposition in Arabic (taking ب as an example) is realized differently in English when translated.

2. Literature Review

As shown above, the present paper is concerned with the Arabic semantic functional content, carried by the preposition ب. It is noticed that the semantic behavior, expressed by ب in Arabic is richer than that in English, and thus cannot transferred through a one-to-one correspondence into English. The seemingly same ب in Arabic can be said to be an overloaded preposition in Arabic that no one particular preposition can be predicted in English. This linguistic phenomenon is context-bound in that the same preposition ب behaves semantically different and thus cannot be dealt according to watertight criteria predictably.

One major way of forming Arabic sentences is what is referred to as 'partial construction' (Samirra'y 2000). This involves using the same verb, but followed by different a preposition. One example is رغب إلى، رغب في ورغب عن, which mean 'supplicated or prayed to', 'wanted to' and 'backed away', respectively. In English, we call this type of verbs 'phrasal verbs' and we refer to the Arabic prepositions following their respective verbs as 'adverb particles'.

It is interesting to note above how the whole equivalent verb has changed in English when the preposition in Arabic changed after the verb رغب. The paper here is concerned with how the same preposition in Arabic is realized differently in English in a bid to match the semantic function expressed in Arabic.

In Arabic, particles are divided into 'effective or operative' and 'passive' عامل وعاطل. By the former, we mean that their occurrence before the noun it accompanies bring about what is grammatically known as 'declension' الإعراب. This means the last morpheme or inflection of the word carries a marker (diacritic mark) showing its grammatical case and category. Such particles, depending on what particles are used, may make the word they precede in the nominative, accusative, dative or apocope case, that is حالة الرفع أو النصب أو الجر أو الجزم respectively. Prepositions

are considered one type of 'effective particles' as they transform the noun following them into the dative case. The 'passive' particles, when preceding words, bring about indeclinability or invariability to those words. They enable the words they precede to keep adhering to one form, no matter where they occur حالة البناء .

Approaching the paper focal point further, the paper will shed light on 'prepositions', a class of Arabic particles which is renowned for bringing the dative case to the noun following it. Prepositions are 20 in number in Arabic (Ghalaiyeeni 2015 and Babty 2004). Some books refer to them as particles of addition since they convey the meaning of verbs preceding them to the nouns following them. As opposed to the English classification of prepositions which classes them into simple (one-word prepositions) and complex ones (multi-word prepositions) (Carter and McCarthy 2006 and Svartvik and Leech 2003), all Arabic prepositions are simple ones. In Arabic, such particles may be categorized according to the number of letters each particle is made up of. So, we have one-letter particles like ب and ك, 2-letter particles like أن and يل, 3-letter particles like إلى and لات, 4-letter particles like حتى and لولا and one 5-letter particle which is لكن(Addihdah 2013).

The Arabic prepositions can be described as multifunctional words because some of them are particles all the time (like من وإلى والباء), others are particles or nouns like على وعن ومنذ and the last group are particles or verbs like حاشا وخلا وعدا(Ghalaiyeeni 2015 and Babty 2004). The focus of this paper is the preposition بin Arabic and how it is realized differently and strikingly in English. This is so because the semantic content carried by it varies according to the context they occur in.

Prepositions in English enjoy a more flexible position than that in Arabic through a grammatical shift of the preposition in what is known as 'preposition stranding', where the preposition is deferred to the end of the sentence. Although a preposition normally and almost always comes before its complement in the prepositional phrase, it can come either at the end or at the beginning in wh-questions, relative clauses and exclamations. Some illustrative examples of the above 3 cases are shown below respectively:

A1. Whom are you talking to?

A2. To whom are you talking?

B1. This is the book I have been looking for.

B2. This is the book for which I have been looking.

C1. What a hard time he has been through!

C2. With what amazing skill this painter handles the brush!

On the contrary, prepositions in English are reluctant and stubborn to change their position in 3 cases, namely A. wh-cleft clauses, B. passive clauses and C. infinitive clauses. Some typical examples can be A. What I she was convinced of is that the country would see some economic unrest. B. The patient who was looked after at hospital turned out to be my old teacher, and C. Our colleague Nader is a cheerful man to work with.

3. Methodology

The present paper adopts a logical funnel-like method in tackling the current issue. An overview of the background of the parts of speech in both languages is provided. Particular emphasis is placed on the particular part of speech to which the paper focal point belongs, i.e. particles. Some grammatical and semantic analysis ensues to pave the way for the reader to establish a relevant train of thought. Some examples are given for illustrative purposes. Excluding all other particles, an analysis of the preposition بـ is carried out. Examples from the Holy Quran, being the unrivalled linguistic model of excellence in Arabic, are given top priority in citation where possible. Finding an appropriate translation to the same Arabic preposition in different context, it is found out that the same preposition بـin Arabic is functionally realized differently in English. The same preposition بـ behaves differently semantically in Arabic, bringing different semantic subtleties and nuances in different contexts. The paper addresses the functional semantic realization in English of the same preposition in Arabic, i.e. بـ. Some examples from Arabic literature are provided for further illustration. Translations of the Quranic verses cited are cited from authoritative and widely circulated versions of the Holy Quran.

4. Results and Discussion

The underlying assumption which will be taken as a point of departure for this paper is the fact that a full translation is found in the linguistic analysis at the grammatical, lexical, collocational and situational levels (Firth 1968). This entails that a semantic content must be sought for in the target language text. The preposition ب in Arabic has no one-to-one relationship with its counterpart in English depending on the context it occurs in. A good translator must desperately devote his/her efforts to finding the functional equivalent to the source text (Diaz-Diocartez 1985). This places us on the track in pursuit of the functionally semantic content carried by the same preposition ب in different contexts. Failing to capture the exact functional semantic content in the target text definitely ends up in a fiasco or a choppy translation.

Having carried out a full scale review of the semantic functions expressed by the preposition ب, I have found out that the same preposition in Arabic cannot be expressed in the same particle in English all the time. The preposition ب has a significant influence on the semantic message to be conveyed, thus requiring the translator to have a complete command of Arabic first in order to be able to have the correct reflection I his mind, prior to embarking on seeking the functionally equivalent in the target language. In the sections below, the preposition ب will undergo a full scrutiny.

A. ب الإلصاق (that of physical contact)

This usage indicates there is a full physical contact with the instrument mentioned. This usage can be real or metaphorical. One example of real physical contact can be found in the following example cited from Al Ma'ida Chapter'وَامْسَحُوا۟ بِرُءُوسِكُمْ' where the preposition ب indicates that the wet hand must touch and be in physical contact with the head while performing ablution. Khan and Hilali, in their translation of the Quran, translate this part of the verse as 'rub (by passing wet hands over) your heads' (5:6). The usage of 'over' indicates that there is no physical contact between the hand and the head. However, the metaphorical usage of the ب can be seen in 'مررت بالمدرس'' where there is no real physical contact. It just expresses the vicinity between me and the teacher. In this metaphorical usage, it is realized in English by using a phrasal verb like 'pass by', for instance. It is noted here that the real and metaphorical usage of the same preposition(ب) is realized in English differently.

In English, some prepositions are used in both senses: real and metaphorical. One example is 'behind'. In the sentence that reads 'The book you have been looking for is behind the armchair'. In this example, the preposition 'behind' is used in the real sense, and is said to have expressed 'a basic spatial sense' as opposed to the sentence which reads 'The whole nation is behind the ruling party'. In the last example, the preposition 'behind' has been used metaphorically to mean 'to give support', rather than just standing behind the party.

B. ب الاستعانة (instrumental ب)

This ب is usually inflected to the tool or instrument used to carry out an activity. One example from the Holy Quran is ' فَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَى مُوسَى أَنِ اضْرِب بِّعَصَاكَ الْبَحْرَ ' (26:63). In English, the instrumental ب is always expressed by using 'with'. So, the translation of the previous verse could be 'Then We inspired Musa: "Strike the sea *with* your stick". More examples could be كتبت بالقلم وفتحت الباب بالمفتاح. They can be translated as 'I wrote with the pen' and 'I opened the door with the key'.

C. السببية والتعليل(causal ب)

This function is usually used to express the reason why a certain act takes place. It explains the reason behind the occurrence of an accompanying verb. On example from the Quran is ' فَبِمَا نَقْضِهِم مِّيثَاقَهُمْ لَعَنَّاهُمْ ' (5:13). This usage can be replaced and realized by 'because of, due to, or owing to'. The translation of the verse is 'So because of their breach of their covenant, We cursed them'. Another example reads as follows ' يَا قَوْمِ إِنَّكُمْ ظَلَمْتُمْ أَنفُسَكُم بِاتِّخَاذِكُمُ الْعِجْلَ ' (:54). It is interesting to note that the causal function of ب here can be realized by using 'by + gerund'. So the translation can read as follows '"O my people! Verily, you have wronged yourselves by worshipping the calf'. So, this ب is realized in English through a wider range of possibilities, if compared with the other functions of ب.

D. التعدية (that of transitivity)

The semantic function brought by this ب is to transform an intransitive verb into a transitive one. It is equal to change a sound pattern of a verb into فعّل or أفعل in a bid to morphologically transform an intransitive verb into a transitive one. Because of its ability to transform the verb into a transitive verb, some grammarians call it ب النقل(that of transformation or transference). One example is 'نام' which is an intransitive verb. However, it can be made transitive by making its

morphological form comply with one of the sound patterns فعّل or أفعل. So, we can say أنامت الأم نَوّمت الأم ابنتها or ابنتها. Here it is noted that the intransitive verb has changed into a transitive one.

By the same token, the semantic function expressed by this بـis to bring the transitivity phenomenon to the verb. One example from the Holy Quran is 'وَلَوْ شَاء اللّهُ لَذَهَبَ بِسَمْعِهِمْ وَأَبْصَارِهِمْ' (2:20). Such function of بـ is realized by either a) using the same literal intransitive verb of the Arabic text on condition that it is preceded by the verb 'to make', or b) to use a transitive verb with the same semantic message. One way of translating the previous verse and realizing this بـ is 'if Allah willed, He could have taken away their hearing and their sight'. One more example is found is the following verse as it reads 'ذَهَبَ اللّهُ بِنُورِهِمْ' (2:17). It seems more common to go for the option b above which involves using a transitive verb, rather than using the same literal intransitive verb, preceded by 'to make'. So, the translation of the last verse could be 'Allah took away their light'.

E. باء القسم (that of swearing or administering an oath)

The function of this بـis to administer an oath. It is considered the primary tool for swearing an oath. Other oath-expressing-prepositions are اللام والواو. In Arabic, the oath-carrying بـ is characterized by the fact that it can accompany the verb of administering the oath as in أقسم بالله لأجتهدن. It can also be inflected to the pronoun in Arabic as in بك لأجتهدن. It is noted that in oath-administration style in Arabic, a special kind of نـappears at the end of the verb used, i.e. stressed or unstressed corroborative ن(نون التوكيد الثقيلة أو الخفيفة).

One example from the Holy Quran is لا أُقْسِمُ بِيَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ (75:1). In this example, the oath-swearing preposition is accompanied by the explicitly-stated verb 'أقسم'. This function of oath-administration is realized in English by using 'by' whether followed by the verb or not. The 3 different oath-taking prepositions are all realized by one equivalent in English, i.e. 'by'.

F. ب البدل (Substitutive ب)

This function carries the semantic message of 'substitution' of 'replacement'. One example is 'أتمنى لو أن لي بهم أصدقاء مخلصين'. The intended meaning, carried over by the preposition here is that of replacement. The translation would go as follows 'I wish I had loyal friends instead of those'. It is noted here that the substitutive بـis realized in English by 'instead of ' or 'in lieu of'. A line can be drawn between the substitutive ب and that of one-to-one ب (المقابلة أو العِوض) in that the

former states 'substitution' for no return, and expresses a sense of waiving or relinquishing the item stated 9as will shown below).

G. (ب one-to-one or rewarding) ب المقابلة أو العِوض

Looking similar to the substitutive ب, the semantic function carried by this ب is the sense of rewarding, in that something is given or taken in return for something else. One clear example is خذ الدار بالفرس (Take the house in return for the horse). In other words, it means take the house and give me the horse in return. One example from the Holy Quran is ادْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (16:32). This means you are rewarded with getting into the Paradise (in return) for the good deeds you did before your death. It is noted that the preposition ب which expresses the function of 'reward' is realized in English by 'in return for' or 'for'.

H. ب الاستعلاء (that of entrustment)

The semantic function expressed by this ب is that of entrustment or something one has control over temporarily until the original owner reclaims it. In Arabic, it has the literal meaning of على. One example from the Quran reads وَمِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ مَنْ إِن تَأْمَنْهُ بِقِنطَارٍ يُؤَدِّهِ إِلَيْكَ (3:75). Here the realization in English of the entrustment-expressing ب is carried out by 'with', because the implicit interpretation is تأمنه على قنطار.

I. ب التبعيض (partitive ب)

The semantic function of this preposition is to indicate 'partition' in the sense that 'wherefrom' or 'from' is implicitly meant. One example from the Holy Quran reads عَيْنًا يَشْرَبُ بِهَا عِبَادُ اللَّهِ (76:6). One possible translation may read 'A spring wherefrom the slaves of Allah will drink'. What characterizes the partitive ب is that it used with transitive verbs only. One more example can be cited from Emr ElQais's suspended Ode as he says هَصَرْتُ بِفَوْدَيْ رَأسِها فَتَمايَلَتْ ... عليّ هَضيمَ الكَشحِ رَيَّا الْمُخلخَلِ

Seeing that this preposition accompanies transitive verbs, it can be realized occasionally by a nil form ∅, depending on the context.

J. ب الظرفية (Adverbial ب)

The semantic function of this ب is to indicate the occurrence of the verb used during an adverbial. This adverbial could be an adverbial of place or time. One example from the Quran is وَلَقَدْ نَصَرَكُمُ اللَّهُ بِبَدْرٍ وَأَنتُمْ أَذِلَّةٌ (3:123). The realization in English of this بdepends, to a large extent, on the noun (phrase) following it. The translation is 'Allah has made you victorious at Badr'. If it is a renowned big location or site, country, etc, it is realized by 'in'. If not, it is realized by 'at' as shown in the verse aforementioned. In the previous verse, the preposition is realized by 'at' followed by an adverbial of place. However, it can also precede an adverbial of time as shown in the following example from the Holy Quran 'إِلاَّ آلَ لُوطٍ نَّجَّيْنَاهُم بِسَحَرٍ' (54:34). Here, the preposition precedes an adverbial of time, and thus the translation could be 'Except the family of Lout, whom We saved in last hour of the night'. However, the realization of the adverbial بis open to many possibilities, depending on the adverb itself.

K. ب المصاحبة (concomitant or accompanying ب)

The semantic function of the preposition in this usage is to indicate a sense of accompaniment. One simple example is بعتك الشقة بأثاثها والفرس بسرجه. This is translated as 'I sold you the apartment (along) with its furniture and the horse with its saddle'. Another example from the Quran reads 'اهبط بسلام' (11:48). The preposition here is realized by 'with'. Thus the translation reads 'Come down (from the ship) with peace'.

L. ب(corroborative)ب التوكيد

The semantic function of the corroborative ب is to place emphasis on and highlight the importance of the noun it is inflected to. Grammarians describe it as an extra tool. One example from the Quran is 'قُلْ كَفَى بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا' (13:43). Because the corroborative ب is meant to stress the importance of the noun it is attached to, there is usually no particular abstract realization in English. One good bid is to use a stance adjunct to indicate the importance wished to be emphasized, like 'verily, indeed, certainly, etc'. The translation of the previous verse could be '"Sufficient for a witness between me and you is –verily- Allah'. Describing what grammatical categories might accompany the corroborative ب adds very little to the realizations of it in English. For instance, this preposition can be attached to the subject (as in the example given above), object, predicate, etc.

5. Conclusion

The paper has put effort into trying to functionally analyze the semantic content or message carried over by the Arabic preposition بـ. Some 12 different functions have been detected, explained, analyzed and discussed. The vast majority of the examples have been cited from the Holy Quran. Strikingly enough, the same preposition (i.e. بـ), seemingly steady in semantic behavior, it is realized differently in English. The choice of the realization in English depends on the context in which this preposition occurs. Some alternative solutions have been provided to realize the same preposition in different contexts in a bid to enlighten the path for student trainee translators to broaden their horizons of thoughts when tackling the preposition بـ .

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