
*Attributively and Predicatively Used Adjectives in
English Proverbs with Reference to Translation*

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Introduction

In English, adjectives constitute a separate part of speech and are distinguished from nouns in that they are used attributively before the head noun and predicatively after copula. As for the class of adjective in Arabic, it is not a separate part of speech. It is a subclass of the class of nouns. Adjectives enter into two main types of relationship with the class of nouns: attribution and predication.

This paper tackles the problems that a translator encounters when translating some English proverbs which include attributively and predicatively used adjectives. To achieve this aim, eleven English proverbs with their renderings have been chosen from Ba'albaki's (1980). These proverbs with their renderings will be discussed in terms of syntax and translation. Similarities and differences in the usage of the attributively and predicatively used adjectives in English and Arabic will be shown. Then the two types of translation, namely the semantic and the communicative will be applied. The areas of success and failure and the adequate translations will be specified.

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1. Adjectives: a General Perspective:

Scholars do not agree on the definition of adjectives in English. Some of them, for instance, define an adjective as "a word used with a noun or other substantive as a modifier to describe or define it" (House & Harman, 1931: 73).

An adjective may also be defined as "a word that qualifies a noun, adds to its meaning, but limits its application". The noun 'house' can be used to signify any house. 'The big house' tells more about the house, but limits its application; it rules out all 'small houses' (Eckersley & Eckersley, 1960: 64).

Others define the 'adjective' as 'a word which describes or gives more information about a noun or a pronoun. It describes nouns in terms of such qualities as size, colour, number and kind' (See for example Feder, 2002: 1, cited in Al-Ashoor, 2004: 9)

2. Types of Adjectives in English:

Adjectives of quality in English can be divided functionally into the following types:

2.1 Attributively used Adjectives:

An 'adjective' can pre-modify a noun appearing between the determiner and the head noun of a noun phrase as in 'a beautiful painting' 'the round table' (Thomson & Martinet, 1960: 33).

Attributive adjectives usually modify common nouns as in:

It had been his favourite toy.

They can also modify proper places as in 'Ancient Mesopotamia'.

They can also modify personal pronouns, but generally rarely, as in '...not like poor me' (Biber et al., 2002: 199).

The 'attribute' or 'pre-nominal' position is the most important position for the English adjectives. Although many adjectives can appear in both positions, i.e. attributive and predicative, certain ones called 'reference adjectives' must occur either attributively or predicatively.

Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman believe that certain types of adjectives occur exclusively in attributive position:

- i) Those adjectives which show that the reference of the head has been determined as in: "The same man I was seeking."
- ii) Those adjectives that show us the importance of rank of the head noun as 'main', 'chief', 'principal', 'sheer', 'utter' ...etc. as in:

(1) Their main fault is supporting the invaders.

(2) This is utter nonsense.

- i) Those adjectives which show that the head noun is recognized by law or customs as 'the true heir'.
- ii) Those adjectives that identify the reference of the noun itself, that is they tell us, in part, what the noun means – and not occur after the copula 'be' as 'a medical doctor' 'a reserve officer'.
- iii) Those adjectives that qualify the time reference of the noun as 'the future king'.
- iv) Those adjectives that qualify the geographical reference of the noun as 'the urban crises' 'a rural mail carrier'.

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v) Those adjectives which show the uniqueness of the head noun as 'the sole survivor' 'the only nominee'.

vi) Those adjectives that intensify or emphasize the head noun as in: 'a total stranger' 'utter nonsense'

(Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999: 382)

Attributively used adjectives that directly precede nouns have more permanent characteristics than the post nominal adjectives that directly follow nouns, which tend to reflect temporary states or specific events. Consider the following examples: 'the guilty people' (a characteristic, classifying modifier of the people), 'the people guilty' (the people described in terms of one act/event) (Biber et al, 1999: 510).

2.2 Predicatively Used Adjectives:

Predicatively used adjectives are restricted to the position after the copula and enter into intensification relation with the head. They occur with two syntactic roles: subject predicative and object predicative (see Downing and Locke, 2002: 518).

2.2.1 Subject Predicatives:

Subject predicatives occur as subject complements after a subject verb. They characterize a nominal expression which occurs in subject position as in the examples below:

It would be easier, quicker and cheaper.

(Downing & Locke, 2002: 518)

2.2.2 Object Predicatives:

Object predicatives occur with complex transitive verbs, following the direct object. They characterize the object as in the following example:

I said you've got all your priorities wrong.

(Downing & Locke, 2002: 518)

3. Adjectives in Arabic:

Words in Arabic have been traditionally classified into three classes: nouns, verbs, and particles. Adjectives are not morphologically distinguishable from nouns. In their syntactic function, they are said to be 'توابع' 'followers of the noun'. So, an adjective in Arabic is defined as 'a word which qualifies the noun preceding it and agrees with it in case, gender, number, and definiteness or indefiniteness' (Wright, 1971: 272).

Arabic adjectives are mainly derived from verbs and nouns. The most common adjectives derived from verbs are of the following forms:

فاعل as: صابر، تابع، جاهل...الخ.

فعليل as: سعيد، حميد، كبير...الخ.

فعول as: كسول، حقود...الخ.

فعالان as: خجلان، غضبان...الخ.

أفعل / فعلاء as: أحمر/حمراء، أخضر/خضراء.

Adjectives derived from nouns are formed by adding the suffix 'ي', termed (النسبة) or (ياء النسب) to the noun as: عقلي، رمزي، نفسي...etc.

Adjectives in Arabic can be used attributively and predicatively.

3.1 Attributively Used Adjectives in Arabic:

Attributively used adjectives postmodify the noun head with which they agree in case, gender, number, and definiteness or indefiniteness:

ولد ذكي، ولدان ذكيان، أولاد أذكىء، الولد الذكي، الولدان الذكيان، الأولاد
الأذكىء.
بنت ذكية، بنتان ذكيتان، بنات ذكيات، البنت الذكية، البنات الذكيتان، البنات
الذكيات.

Khalil (1999) believes that attributively used adjectives are of two types: *حقيقي* 'direct' and *سببي* 'indirect':

- (1) رجل حسن 'a good man': *'حقيقي* 'direct'
(2) رجل حسن أبوه 'a man whose father is good': *'سببي* 'indirect'

The indirect adjective agrees with the head noun in case and definiteness and with the noun it premodifies in gender:

- (1) رجل محترم أبوه 'a man whose father is respectable'
(2) ولد جميلة أمه 'a boy whose mother is pretty'

(Khalil, 1999: 163-4)

Syntactically, these adjectives modify the head noun directly. There is, however, another construction in which the adjective is related indirectly to the preceding head and directly with the following noun:

- (3) جل طويل القامة (A man tall in regard to his stature came: a tall man came).

The adjective 'طويل' in (3) is indirectly connected with (رجل), but directly with (القامة). In this construction, the adjective agrees with the preceding noun in definiteness and case only. The number of the adjective is usually singular:

(4) وكان رجلا طويل القامة (He was a tall man)

(5) رأيت الرجل الحسن وجهه (I saw the handsome man)

(Aziz, 1989: 166)

3.2 Predicatively Used Adjectives in Arabic:

This type of adjectives is usually indefinite. It is predicated of a definite noun in a nominal sentence. Both parts of the sentence are placed in the subjective (nominative case).

(1) الكتاب ثمين (The book is valuable)

The first part of the sentence (الكتاب) is called (المبتدأ) (subject), and the second part (ثمين) is called (الخبر) (predicate). The adjective may occur, as well as the subject, as definite, in which case a separable pronoun (ضمير منفصل) must be placed between the two parts of the sentence:

(2) زيد هو الصادق 'The man who is truthful is Zayd'

In all other respects, the predicatively used adjective agrees with the noun of which it is predicated (i.e. in gender: الولد ذكيا/البنات ذكيات and in number: الولدان ذكيان/الأولاد أذكىاء (Aziz, 1989: 167-8).

4. Comparison of Adjectives in English and in Arabic:

Adjective class in English is an independent part of speech. In Arabic; however, adjective class is not an independent part of speech. It is a subdivision of 'noun class'. In English, adjectives include a wide range of items, whereas in Arabic, adjectives occupy a narrow area.

In English, an attributively used adjective precedes its head noun. It may be definite or indefinite. However, in

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Arabic, if the head noun is defined by the definite article 'ال', the adjective must be defined also. But, if the head noun is indefinite, the adjective must be indefinite also, because if the adjective is defined by 'ال', the adjective will be predicative not attributive.

5. Proverbs:

Proverbs are linguistic items which are strictly speaking culture bound. They pose serious problems for English-Arabic translators. They are cultural institutions in the sense that they carry special culturally based messages that foreigners would not understand (Makkai, 1977: 87).

A literal translation of SL proverbs into TL proverbs may cause cultural shock because they are rooted in two different cultures. The translation of proverbs is difficult because they contain metaphors and images which are meaningful only in the context of their culture for they are closely related to the experience of people (Nida, 1964: 219). Consequently, a proverb which is well understood in one culture may have a different meaning in the TL culture if it is translated literally (Nida & Taber, 1974: 88). So, a translator must be well-familiarized with proverbs in both cultures and should be aware of the similarities and differences that arise from the process of translation. With regard to translating proverbs into Arabic, there are three types of proverbs in English:

a) Equivalent corresponding proverbs:

The proverbs of this group have equivalent corresponding Arabic proverbs. They involve similar images

and lexical items. They involve no problem for the translator (see our data analysis SL texts 2 and 10).

b) Equivalent non-corresponding proverbs:

These proverbs do not involve similar images or lexical items but they are interchangeable in situations (see SL texts 1 and 7).

c) The third group of English proverbs are those which have no equivalent Arabic proverbs. They involve a problem in translation. As a result, one should use all available instruments for finding the closest equivalence for them, particularly cultural equivalences (see text 11).

It is preferable to substitute English proverbs by Arabic proverbs that can serve the same function. Literal translation in such a case often leads to collocational abnormal Arabic expressions.

Data Analysis and Translation:

The data are English proverbs chosen from Ba'labaki's (1980). They have been translated according to two methods of translation, semantic and communicative. After the data analysis the problems arising from these two methods will be discussed.

SLT 1:

"A burnt child dreads the fire."

TLTs:

Semantic Trans.: 1- الطفل المكتوي بالنار يخاف النار.

Communicative Trans.: 2- من نهشته الحية حذر الرسن الأبلق.

Discussion:

This text includes an attributively used adjective, 'burnt', which precedes its head noun 'child'. The noun phrase

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consisting of the adjective and the head noun is preceded by the indefinite article 'a'.

Looking at the renderings, one can see that TLT 1 results from applying the semantic method. The adjective 'المكتوي' 'burnt' follows its head noun 'الطفل' 'child'. The adjective and the head noun are both defined by the definite article 'ال'.

As for TLT 2, it is a communicative rendering. It can be noted that the form is totally different from the SLT. It contains no adjective. However, its effect is considered to be as that of the SLT.

SLT 2:

"A drowning man will clutch at a straw."

TLTs:

Semantic Trans.:

1- الغريق يتعلق بقشة.

Communicative Trans.:

2- الغريق يتعلق بحبال الهواء.

Discussion:

This text means that if some body faces a serious problem, or if he falls in a serious dilemma, he will try to save himself even by the smallest insignificant means. It includes a present participle form 'drowning' functioning as an adjective.

Looking at TLT 1, one can find that the adjective 'الغريق' functions as a subject. It is a hyperbolic type of the form 'فعليل' which means 'the drowning man'. The translation is a semantic method, but it has got the same effect as that of the SLT.

As for TLT 2, the same word, 'الغريق' has been used, but instead of 'قشة' the expression 'حبال الهواء' 'air ropes' has been used which do not exist in the world of reality. The

communicative method is adopted in this text. It has the same force as that of the SLT.

SLT 3:

"A guilty conscience needs no accuser"

TLTs:

1- الضمير الشاعر بالإثم في غير ما حاجة إلى متهم.

2 - كاد المريب أن يقول خذوني.

Discussion:

This text includes an attributive adjective 'guilty' preceded by the indefinite article 'a' and it involves ellipsis. It tries to say 'the owner of a guilty conscience'. It means that the signs of crime appear clearly on the guilty man. Thus, he needs nobody to accuse him.

Looking at the renderings, we notice that TLT 1 has used the present participle 'الشاعر' as an attributively used adjective. The adjective and its head noun are both defined by the definite article 'ال'. TLT 1 has used the semantic method of translation as it attempts to preserve the form rather than the effect of the text. It has failed to convey the same force as that of the SLT. TLT 2 has followed the communicative method of translation as it exists as a proverb in Arabic. Its form is totally different from that of the SLT. However, it is believed that it conveys the same effect as that of the SLT.

SLT 4:

"A hungry man is angry man"

TLTs:

1- الرجل الجوعان رجل غضبان.

2 - كاد الفقر أن يكون كفرا.

Discussion:

This text describes the state of a hungry man. It depicts the negative effect of hunger on a man. It includes two attributively used adjectives; 'hungry' and 'angry'. The first NP: 'hungry man' is preceded by the indefinite article 'a', whereas the second NP 'angry man' is zero reference.

Taking the two renderings, one can notice that TLT 1 is a semantic translation. It preserves the form and the content of the SLT. It contains two attributively used adjectives, 'الجوعان' and 'غضبان'. In the first NP, the adjective and its head noun are both defined by the definite article 'ال', whereas the adjective غضبانٌ and its head noun رجلٌ in the second NP are both indefinite as they contain 'nunation'. It is worth noting that this rendering is unable to convey the effect of the SLT.

As for TLT 2, it is a communicative rendering. It contains no adjective. It can be said that it could convey the same effect of the SLT. It uses cultural specificity by using the word "كفرا".

SLT 5:

"Absence makes the heart grow fonder."

TLTs:

Semantic Trans.: 1- البعد يزيد القلب ولو عا.

Communicative Trans.: 2 - الهوى من النوى.

Discussion:

This text depicts the state of a heart when the lover is absent. It contains a predicatively used adjective 'fonder' in the form of comparative. It follows the verb 'grow'.

Looking at the renderings, one can see that TLT 1 includes no adjective. It is a semantic translation. It tries to

preserve the form of the text, but it fails to keep the effect of the SLT. TLT 2, on the other hand is communicative translation. Its form is quite different from that of the SLT, but it has got a beautiful image for the relation between love and absence. Thus, it could be considered adequate translation.

SLT 6:

"All is well that ends well"

TLTs:

Semantic Trans.

1- كل الأمور خير إذا انتهت على خير.

Communicative Trans.:

2 - خير الأمور احمدها مغبة.

Discussion:

This text contains a predicatively used adjective: 'well' following a copula. It means that one's affairs are considered to be good if he achieves all his aims and purposes successfully.

TLT 1 is a semantic translation. It preserves the form of the SLT. However, the effect is not as that of the SLT. It follows the SLT by repeating the word 'خير'. Therefore it results in an awkward translation, although it has used a predicative adjective 'خير'.

TLT 2 contains a predicatively used adjective, 'احمد', of the elative form.

Adopting the communicative method of translation, it has succeeded in conveying the force of the message.

SLT 7:

"Fair words butter no parsnip"

TLTs:

Semantic Trans.:

1- الكلام المعسول لا يطهو الجزر الأبيض.

Communicative Trans.:

2 - كلام كالعسل وفعل كالأسل.

Discussion:

This text means that the words may not be truthful unless they are approved by actions. It reminds of the English saying "Actions speak louder than words". The text includes an attributively used adjective, 'fair' which precedes its head noun, 'words'.

Looking at the TLTs, one can see that TLT 1 adopts the semantic method of translation. It includes an attributive adjective, 'المعسول' which follows its head noun, 'الكلام'. The adjective and its head noun are both defined by the definite article 'ال'. Although it is not familiar in the TL culture, it is believed that it has conveyed an effect as that of the SLT.

As for TLT 2, it can be said that it adopts the communicative approach to translation. It is an Arabic saying. It conveys to the TL receiver the same effect of SLT on its receivers, although it contains no adjective. It consists of two clauses, each of which includes a simile. So, it is believed to be a quite adequate translation.

SLT 8:

"Forbidden fruit is sweet"

TLTs:

Semantic Trans.: 1- الثمرة المحرمة حلوة.

Communicative Trans.: 2 - أحب شيء إلى الإنسان ما منعاً.

Discussion:

This text includes the attributively used adjective forbidden. Both of the adjective and its noun head have neither definite nor indefinite article. The text includes, also, a predicatively used adjective, 'sweet' following the auxiliary

verb 'is'. The text denotes that a human being always likes the things which he is forbidden to have.

Examining the renderings, one can note that TLT 1 adopts the semantic method of translation. It preserves the form of the SLT using two adjectives. The first one is the attributively used adjective 'المحرمة' which follows its head noun 'الثمرة'. The head noun and its adjectives are both defined by the definite article 'ال'. The second adjective 'حلو' is an indefinite predicatively used adjective. The translation could not convey the same force as that of the SLT.

As for TLT 2, it has used the predicatively used adjective 'أحب' of the elative form, 'افعل'. The text is a second hemistich of an Arabic verse. It manages to convey the force of the message successfully. It is a quite adequate translation.

SLT 9:

“Hope deferred makes the heart sick”

TLTs:

Semantic Trans.:

1- الأمل المرجأ يمرض القلب.

Communicative Trans.:

2 - أعلل النفس بالآمال ارقبها ما أضيقت العيش لولا فسحة الأمل

Discussion:

This text contains two adjectives. The first one, 'deferred', is a reduced relative clause, attributively used one, but it does not precede its head noun 'hope', it follows it, just like the case in Arabic. This point must be taken into consideration by translators. The second adjective is 'sick' which is a predicatively used one. It follows the verb 'makes'. The text means that charity must be done at once without delay, otherwise it will make the person sick.

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The TLT1 has adopted the semantic method of translation. It contains an attributive adjective; 'المرجأ'. The adjective and the head noun 'الأمل' are defined by the definite article 'ال'. The text preserves the form of the SLT.

As for TLT 2, it is a verse of poetry. But it is believed that the meaning of the this text is the opposite of the SLT. The meaning here is that life is unhappy without hope, which may be deferred. The most adequate Arabic equivalent for this text is the saying of prophet Mohammed (PBUH): "خير البر عاجله".

SLT 10:

"Love is blind"

TLTs:

Semantic Trans.:

1- الحب أعمى

Communicative Trans.:

2- وعين الرضا عن كل عيب كليلة ولكن عين السخط تبدي المساويا.

Discussion:

This text means that a lover can see the advantages of his/her beloved. He/she believes that the beloved has no disadvantages. It contains a predicatively used adjective, 'blind', which follows the auxiliary verb 'is'.

Looking at the renderings, we can see that TLT 1 adopts the semantic method of translation. It preserves the form of the SLT and contains the predicatively used adjective 'أعمى'. It is indefinite, whereas its head noun 'الحب' is defined by the definite article 'ال'. It is believed that TLT 1 conveys the effect of the SLT.

As for TLT 2, it adopts the communicative method of translation. The text contains the predicatively used adjective

'كليلة'. It is indefinite, whereas its head noun 'عين' is defined by adding the genitive 'الرضا'. TLT 2 conveys the force of the SLT successfully. In Arabic there are many sayings which could be considered as adequate equivalents of this SLT such as 'الحب يعمي ويصم' and 'الهوى شريك العمى'. It is worth noting that the famous Arab poet 'Michael Na'eema' believes that there is unjustifiable exaggeration in this proverb, but love, as he believes, is one eyed not blind (Ba'albaki, 1980: 62).

SLT 11:

"Talk of the devil, and he is sure to appear"

TLTs:

Semantic Trans.: 1- تحدث عن الشيطان يسارع إلى اطلاع رأسه.

Communicative Trans.: 2- ابن الحلال يأتي عند ذكره.

Discussion:

Sometimes one talks about an absent person, but suddenly and unexpectedly that person appears.

The text includes a predicatively used adjective 'sure' following the verb to be 'is'

As for the Arabic renderings, one can see that TLT1 has no adjective, neither does TLT2. Besides, TLT1 has used the literal method of translation which has no effect or force as that of the SL text. As for TLT2, it seems that it has used the literary method of translation to get the same effect as that of the SL text. It is considered an adequate translation.

This English proverb and other similar ones have no equivalent corresponding Arabic proverb. Such proverbs are considered the most problematic area in translating English proverbs into Arabic; therefore, a translator must seek a cultural equivalent.

Conclusions:

The following points can be concluded from this paper:

1. There is no one-to-one correspondence between English and Arabic proverbs involving attributively and predicatively used adjectives due to formal and cultural differences.
2. In both languages, English and Arabic, adjectives may enter into two main types of relationship with the head noun: 'attribution and predication'.
3. Attributively used adjective in English often precedes its head noun in the noun phrase, while in Arabic it often follows its head noun.
4. In English, the attributively used adjective does not agree with its head noun. It has no number contrast and no case inflection. In Arabic, it agrees with its head noun in definiteness, number, gender and case.
5. Predicatively used adjective in English occurs after copula. It does not agree with the noun it modifies. In Arabic, however, predicatively used adjective agrees with its noun in gender, number, and case, but it is always 'indefinite'.

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النعوت الملاصقة والنعوت الخبرية في الأمثال الإنكليزية

بالإشارة إلى الترجمة

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الملخص

تشكل الصفة قسما مستقلا من أقسام الكلام في اللغة الانكليزية. وتقسم من حيث الوظيفة إلى قسمين: "نعت ملاصق" 'attributive adjective' و"نعت خبري" 'predicative adjective'. وفي الحالة الأولى تقوم الصفة بوصف الاسم وتأتي قبله أو تسبقه في الموقع، وتقع بينه وبين "المحدد" determiner ويطلق عليها "الصفة المستخدمة نعتا ملاصقا" the attributively used adjective. أما في الحالة الثانية فتأتي بعد فعل رابط copula وتسمى في هذه الحالة "الصفة المستخدمة نعتا خبريا" the predicatively used adjective.

أما في اللغة العربية فان الصفة ليست قسما مستقلا من أقسام الكلام وإنما تعد جزءاً من "الاسم" ولتمييزها عن الاسم يطلق عليها النحويون العرب مصطلح "اسم صفة"، أما الاسم فيطلقون عليه "اسم غير صفة". وتقوم الصفة بوظيفة وصف الاسم في حالتين الأولى: "النعت الملاصق" attributive adjective وتأتي عادةً بعد الاسم الموصوف وتتنطبق معه في العدد والجنس والتعريف. أما الحالة الثانية فهي حالة "النعت الخبري" predicative adjective وتأتي في هذه الحالة في موقع الخبر وتتنطبق مع موصوفها في العدد والجنس وتختلف عنه في التعريف حيث تأتي مجردة من "ال" التعريف.*

* قسم الترجمة/ كلية الآداب/ جامعة الموصل.

* Concerning the Arabic meanings of these terms, Al-Khuli (1980) has been consulted.

Al-Khuli, M.A. (1980) A Dictionary of Theoretical Linguistics. Beirut: Librairie Du Liban.

**Attributively and Predicatively Used Adjectives in English Proverbs
with Reference to Translation** **Mohammad Tahir Sattam**

يتناول هذا البحث المشكلات التي يواجهها المترجم عند ترجمة النصوص المحتوية على "الصفة" من اللغة الانكليزية إلى اللغة العربية. وقد تم اختيار عشرة نصوص من كتاب "بعلبكي 1980" وهي عبارة عن أمثال انكليزية مع ترجماتها. ثم جرت مناقشة تلك الترجمات مع التركيز على الطريقة التي تمت بها ترجمة تلك النصوص إلى نوعين من الترجمات هما الترجمة الدلالية والترجمة التواصلية، مع بيان الطريقة الأنسب والأفضل لترجمة مثل تلك النصوص.