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Translation Strategies and Cultural Adaptation In the Arabic Translation of English Sports Texts: A Comparative Analysis

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Abstract

Sports language is considered one of the most complex and dynamic areas within translation studies, as it encompasses unique terminology, culturally specific activities, and distinct linguistic elements that vary across the two languages: English and Arabic. This study investigates the translation of English sports texts into Arabic, focusing on the challenges and variances that arise in rendering such texts accurately for Arabic-speaking audiences. Five sports texts, each signifying a different sport, were selected, and ten graduate-level translators were tasked with translating these texts into Arabic. The researcher developed an eclectic model grounded in Variational Translation Theory (VTT) to systematically analyze the translated texts in the target language. The study hypothesizes that many graduate translators are likely to misuse VTT tools in translating English sports texts into Arabic. The analysis results support this hypothesis, revealing that a significant proportion of the translators scuffled to apply VTT tools accurately, underscoring the challenges in attaining effective and culturally nuanced translations in the field of sports.

Keywords: Sport terms, variational translation theory, graduate translators, translation analysis

1. Definition of the Language of Sport

The language of sport is described as follows: "The language of sport has existed since antiquity. The names of ancient sports, their descriptions, and reflections on them have been preserved in classical texts. Since time immemorial, the language of sport has been a rich area of specialized linguistic communication" (Liporiski, 2009, p. 25).

1.1. The Sport Genre

Sport is defined as one of the most dominant genres in the media industry, resulting from the development of the sports industry. In other words, the sport genre is divided into many sub-genres, including Sport News, Commentary, Journalistic, Sportsmen, and Fans genres (Taborek, 2012, p. 239ff). It is worth noting that each aforementioned sub-genre is further subdivided into additional sub-sub-genres, such as:

1.1.1. The Sub-genre of Sport Games:

The researcher will cover the following sub-genres in the practical part of the paper (see 5. below):

- The sport sub-genre of Boxing
- The sport sub-genre of Baseball
- The sport sub-genre of Basketball
- The sport sub-genre of Football
- The sport sub-genre of Ice Hockey
- The sport sub-genre of Running

1.1.2. The Sport Sub-genre of Journalism

The samples for analysis are taken from the following sources (see 6. below):

- The sport genre of Newspapers and Media
- The sport genre of Magazines
- The sport sub-genre of Sport News Reports

1.2. The Importance of Terminology in the Language of Sport

Terminology is considered the foundation of the sport genre because it is the essential element that enables readers, translators, experts, and even laypeople to differentiate between the sub-genres (Beard, 2003, p. 99ff).

1.3. Characteristics of Sports Genres

According to the researcher, sports genres have several defining characteristics, highlighted as follows:

1. **Informativity:** The sports text (written or spoken) aims to provide its audience with information, as in sport news reports and newspaper articles.

2. **Multimodality:** Whether written or spoken, sports texts are often supported by illustrations to help the audience understand the main theme, as seen in football matches with news commentary. This involves auditory and visual semiotic systems.
3. **Productivity:** Terminology in the sports genre is highly productive due to linguistic and technological developments. An example is the introduction of the term "VAR" (Video Assistant Referee), a technology implemented in the 2018 World Cup in Russia.

2. What is Translation?

Translation is defined as the process and product of rendering a text, from one word to an entire book, from one human language into another with a resemblance to the source language representation in the target version (Colina, 2015, p. 12).

2.1 The Components of Translation

It consists of three important components:

1. **Process:** How the translation is carried out by the translator—in other words, what strategies the translator employs throughout the translation process.
2. **Product:** The translated text produced by the process.
3. **Function:** Whether the translated text functions similarly to the source version (Ibid).

2.2 The Special Resemblance to the Source Version

"Perfect equivalence is unattainable due to linguistic and cultural differences between languages. Therefore, there could be partial equivalence, not perfect" (Ibid, p. 16ff).

2.3. Types of Equivalence

Since perfect equivalence is impossible to achieve, translators must work towards a specific type of equivalence when rendering text from one language to another. The main types of equivalence are as follows:

1. **Semantic Equivalence:** Focuses on meaning.
2. **Pragmatic Equivalence:** Focuses on effect.
3. **Functional Equivalence:** Focuses on function.

The most frequently employed among these is functional equivalence, as it aims to translate the function of the source text in a way that aligns with the target text's purpose. Function includes extralinguistic aspects surrounding the text, such as time, place, motive, audience, and purpose.

3. Text Types

Katharina Reiss presented a theory of text types relevant to translation, outlined as follows:

1. **Informative Text and Translation:** Here, the translator focuses on the content of the text (content-focused translation), as the target readers are primarily seeking information. This type is applied to legal and scientific texts.
2. **Expressive Text and Translation:** The translator concentrates on aesthetic effects and figurative devices in the source text to convey its artistic form for the target audience's enjoyment. This is known as form-focused translation and applies to literary texts such as poetry, prose, short stories, novels, and plays (1989, p. 105ff).
3. **Vocative Text Type:** In this type, the translator uses persuasive devices to convince readers to believe in something, take action, or buy products. Known as appeal-focused text, this type is often used in advertisements.
4. **Info-Express Text Types:** The researcher introduces this fourth category, which combines informative and expressive elements, making it challenging to translate. Defined as form-content focused text, it is best applied to journalistic and religious texts (Ibid).

4. Written Translation and its Text Types

Written translation involves translating a written text from one language into another. The main types are as follows:

1. **Legal Translation:** This type focuses on legal terminology, with repetition and non-standard grammar sometimes used to convey directives. It aims to inform the audience about legal matters or instruct them to take action.
2. **Literary Translation:** Deals with literary language, where figurative devices are emphasized, often involving high degrees of deviation from ordinary language to reflect cultural differences. Here, readers seek the literary essence of the text (Yasmine and Houria, 2020, p. 4).
3. **Sport Translation:** Combines linguistic and extra-linguistic elements, including nicknames, idioms, slang, and coded language. The translator must consider the target audience's views to avoid misunderstandings.

4. **Religious Translation:** Comprises a range of sub-texts, including teachings, rituals, rules, and scientific works. Translators must rely on both the text and commentaries for a comprehensive understanding before translating.
5. **Journalistic or Media Translation:** Involves a mix of simple and figurative language. Translators often translate the headline last to capture the text's theme fully.
6. **Cultural Translation:** Known as the most complex type, it is connected to all translation types due to the interplay between language and culture. Translators focus on cultural differences and may use footnotes or multiple strategies to bridge gaps between the languages.
7. **Technical and Scientific Translation:** This type relies heavily on precise terminology. Readers seek information without extraneous detail, so translators must select terms carefully to avoid misunderstandings (Ibid, p. 6).

5. The Translation Analysis of English Sport Terms into Arabic

Since English and Arabic belong to different language families—the former being a Germanic language and the latter Semitic—there are significant cultural and linguistic differences between them. These differences are also apparent in the language of sports between these language pairs.

5.1. Sport Term Unavailability in the Target Language

It is worth noting that some sports commonly found in Western countries, such as the United States, do not exist or are unfamiliar in parts of the Middle East, such as Iraq. For instance, cricket is widely played and followed in the West but is largely unfamiliar in Iraq. This lack of familiarity can present challenges for translators who are tasked with rendering such terms from English to Arabic.

5.2. Misuse of Certain Terms by English Sport Writers

The researcher observes that many translators, particularly recent graduates, may struggle to interpret texts that include unfamiliar terms, especially when these terms deviate from their usual meanings. For example, an editor might use a military term within a sports text to grab the attention of English-speaking readers, creating potential confusion for the translator. In cases where the translator lacks an understanding of the context, they may translate the term literally into Arabic, leading to misunderstandings among Arabic readers.

For instance, if the word "pilot" is used to mean "trainer" or "coach" in a sports context, a literal translation into Arabic as "طيار" (meaning "pilot," as in

someone who flies a plane) would be incorrect. The solution to this issue lies in understanding the situational context, allowing the translator to render the term accurately within the target language context.

5.3. The Use of a Single Term to Represent Another Term in the Target Language

Some translators assume that every English term has either a single equivalent term in Arabic or no equivalent at all, and they may feel constrained by this perception. For instance, the term "cycling" is translated as "دراجات هوائية" in Arabic. Some translators might shorten this to "دراجات," assuming this word alone would be clear to readers. However, "دراجات" (meaning "bikes") could imply either a bicycle (دراجة هوائية) or a motorcycle (دراجة نارية), leading to potential ambiguity for the reader.

To avoid confusion, the translator should include the additional word "هوائية" to specify "bicycle" and thereby ensure clarity for the target audience. This additional precision helps bridge the meaning gap effectively and makes the translation clear and accurate.

6. Data Collection

The researcher collected five different sports texts from five distinct websites, each containing specific sports terms (primarily names of various sports games). These samples were then sent to ten undergraduate students (4th year students) from Al-Iraqia University, College of Arts, Department of Translation and Mustansiriyah University, College of Arts, Department of English in the academic year 2023-2024 to evaluate their ability to accurately render the terms into Arabic. Below are the sports terms that the researcher will assess in the translations provided by the ten graduate translators:

1. Badminton

- **English Definition:** "A sport in which two or four people hit a small object that looks like a ball with feathers over a net."
- **Arabic Translation:** تينس الريشة
- **Source:** Cambridge Dictionary (retrieved June 5, 2021)

2. Cycling

- **English Definition:** "The activity of riding a bicycle."
- **Arabic Translation:** ركوب الدراجات
- **Source:** Cambridge Dictionary (retrieved June 5, 2021)

3. Baseball

- **English Definition:** "A game in which two teams try to win points by hitting a ball and running around four fixed points."
- **Arabic Translation:** لعبة البيسبول / كرة القاعدة
- **Source:** Cambridge Dictionary (retrieved June 5, 2021)

4. Gymnastics

- **English Definition:** "A sport in which you do physical exercises on the floor and on different pieces of equipment."
- **Arabic Translation:** جُمباز
- **Source:** Cambridge Dictionary (retrieved June 5, 2021)

5. Cricket

- **English Definition:** "A game in which two teams of eleven people score points by hitting a ball and running between two sets of sticks."
- **Arabic Translation:** لُعبة الكريكت
- **Source:** Cambridge Dictionary (retrieved June 5, 2021)

7. Methodology

The researcher made use of variational translation theory in assessing the Arabic translated sports texts to see what are the tools employed by undergraduate translators whose translations are selected for analysis were acceptable in the target language. So, variation translation is defined as a translation activity where the translator, based on certain needs of target language readers under particular conditions, employs adaptation techniques like: adding, deleting, narrating, condensing, integrating changing into ingesting the original's contents. The researcher aims to see how far these tools are correctly and incorrectly employed by translators in rendering English sport texts into the Arabic language (Huang and Zhang, 2020: P. 103-134).

7.1. Eclectic model of translation analysis of English sport texts into Arabic

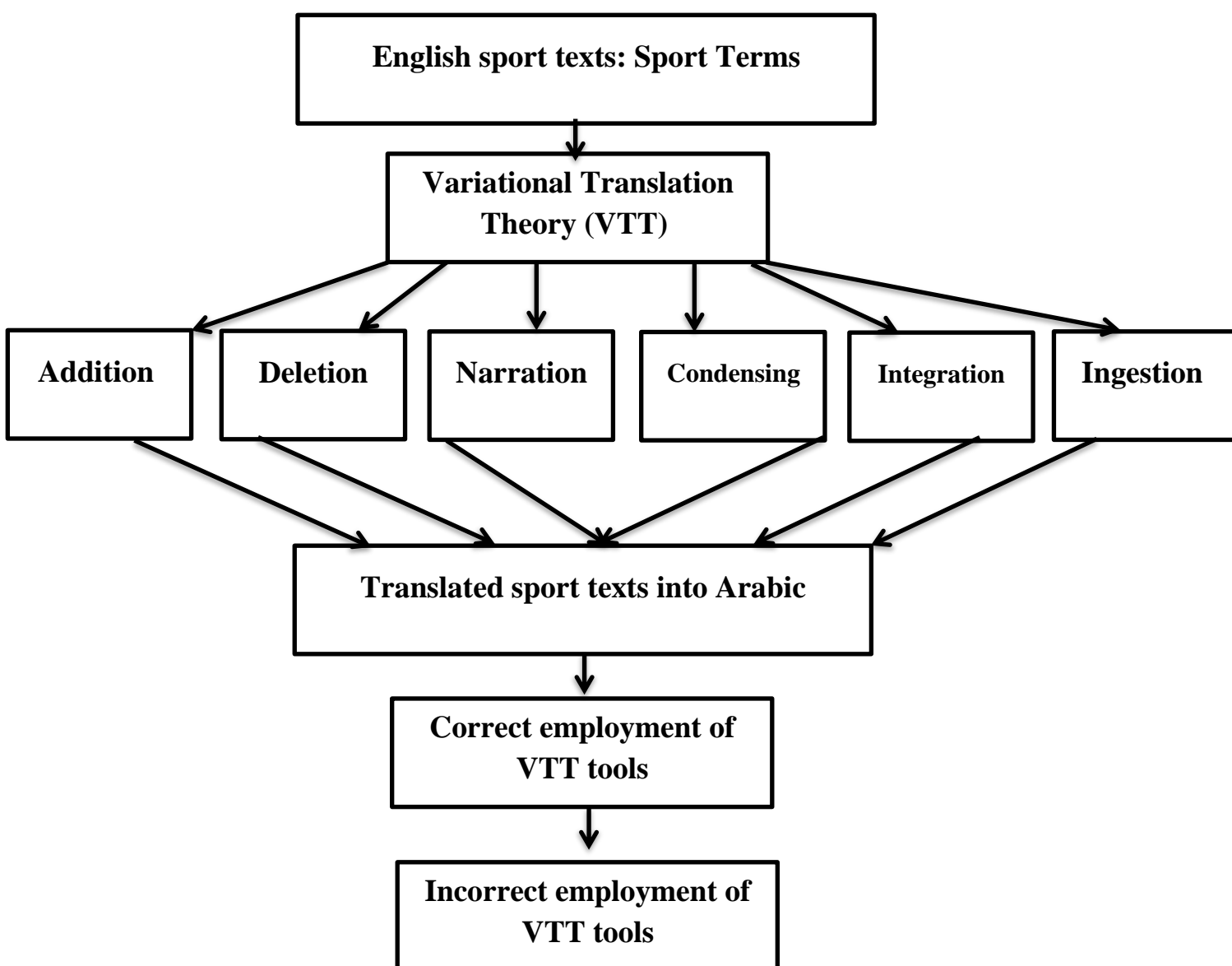


Figure (7.1.) eclectic model of translation analysis of the Arabic translations of English sport terms with the employment of VTT

8. Translation analysis of English sport texts into Arabic

Data Analysis

The current section is concerned with the translation analysis of English sport terms found in the body of selected sports text into Arabic rendered by 10 undergraduate students with the employment of the eclectic model of analysis whose main component is variational translation theory VTT.

8.1. More Malaysian Badminton Tested Positive for Covid 19:

1. إصابة أكثر من ثمان لاعبون تنس الريشة ماليزيون بفيروس كوفيد 19
2. فريق تنس الريشة الماليزي يقوم بإجراء المزيد من فحوصات كوفيد 19. والتي بدورها أظهرت نتائجاً إيجابية
3. BAM : اختبار إيجابي لكوفيد ١٩ لأكثر من ثمانية اشخاص في أكاديمية تنس الريشة في ماليزيا
4. ثمانية لاعب كرة ريشة آخرون في ماليزيا أصيبوا بفيروس كورونا المستجد.
5. لعبة الريشة الماليزية تم تجربتها بشكل إيجابي على كوفيد ١٩
6. ثبتت إصابة ثمانية لاعبين آخريين في الاتحاد الدولي لكرة الريشة في ماليزيا بفيروس كورونا.
7. إصابة ثمانية لاعبين آخريين في الاتحاد الدولي لكرة الريشة في ماليزيا بفيروس كورونا.
8. خضع ثمانية من لاعب كرة المضرب الماليزيين لاختبار كوفيد-١٩ وجاءت النتيجة إيجابية.
9. إصابة ثمانية لاعب تنس الريشة بفايروس كورونا المستجد
10. ثبتت إصابة ثمانية لاعبين آخريين في الاتحاد الدولي لكرة الريشة في ماليزيا بفيروس كورونا.

8.1.1. Translation Analysis

All the above-mentioned translators employed addition and some of them used other tools like condensing in one way or another. In other words, some of the additions were correct and other were incorrect. For **badminton** refers (لاعبوا) (تنس الريشة). Some translators made use of addition successfully like adding the following words (فريق تنس الريشة). But the rest of translator incorrectly resorted to addition as in the following choices: (اشخاص في أكاديمية تنس الريشة) (لاعب) and (اشخاص) is incorrect because it refers to anyone in the association of the badminton the right one is (لاعبين). while the

second one employed (كرة المضرب) which means Ping-Pong in back-translation. In other words, it is a wrong translation. Speaking of condensing tool, one translator made use of it in his translation where he condensed it into (لعبة الريشة). It is unclear because there is no reference to the word player which means (لاعبين) in the Arabic version. It is worth noting that 70% of translators correctly used VTT tools and 30% failed to use it correctly.

8.2. Hugh Carthy: Peter Crouch of cycling is part of new Brit pack:

1. هيو كارثي؛ الدراج بيتر كراوج ينضم لعالم النجومية البريطانية
2. هيو كارت: بيتر كراوتش للدراجات الهوائية. هو جزء من المجموعة الجديدة لبريت
3. هوغ كارثي: ان بيتر كراوتش لركوب الدراجات هي جزء من المجموعة البريطانية الجديدة
4. اعلن هيو كارثي عن انضمام راكب الدراجات بيتر كراوتش الى مجموعة بريت الجديدة.
5. هاك كارثي انحنى لركوب الدراجات الذي هيه جزء من نظام بريطانيا الجديد
6. هيو كارثي: الدراج بيتر كراوتش جزء من مجموعة برت الجديدة.
7. هيو كارثي: الدراج بيتر كراوتش جزء من مجموعة برت الجديدة.
8. هيو كارثي راكب الدراجات الهوائية: يمثل بيتر كراوتش لاعب كرة القدم جزءاً مهماً من المجموعة البريطانية الجديدة لرياضة ركوب الدراجات الهوائية.
9. هيو كارثي: بيتر كراوتش _____ جزء من مجموعة برت الجديدة.
10. هيو كارثي : بيتر كراوتش هو إضافة لمجموعة بريت الجديدة لسباق ركوب الدراجات

8.2.1. Translation analysis

Three VTT tools were resorted to by the translators whose translations are presented above, they are as follows: Addition, deletion and condensing. The sport term **cycling** refers to (دراج هوائي). In other words, the athlete who rides bicycles. However, some translators made use of the following phrase (دراجات هوائية) which is described as correct use of addition. While other translators rendered it into the word (دراج) which means that they resorted to condensing and it is not acceptable because it causes real confusion among target language audience. While some translators counted on deletion by removing the word from the target language text. It is understood that 20% correctly resorted to VTT tools while 80% of translators incorrectly used them.

8.3. MLB, USA Baseball Supplement Pitch Smart Guidelines for 2021 Season:

1. بطولة كرة القاعدة الكبرى تعلن عن الضوابط الذكية لاستهلاك المكملات الغذائية من قبل رامي الكرات لعام ٢٠٢٠ في الولايات المتحدة
2. الرابطة العامة للاعبين البيسبول. الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية تعلن عن الملحق الذكي للمبادئ التوجيهية لموسم 2021
3. BML: الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية ارشادات تكميلية لبرنامج (smart pitch) كرة المضرب لموسم ٢٠٢١
4. ملحق دوري كرة القاعدة الأمريكي: اطلاق قواعد ارشادية الكترونية لموسم 2021.
5. ملحق الارشادات الملعب لبطولة البيسبول الكبرى في الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية لموسم ٢٠٢١
6. دوري كرة البيسبول الرئيسي في الولايات المتحدة يطلق خطة اللعب لموسم ٢٠٢١.
7. دوري كرة البيسبول الرئيسي في الولايات المتحدة تطلق خطة اللعب لموسم ٢٠٢١.
8. يستكمل دوري البابيسبول الرئيسي للولايات المتحدة المبادئ التوجيهية الصحيحة لموسم 2021.
9. اعلان دوري كرة القاعدة ارشادات المباريات لملحق دوري الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية لموسم ٢٠٢١
10. دوري كرة البيسبول الرئيسي في الولايات المتحدة يطلق خطة اللعب لموسم 2021.

8.3.1. Translation Analysis

All translators whose translations are highlighted above made use of VTT tool of addition but these uses are varying from translator to another. The sport term baseball means (كرة القاعدة) in Arabic language. in other words, the correct rendering must include addition because the English version consists of one word while the Arabic version must embrace two words so as to make it clear to the target language audience. Three translators only employed addition tool correctly and they translated it as it is highlighted at the beginning of our analysis of the third sample while the rest are divided into two groups of translators: as for the first one, they employed transliterated term of baseball in English in Arabic (كرة البيسبول), although it is almost to known to some Arab communities in Middle East, however, it is not clear to the Arab audience in general. The second group used the transliterated term in Arabic only (بيسبول). In other words, they condensed the target language product incorrectly. Finally, one translator failed completely because he rendered baseball into (كرة المضرب), it is total failure because the said term refers to another sport activity which

ping-pong. So, the rate of correct usage of VTT tools is 30% while 70% of translators failed to use them correctly.

8.4. Becky and Ellie Downie say bullying and abuse in Great Britain gymnastics ‘completely normalised’:

1. صرح كل من بيكي و ايلي داووني بان التنمر و العنف الجسدي خلال جيمباز بريطانيا العظمى امسى شيئا اعتياديا
2. ان التنمر وسوء المعاملة في الجيمباز في بريطانيا العظمى امر طبيعي تماما كما ذكر بيكي وايلي دواين
3. بيكي وايلي داووني يقولان ان التنمر واساءة المعاملة في ثقافة الجيمباز عند دولة بريطانيا العظمى ظاهرة (طبيعية تماما)
4. يقول بيكي وايلي داووني ان التنمر وسوء المعاملة قد اصبحا جزءا لا يتجزأ من رياضة الجيمباز في المملكة المتحدة البريطانية.
5. يقول ايلي داووني وبيكي ان التنمر وسوء المعاملة في الرياضة البدنية في بريطانيا اصبح امر طبيعي
6. بيكي و ايلي دواين تصرحان بان التنمر وسوء المعاملة في فريق البريطاني للجيمباز اصبح امر "طبيعي للغاية".
7. بيكي و ايلي دواين تصرحان بان التنمر وسوء المعاملة في فريق البريطاني للجيمباز اصبح امر "طبيعي للغاية".
8. صرحت الشقيقتان لاعتبي الجيمباز بيكي وايلي داووني عن كمية التنمر والاهانة التي اختبراهما خلال لعبهما في اولمبيات الجيمباز وأنه أصبح أمراً طبيعياً.
9. بيكي وايلي داووني : التنمر وسوء المعاملة في بطولة بريطانيا للجيمباز "تطبيع تام"
10. بيكي وايلي دواين تصرحان بأن التنمر وسوء المعاملة في فريق البريطاني للجيمباز اصبح امر "طبيعي للغاية".

8.4.1. Translation Analysis

All the translations produced by the graduate translators embrace the term (جيمباز) in the Arabic versions. However, some translators added another word to the abovementioned one such (رياضة) or (ثقافة). Speaking of the first addition, it is quite compatible with the context and makes the target text readers understand the Arabic version correctly, while the second addition, it is not suitable due to the nature of the language of sport. Other translated integrated the term in question with other terms such as (لاعتبي) or (اولمبيات) in a successful manner in the target language versions. It is worth noting that there is a translator whose translation is described as a total failure because he rendered it into (الرياضة)

(البدنية) which means *physical education* not *gymnastics*. Moreover, 30% of translators coined VTT tools correctly and the rest failed to use them correctly.

8.5. A new cricket league pilot in Warwickshire is giving young Muslims the chance to play sport during Ramadan, late into the evening:

1. بطولة كركت جديدة في مدينة وارووكشاير تتيح للشباب المسلمين فرصه ممارسة الرياضة خلال شهر رمضان في وقت متأخر من المساء
2. مدرب جديد لدوري الكريكت في واروكشاير, يمنح الشباب المسلمون فرصة ممارسة الرياضة خلال شهر رمضان في وقت متأخر من المساء.
3. طيار جديد لدوري الكريكت في واويشكاير يمنح الشباب المسلمين فرصة لممارسة الرياضة خلال شهر رمضان في وقت متأخر من المساء
4. ريادي جديد في دوري الكريكت في مدينة واويشكاير يمنح الشباب المسلم فرصة اللعب لوقت متأخر في شهر رمضان المبارك
5. الطيار الجديد لدوري لعبه الكره والمضرب في واروكشاير يمنح الشباب المسلمين فرصه ممارسه الرياضه خلال شهر رمضان في وقت متأخر من المساء
6. طيار جديد لدوري الكريكت في واروكشاير يمنح الشباب المسلمين فرصة لممارسة الرياضة خلال شهر رمضان في وقت متأخر من المساء.
7. طيار جديد لدوري الكريكت في واروكشاير يمنح الشباب المسلمين فرصة لممارسة الرياضة خلال شهر رمضان في وقت متأخر من المساء.
8. يمنح دوري الكريكت الجديد التجريبي في مدينة واروكشاير فرصة للاعبين المسلمين الشباب لممارسة رياضتهم خلال شهر رمضان في وقت متأخر من الليل بعد الإفطار.
9. قام كابتن دوري الكريكت الجديد في واروكشاير بإتاحة الفرصة أمام اللاعبين المسلمين للعب خلال الشهر رمضان في وقت متأخر من المساء.
10. طيار جديد لدوري الكريكت في واروكشاير يمنح الشباب المسلمين فرصة لممارسة الرياضة خلال شهر رمضان في وقت متأخر من المساء.

8.5.1. Translation Analysis

The term *cricket* does not have an equivalent term in Arabic due to the fact that this game is not found in Middle East region. In other words, it is untranslatable. Therefore, the appropriate approach to handle this situation is by lexicalizing it in Arabic. This means that the sport game *cricket* is understood by Arab athletes if it is mentioned before them because it is completely lexicalized. So, all translators participated in the current study transliterated the term in question in the Arabic language and this is described as translators intervention in

integrating the transliterated term with Arabic context of situation. But this is not the case with the translation of the term *pilot* because some translators either failed in rendering it into Arabic by selecting different choices such (طيار), (ريادي) and (كابتن) or through deletion tool. Moreover, other translators correctly translated it into (مدرب). The translators who selected (مدرب) in Arabic intervened positively so as to shift pilot which means an officer who flies a fighter jet or plane into (coach مدرب). One out of ten translators correctly employed the integration tool in translating *pilot* into (مدرب) and the rest were incorrect.

9. Translation analysis results

The following table is going to show you the rates of correct and incorrect employment of VTT tools in rendering English sport texts into Arabic basing on the translation analysis process that was presented in the previous section (see 8. above)

Notes:

The small (i) refers to incorrect employment of VTT in sport term translation into Arabic

The small (c) refers to correct employment of VTT in sport term translation into Arabic in the table below:

No. of translato	First sport text	Second sport text	Third sport text	Fourth sport text	Fifth sport text	
or						
First	c	i	c	i	c	i
Second	c	c	i	i	c	c
Third	i	i	i	i	c	i
Fourth	c	i	c	c	c	i
Fifth	i	i	i	i	c	i
Sixth	c	i	i	i	c	i
Seventh	c	i	i	i	c	i

Eighth	i		c		i		c		c		i	
Ninth	c		i		c		c		c		i	
Tenth	c		i		i		i		c		i	
Total	c	i	c	i	c	i	c	i	c	i	c	i
	70	30	20	80	30	70	30	70	100	0	10	90
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%

Conclusion

It is concluded that variational translation theory tools were not employed in the translations of graduate students correctly because the vast majority of the graduate translators' translated texts failed to translate these sports terms into Arabic. This significant point verified the hypothesis of the study. In other words, the rate of correct employment of VTT tools in rendering sport texts into Arabic is 43.33%. while the rate of incorrect use of VTT tools in transferring sports texts into Arabic is 56.66%.

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