

The Translation of Arabic *Almafaʿil* Terms into English: A Case Study

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B. A. of Translation

Abstract

This paper is a descriptive analytical study of translating Arabic *almafaʿil* into the target language (English) by Western linguists exclusively. The problem tackled in this paper lies in the linguists' differences in translating *almafaʿil* terminology each in accordance with his/ her own conception of the Arabic grammar. It assumes that the differences in the syntactic forms in the translations are due to the lack of equivalents in the TL to these forms. It also assumes that the movement of *almafaʿil* in the TL sentences changes their forms and functions. To investigate the causes of these changes, a number of Western linguists' translations are collected and analyzed according to House's (2009) theory of interpretation. The most important result is the lack of unified terminology of *almafaʿil* kinds in the TL.

1-- Introduction:

Object in Arabic grammar, which appears in different forms having various functions termed *almafaʿil*, has been differently rendered into English. It falls into five types: *almafaʿulu bihi*, *almafaʿulu almutlaq*, *almafaʿulu liʾajlihi*, *almafaʿulu maʿahu*, and *almafaʿulu fiihi*. They are classified under the category of

accusative case "*almansu:bat*" (*Alghula:yini*, 1966, Vol. 3: 3). Other Arab grammarians classify them as 'extra' or 'surplus' "*fadhlat*" (*Ar-rajihi*, 1993:195). As for the other classifications of *almafaʿil*, they depend on certain criteria like explicitness vs. implicitness, and foregrounding vs. deferment.

The translation of the kinds of *almafaʿil* is problematic, due to the difference of their forms in the target language; they take the functions of different grammatical categories such as prepositional phrase, verbal noun, adverbs...etc. The research is a case study of translating *almafaʿil* terms from Arabic into English. It throws light on the *almafaʿil* whose grammatical forms are changed when they are translated into the TL. These forms correspond with certain grammatical forms in the TL. The study adopts House's (2009) approach of interpretation in its criterion of translating *almafaʿil* terms regarding the theoretical background of *almafaʿil* and its types.

It is hypothesized that the change of the grammatical forms is due to the lack of their equivalents in the TL. The research also assumes that the object movement in the TL changes the form and functions of the object. The study is confined to certain English writings on Arabic grammar. The scope of study covers the five categories of *almafaʿil*; it eliminates the sub-categorizations based on explicitness vs. implicitness and foregrounding vs. deferment. It is restricted to Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) as far as the source language is concerned. Its significance lies in its focus on the translation of *almafaʿil* by some Western linguists and grammarians.

The study follows three procedures. First, a corpus of data is collected from certain English sources of Arabic grammar. Second, data are analyzed according to House's conception of interpretation and the modern Arabic grammarians' conceptions of *almafaʿil* terms. Third, certain results are detected from the data analysis.

2-- General Discussion:

Almafaʿil terms belong to the categories of the accusative case which are called in Arabic "*almansu:bat*". They involve the participation of some elements extraneous to the subject and verb. The only feature shared commonly by *almafaʿil* in Arabic is that they are all formally marked for the accusative case by the accusative case ending [ـا (n)] (AL-Bayati, 2000: 25). On the other hand, Aziz (1989: 130) argues that the terms of *almafaʿil* are kinds of the objective case. However, the accusative case is called in Arabic *النصب an-naṣb*, and it has many other uses in addition to marking the object of a verb (<http://en.wikipedia.org>).

- I ask a man. أسأل رجلاً.

- I ask the man. أسأل الرجل.

Ziadeh & Winder (1957: 52) state that the sign of the accusative is the final fathah (ـا) with the exception of the dual number "*almuṭanna*" which is used in Arabic with the suffix (-ayni) on the singular stem to mark the noun as being dual in the accusative case (Ryding, 2005: 129).

- They visited the two ambassadors. زاروا السفيرين.

- I considered the stranger an expert. - ظننتُ الغريبَ خبيراً.
- He regarded the lecture to be useful. - وجدَ المحاضرةَ مفيدةً.
- He made a castle out of the house. - جعلَ البيتَ قصرًا.
- I gave Mohammad money. - أعطيتُ محمداً نقوداً.
- The mother has named the child Muhammad. - سمّت الأمُّ الولدَ محمداً.

Arab grammarians argue that the last type of objects always comes with the *afʿal alqulub*, "verbs of the heart". They are called as such because their meanings signify an act that takes place in the mind such as: certainty, doubt, and denial (Ar-rajihi, 1993: 200).

- The man took the mountain a shelter. - اتخذَ الرجلُ الجبلَ ملجأً.
 - I thought the power the basis of victory. - ظننتُ القوةَ أساسَ النصرِ.
 - The aggressors turned the village into ruins. - صيّرَ المعتدونَ القريةَ
- أطلالاً.

As for *almafʿulu almutlaq*, Arab grammarians agree on its emphatic function. Yet , they differ in their views of the object of emphasis. Ar-rajihi points that it emphasizes the action stated by the verb (Ar-rajihi, 1993: 227).

- The boy hit his brother very violently. - ضربَ الولدُ أخاه ضرباً مبرحاً.

Tamam Hassan sees that it enhances the meaning denoted by the action of the verb. (Hassan, 1973 , 198).

- She walked slowly. - سارت سيراً بطيئاً.
- He walked like the arrogant man. - مشى مشى المتعطرس.

On the other hand, Abbas Hasan argues that *almafaʿulu almutlaq* has three purposes. First, it verbally emphasizes its governor. Second, it determines the kind of its governor. Third, it emphasizes the meaning of its governor (Hasan, 1982: 207-210). The following examples show these three purposes respectively:

- I passed through the river. - عبرت النهر عبوراً.
- The singer recited like the nightingale. - ترنم المغني ترنم البلبل.
- I visited the ruins three times. - زرت الآثار ثلاث زورات.

It is found that *almafaʿulu almutlaq* in the SL has taken various forms: adverb of manner, preposition, and compliment in the TL.

Almafaʿulu liʾajlihi expresses the reason or motive of the agent (Wright, 1981, Vol. II: 122).

- I stood up in respect of my teacher. - وقفت احتراماً لأستاذي.

It is found that *almafaʿulu liʾajlihi* expresses the object of result in both Arabic and English.

Almafaʿulu maʿahu accompanies the action denoted by the verb.

- I walked along the seafront. - سرتُ والشاطئ.

The rendered sentence shows that the underlined phrase of *almafaʿulu maʿahu* moves to the position of the prepositional phrase in the TL.

Almafaʿulu fiihi denotes the setting of the action (Al-Bayati, 2000: 54). It refers to the location in which the action is carried out (Al-Doory, 1986: 130). Arabs refer to time and place adverbials only under the heading of *almafaʿulu fiihi* "adverbial object". This

adverbial is realized by the noun of time *zaraf az- zaman* and the noun of place *zaraf al-makan* (Khalil, 1999: 238). According to Arab grammarians, adverbials are either definite specifying certain time or place, or indefinite expressing non-limited or infinite time or place.

- Ali arrives on Friday. يَحْضُرُ عَلِيٌّ يَوْمَ الْجُمُعَةِ.
- (Definite time adverbial)
- The students read for an hour. قَرَأَ الطَّلَابُ سَاعَةً مِنَ الزَّمَنِ.
- (Indefinite time adverbial)
- She sat in front of the house. جَلَسَتْ أَمَامَ الدَّارِ.
- (Definite place adverbial)
- I walked a mile. (Indefinite place adverbial) سَرْتُ مَيْلًا.

The underlined phrases in Arabic are *almafʿulu fihi*, but in English they move to the positions of the adverbials of time and place.

3- Data Analysis:

Contrastive linguistics necessitate the interpretation of the meanings of grammatical terms in Arabic, especially *almafaʿil*. The research adopts House's (2009: 15) approach to translation which focuses on the SL. For House, the translator has to pay attention to the original text as an example of how a particular language works, with the language into which it is to be translated. His approach is related to contrastive linguistics which studies differences among languages. House argues that many translation problems can be described on the basis of differences across linguistic systems

(Ibid). *Almafaʿil* have been studied in both classical and modern standard Arabic. They were interpreted by Western linguists and grammarians without a unified terminology.

3.1. *Almafaʿulu bihi*:

William Wright translated Carl Paul Caspari's book *A Grammar of the Arabic Language* from German into English. He interprets the object as a determinous and an adverbial complement, and he even interpreted the accusative case of the noun as the determinative case of the verb or the adverbial case (Wright, Vol. II, 1981: 45). According to him, many verbs take two objective complements in the accusative case: the first object and the second object.

- He ate as much bread as he could. . شَبَعَ خُبْزًا.

He filled the bucket with water. . مَلَأَ الدَّلْوُ مَاءً.

Haywood and Nahmad (1962: 392) tackle the object in their study of the usages of accusative in Arabic. According to them, the accusative is used as the object of a verb and verbs may take one object, two objects, and three objects.

- I met a servant-girl in my house. . قَابَلْتُ خِدَامَةً فِي بَيْتِي.
- I gave Hassan a book. . أَعْطَيْتُ حَسَنًا كِتَابًا.
- I informed Hassan that Zaid was lying. . أَخْبَرْتُ حَسَنًا زَيْدًا كَاذِبًا.

In the third example, it is obvious that the second and third objects moved to the position of the direct object "that Zaid was lying". This direct object has the form of a subordinate clause.

Ryding (2005: 64) states that the direct object, which is in the accusative case, is always associated with a transitive verb. She argues that the second object is termed as indirect object or beneficiary of the action, but when it is equivalent to the first one, he considered it as a great author.

- He encountered resistance. .لقي مقاومة.
- I gave Noura the book. .أعطيت نورة الكتاب.
- They consider them their favourite stars. .يعتبرونهم نجومهم المفضلين.

Thatcher (2003: 279- 281) also interprets the object on the basis of the usages of the accusative. His linguistic efforts depart from the semantic meaning of these usages. He demonstrates that the sentence in Arabic may take one object or two objects.

- I struck Zaid. .ضربت زيدا.
- I thought Zaid (to be) a physician. .ظننت زيدا طبيباً.

Schulz (2008: 151) interprets *almafʿulu bihi* as an accusative object. He determines two kinds of objects:

1. Direct object "*almafʿulu bihi*".

- He has read the book. .قرأ الكتاب.

2. The objects with doubly transitive verbs.

- He has given Muhammad the book. .أعطى محمداً الكتاب.

3. 2. *Almafʿulu almutlaq*:

Wright (Vol. II, 1981: 54) interprets *almafʿulu almutlaq* as the undetermined object; because it stands undetermined. He translates the following sentences:

- I gave him a violent beating. . ضَرَبْتُهُ شَدِيدًا.

They traveled a long time. . سَارُوا طَوِيلًا.

He argues that the undetermined object in the second example may assume a more definite meaning, and be viewed as an accusative of time.

Haywood and Nahmad (1962: 392, 472) state that the accusative is used as *almafʿulu almutlaq* in SL and rendered to the adverb in TL.

- I was upset. . قَلَقْتُ قَلَقًا.

I hit him hard. . ضَرَبْتُهُ ضَرْبًا شَدِيدًا.

Ryding (2005: 285) renders *almafʿulu almutlaq* into the cognate accusative. She interprets it as an elegant way of emphasizing or enhancing a previous statement by deriving a verbal noun from the main verb or predicate.

- It solved the issue fundamentally. . حَلَّتِ الْمَوْضُوعَ حَلًّا جَذْرِيًّا.

They participated effectively. . سَاهَمَا مَسَاهِمَةً فَعَالَةً.

Thatcher (2003: 237) argues that *almafʿulu almutlaq* is usually derived from the verb and he gives it the term of absolute object (cognate accusative). In this case, it is used for distinguishing and may occur in the passive voice.

- He rejoiced greatly. .فرحَ فرحاً عظيماً.

- He completely regained his rights. إِستعادَ حقوقَهُ إِستعادةً كاملةً.

- He gave him a good beating. ضَرَبَهُ ضَرْبًا مَبْرَحًا.

- He was struck violently. . ضُرِبَ ضرباً شديداً.

He was rewarded greatly. كُرِّمَ تَكْرِيمًا عَظِيمًا.

It is used for emphasis when the verbal noun occurs without an adjective:

.ضَرَبَ ضَرْبًا . He struck a striking.

Sometimes the adjective alone is expressed and the verbal noun is understood:

- He gave him a good beating. . ضَرْبَهُ ضَرْبًا .

Schulz (2008: 151) renders *almaf_ξulu almutlaq* into the cognate accusative (absolute accusative).

- He read the letter slowly. قرأ الرسالة قراءةً بطيئةً.

- They will withdraw completely. - سينسحبون انسحاباً كاملاً.

3. 3. *Almafɛulu maɣahu:*

Wright (Vol. II, 1981: 83-84) employs transference in interpreting *almaḥḥulu maḥahu*. It is rendered into "the object in connection with which something is done." The conjunction article (و) "*waaw al-maḥiya*" is always translated into "along," ["and," or "with"] in English. It may be rendered differently in other

languages. The three examples from Wright explain this difference in translation.

- Zaid went along the road. - مشى زيدٌ والطريق.
- Water and wood are equal. - إستوى الماءُ والخشبة.
- I went together with him. - سرتُ وإياه.

According to Haywood's and Nahmad's (1962: 397) interpretations of the accusative, it can be used as a comparatively rare construction that means "with" or "by" or "during".

- I travelled along the Nile. - سرتُ والنيل.
- I travelled during the night. - سافرتُ والليل.
- Zaid travelled along with his brother. - سافرَ زيدٌ وأخاه.

The three examples show that the accusative has moved to the position of prepositional phrase. This movement is ascribed to the lack of *almafaʿulu maʿahu* in the TL.

Ryding (2005: 409) argues that when the wa (و) is used as the *waaw al-maʿiya* "the waaw of accompaniment"; it requires the following noun to be in the accusative case [*almafaʿulu maʿahu*].

- Ali walked along the mountain. - سارَ عليٌّ والجبل.

Thatcher (2003: 281) states that *almafaʿulu maʿahu* occurs after the conjunction (و) when the latter means "with".

- Zaid came with his brother. - جاءَ زيدٌ وأخاه.

As for Schulz (2008: 160), he has just mentioned *almafɛulu maɛahu* as an accusative after (و) *waaw al-maɛiya*.

- I walked in the night. سرْتُ وَاللَّيْلِ.

3. 4. *Almafɛulu fiihi:*

Almafʿulu fihi is translated into the accusative of time and place in Wright's view. It is interpreted as "that in which the act is done." (Wright, Vol. II, 1981: 112)

- I sat down in the house. . جَلَسْتُ فِي الدَّارِ.

The example shows that *almafɛɬulu fiihi* shares the prepositional phrase in the TL the semantic meaning in spite of the difference in their syntactic forms.

Haywood and Nahmad (1962: 393) render *almaḡulu fihi* as an adverbially for time and place.

- I stayed with them a whole year. . لَبِثْتُ عَنْدهُمْ سَنَةً كَامِلَةً.
- I awoke in the morning. . تَبَهَّأْتُ صَبَاحًا.
- He looked right and left. . التَفَتَ يَمِينًا وَشِمَالًا.

They argue that such accusative may be replaced by prepositional phrases, often with *fii* (في), hence the grammatical term *almafʿulu fiihi*.

- He arose at dawn. - قَامَ عِنْدَ الْفَجْرِ.

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------|
| - In the morning. | . صباحاً . |
| - Every day. | . كلَّ يوم . |
| - (At, on) the right. | . يميناً . |
| - In the East. | . شرقاً . |
| - In the West. | . غرباً . |

3. 5. *Almafʿulu liʾajlihi*:

As for *almafʿulu liʾajlihi*, Wright (Vol. II, 1981: 122) interprets it as "that on account of which something is done," and it must be a mental or intellectual nomen verb. It moves to the position and function of complement in the TL.

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|--|------------------------|
| - Zaid streamed <u>with perspiration</u> . | . تصبَّب زيدٌ عرقاً . |
| - I planted the land <u>with trees</u> . | . غرستُ الأرضَ شجراً . |
| - I raised the chief <u>in dignity</u> . | . رفعتُ الشيخَ قدراً . |

On the other hand, Haywood and Nahmad (1962: 394) argue that the accusative expresses aim or purpose, *almafʿulu liʾajlihi* / *lahu* by a verbal noun in the accusative.

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|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| - I rose <u>to honour</u> him. | . قمتُ إكراماً له . |
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In this example, *almafʿulu liʾajlihi* / *lahu* moved to the position of prepositional phrase.

In Ryding's study (2005: 296), it is rendered into an adverbial accusative of reason. She interprets *almafʿulu liʾajlihi* as a verbal

indefinite noun in the accusative case that signifies the motive, reason, or purpose of the action.

.شهدت مختلف المدن إضراباً واسعاً تضامناً مع العمال.

- Various cities witnessed a widespread strike in solidarity with workers.

.ألقوات تشن حملةً بِحِثٍّ عن أسلحة.

- The forces are launching a campaign searching for weapons.

Thatcher (2003: 280) interprets *almafaʿulu liʔajlihi / lahu* as the determination of the aim or purpose.

- I rose to honour him. . قمتُ إكراماً له.

As for Schulz (2008: 153), he identifies it as an adverbial qualification of purpose. It expresses a certain purpose or situation.

- I left the university to work. . - تركت الجامعة رغبةً في العمل. حضرْتُ الدرسَ تعبيراً عن شكري.

- I attended the lecture to express my thanks.

Schulz' interpretation of *almafaʿulu liʔajlihi / lahu* as an adverbial qualification of purpose shows a process of intermixing the significations of *almafaʿul fihi* and *almafaʿul liʔajlihi* in one term in the TL.

Conclusion:

After tackling the translation and interpretation of Arabic *almafaʿil* into English as well as analyzing the renderings of some scholars in the field, the researcher has arrived at the following conclusions:

- All the English translations and interpretations of *almafaʿil* lack a unified terminology of equivalents to *almafaʿil*. Most of them have no suitable equivalents in the English language.
- The translation of *almafaʿil* into English shows movement of the position and function of most of *almafaʿilu* in the TL.
- Certain Western translators' efforts at translating *almafaʿilu* uncover deficiency in understanding the significations of some of *almafaʿil* in Arabic.
- The focus on the original text proves its efficiency in analyzing *almafaʿil*.
- Most of the translations of *almafaʿil* indicate the limited scope of comprehending them and their interrelation with the other grammatical particles.
- There exists correspondence of semantic meaning between *almafaʿulu fiihi* and its rendered form in the TL.

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المستخلص

هذا البحث دراسة وصفية تحليلية لترجمة أنواع المفاعيل من اللغة العربية (اللغة المصدر) الى اللغة الإنكليزية (اللغة الهدف) لدى اللغويين الغربيين حصراً. وتكمن مشكلة البحث في تفسير اللغويين الغربيين لهذه المفاعيل حسب تصوراتهم غير المشتركة لقواعد اللغة العربية. وتفترض الدراسة أن الفروق في الأشكال النحوية في تلك الترجمات يعزى الى افتقار هذه الأشكال الى المكافئات اللغوية في لغة الهدف.

وتفترض الدراسة ايضاً أن تحول المفاعيل في اللغة الهدف يغير من أشكالها ووظائفها. ولتقصي أسباب هذه التغيرات، تم جمع وتحليل عدد من ترجمات اللغويين الغربيين من ثم استخلاص النتائج. لقد تم اعتماد نظرية جولي هاوس (٢٠٠٩) في التفسير منهجاً

لدراسة وتحليل الترجمات. ومن أهم النتائج المستخلصة هي افتقار هذه الترجمات الى
المصطلح الموحد لأنواع المفاعيل في اللغة الهدف.