



A Pragmatic Approach to Translating The Arabic Anomalous Texts With Ellipted Negator Into English

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ABSTRACT

It is indeed hard to render the anomalous texts which imply an ellipted negator from Arabic into English. The main task of the text recipient, i.e. especially the translator, here, is to set all his/her energy to detect such negator to work out the communicative (pragmatic) meaning. Then, s/he will be able to render the text pragmatically. Actually, the pragmatic anomaly usually takes place due to the violation of one or more of the Gricean maxims. The present paper hypothesizes that the maxim of relation is the one which is very often violated. When the negator is deleted, the text becomes anomalous since cohesion cannot be attained. The paper aims at finding effective solutions for such anomalies in Arabic texts to distinguish between what may or may not be anomalous in the same text. The present paper also verifies that the violation of any maxim could result in pragmatic anomaly. Thus, these slippery areas of anomalies should be grasped properly to produce appropriate renderings. So, the ellipsis of any lexical item in the text can distort the intended message considerably and it becomes even more complicated if the ellipted word is the negator (لا).

KEYWORDS

Anomalous, Negator, Pragmatic, Rendering, Ellipsis



Introduction:

The present paper scrutinizes the communicative meaning of the areas of pragmatic anomaly in Arabic texts. It also concerns how the proper cognition of the Arabic ellipted negator plays an active part in conveying the intended meaning of the pragmatic anomaly. As a matter of fact, pragmatic anomaly is intentionally experienced, so it can usually be the most effective tool to convey an expressive meaning the text producer intends to pack within the text. It is also usual to find out the ellipsis of the Arabic negator (لا) lies inside the construction [أَنْ + تَفْعَلْ] i.e between the marker (أَنْ) and the imperfect verb (تَفْعَلْ). So, it is essential, on the part of translators, to detect the stylistic values behind the employment of such construction whether in Quranic discourse or in any other stretch of communication. In reality, any missing material in the discourse can result in misunderstanding of the whole discourse to a certain extent. It will be more surprising if the missing material is the marker which can change the function of the text radically from positive to negative.

1. The Realizations of The Missing Material:

In Arabic, the negator (لا) can be ellipted in some selectional preferences to yield certain stylistic values to arrest the attention of the text recipient. Such stylistic preference is exercised especially in Quranic discourse and poetic one.

(يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمُ أَنْ تَضِلُّوا) (النساء: ١٧٩).

First of all, it seems that the above-mentioned Aya signals positive. Actually, the Aya is positive in form but negative in function. In Arabic, it is permissible to delete the negator (لا) if it can be inserted into the construction [أَنْ + مضارع]. In other words, if the context of situation necessitates the existence of the negator (لا) to make complete sense throughout the whole text, the negator must be utilized between the marker (أَنْ) and the imperfect verb (تَضِلُّوا) to mean (أَنْ لَا تَضِلُّوا). After that, the meaning of the Aya will become (يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمُ أَنْ لَا تَضِلُّوا) Furthermore, the marker (أَنْ) and the negator (لا) can be contracted to become (أَلَّا) which is considered, in Arabic, more standard (Al-Bydhawi, 2000, Vo.1:414-5). So, it is of crucial significance to maintain the sense of negative when rendering the Aya into English as in:

Allah guides you so as not to go astray.

Additionally, the negator (لا) can also function as a redundant marker, as if it is ellipted, before the forms of oath. In other words, since the Arabic negator (لا) can be ellipted for pragmatic functions, it can also be mentioned redundantly. Such missing material can be retrieved either from a previous text or from a subsequent text. Each (لا) precedes the verb (أَقْسِمُ) functions as a redundant negative marker for emphasis of the oath. Such phenomenon takes place in Quranic discourse eight times. Consider the following Quranic discourse:

Consider the following illustrative instance:

(فَلَا أَقْسِمُ بِرَبِّ الْمَشَارِقِ وَالْمَغَارِبِ إِنَّا لَقَادِرُونَ) (المعارج: ٤٠).

So, I swear by the Lord of all the [three hundred and sixty-five (365) points of sunrise and sunset in the east and the west that surely, we are Able. (Al-Hilali and Khan, 1989:786).

In English, the negator "not" can also be ellipted as follows:

I could care less.

The intended meaning of the clause above points out to "I couldn't care less" is the clearer, more accurate version. Why do so many people delete the negative from this statement? Because they are afraid that the "n't ...less" combination will make for a double negative, which is a no-no (Lederer, 1990:17). The proposed rendering of the clause under investigation can be:

لَا يُمَكِّنُنِي إِلَّا أَنْ أَعْتَنِي بِالْأُمُورِ أَشَدَّ عَنَاءِي.

The omission from a sentence or an utterance of material which is logically necessary but which is recoverable from the context. Traditional grammarians have for centuries applied the term "ellipsis" to a wide range of phenomena in which some part of a sentence or an utterance appears to be 'missing' or 'understood'. Contemporary linguists, however, generally prefer to use the term

more narrowly to denote only the omission of material which can be unambiguously recovered from the context. Let us view the following exchange carefully:

Mike: Where's Susie?

Sarah: In the library.

Here, Sarah's response is unambiguously interpretable in the context as meaning "Susie is in the library", and hence we speak of the ellipsis of the material "Susie is".

But now consider another exchange.

Mike: Here's the book I promised you.

Sarah: Thanks.

This time 'Sarah's response cannot be specifically identified as a reduced form of any particular longer utterance, and so we would probably not speak of ellipsis here (Trask and Stockwell, 2007: 83-4).

2. Presupposed Context-Based Ellipsis:

In Arabic, there is also context-based presupposition of what is to be said, i.e., of what has been ellipted from the sentence. In other words, we can presuppose the ellipted information without assistance from either the micro or the macro text. Instead, we establish our presupposition of context (Abdul-Raof, 2019:159).

3. Contextual Constellations:

In isolation, just about all utterances are highly indeterminate because of the multiplicity of contextual constellations they can fit into. Far from introducing vagueness, allowing context into linguistic analysis is therefore a prerequisite for precision. As said before, however, we should avoid the mistake of reifying or petrifying context. Context contributes to charity by being subject to negotiation, uptake or rejection, acceptance of uptake or renegotiation, and the like (Verscheren, 2003: 111).

4. Relevance Theory:

Relevance theory has a single Communicative Principle of Relevance: that each utterance raises a presumption of its own optimal relevance. Essentially, the claim is that in making an utterance a speaker takes up some of her hearer's attention and this means that there is a fallible presumption that what she says will provide a good (in fact optimal) pay-off in information, relative to the cost involved in processing it. The Communicative Principle and presumption of optimal relevance are specific to communication, but they are argued to be instances of a more general tendency, that cognition tends to be geared to maximize relevance (Allott, 2010:10).

To illustrate more and more, one can view the following exchange and its discussion as in:

Sue: Did you go to Tom's recital?

Donald: Tracy's here.

On the surface, Donald's response to Sue's yes/no question appears to be irrelevant as he gives information about another person. In order for "Sue" to process Donald's utterance as meaningful, she must assume that Donald is being relevant to the exchange in that particular context. For example, she needs to take into consideration that Tracy is Tom's ex-partner and that Tracy does not like to hear Tom being talked about (Baker and Ellece, 2011:115).

5. Vague Language and Variation:

Vagueness in language sometimes is activated by some professional text producers to broaden the area of meaning and to attract the text recipient's attention. Vagueness can be regarded as a merit in the text. "Vague language involves the purposeful use of words or phrases with general meaning to refer to items in a non-specific, imprecise way. This non-specific, imprecise use of language does not; however, signal that the language user is being, in any way, sloppy or lazy in

their use of language; instead, vague language has been shown to be highly interactive, prioritizing interpersonal involvement above actual explicitness" (O'keeffe et al,2020:159).

6. Pragmatic Failure:

Wo (2007) notices pragmatic failure when 'the interpreter's failure in conveying the intended meaning of the message as the result of the inappropriate use of language. Literal translation is a major cause of pragmatic loss. With regard to pragmatic meaning in translation, there two conditions which are essential for pragmatic equivalence between the source text and target text: coherence and implicature. They are particularly helpful in exploring the question of "making sense" and in highlighting areas of difficulty in cross-cultural communication (Faiq, 2019:89-90).

7. Violation of The Maxim of Relation:

As an example 'in which an implicature is achieved by real, as distinct from apparent, violation of the Maxim of Relation' Grice imagines the following situation illustrated in exchange below, meant to occur 'at a genteel tea party:'

A: Mrs. X is an old bag.

(Silence).

B: The weather has been quite delightful this summer, hasn't it?

After the utterance of speaker (A) there is a moment of embarrassed silence. Then, speaker (B) produces his utterance about the weather, blatantly refusing to make what s/he says relevant to A's preceding remark. With this, speaker (B) implicates not only that A's remark should be ignored, but also that (A) has committed a social faux pas (Senft, 2014:36).

8. Data Collection:

The present paper has collected ten texts to be interpreted and discussed in a proper manner. It seems that the number of the Ayas is taken into consideration more than any other sample since the ellipsis of the negator (لا) is widely utilized in the Quranic discourse. Furthermore, the somewhat eclectically-taken data can prove that the ellipsis of the negator (لا) in Arabic can be spotted and tackled in many different genres of language.

SL Text (1):

(يَعْضُكُمُ اللَّهُ أَنْ تَعُودُوا لِمِثْلِهِ أَبَدًا) (النور: ١٧).

Interpretation:

It is quite straightforward to insert the negator (لا) between the marker.

((أَنْ and the imperfect verb (تعودوا) in order to make complete sense. In addition, the word (أَبَدًا), in Arabic, usually correlates with the negative. It is definitely an indicator of the ellipsed negator (لا). As a result, the meaning of the Aya becomes [...ي لا تعودوا لمثله أبداً...]. In such a case, the phenomenon of pragmatic anomaly is clearly identified and any sort of vagueness is totally removed by means of retrieving the negator (لا) (Al-Samarra'i, 2009: 181).

Discussion:

It goes undeniable that the surface meaning of the Ay under discussion signals a sort of pragmatic anomaly since the whole text is originally based on the negative. So, the issue of the ellipsis of the negator (لا) must not go unnoticed if the translator could recognize the hidden stylistic meaning. The main task of the translator is to detect the core meaning of the pragmatic anomaly and try to render it into English. By no stretch of imagination, one can suggest the pragmatic translation so as to convey the sense of the pragmatic anomaly. In addition to that, it is a must for translator to convey the intended meaning of the pragmatic anomaly into English properly.

Proposed Rendering:

Allah preaches you so as not to do it again at all if you are truly believers.

SL Text (2):

نَزَلْتُمْ مَنْزِلَ الْأَضْيَافِ مَنَّا
فَعَجَلْنَا الْقَرِيَّ أَنْ تَشْتَمُونَا

Interpretation:

In the poetic line above, the underlined construction [أَنْ + تَشْتَمُونَا] implies an ellipted negator (لا) which could be inserted to become [لكي لا تشتمونا]. It is also of crucial significance to state that there is some pragmatic anomaly within the construction under investigation and the whole poetic line. In reality, the pragmatic meaning cannot be arrived at unless one tries to find out a certain relevance between the meanings of the constituents of the construction and the whole text (Al-Durah, 1989:430).

Discussion:

A word of caution is necessary, on the part of translators, to look for the most convenient way to work out the communicative meaning to render the text in a proper manner. If the surface meaning is only taken into account, this indicates a sort of some anomaly in the general meaning of the text thoroughly. It seems that the literal meaning clashes, in one way or another, oddly and pragmatically with the communicative meaning. On top of that, to give credence to the suggested rendering, the intended message must be accommodated in the target text.

Proposed Rendering:

You, as guests, have paid a visit to us

So, we quickly prepared food for you so not to call us names.

SL Text (3):

وقد آليتُ أَعْدِرُ فِي جَدَاعٍ وَأَنْ مَنَيْتُ أَمَاتِ الرِّبَاعِ
لَأَنَّ الْعَدْرَ فِي الْأَقْوَامِ عَازٌّ وَأَنَّ الْمَرْءَ يُجْزَأُ بِالْكَرَاعِ

Interpretation:

It is worth noting that the imperfect verb (أَعْدِرُ) points out to positive in form, but formally the whole text does not make any sense. On the contrary, when the verb (أَعْدِرُ) is preceded by the negator (لا) to turn into (أَنْ لَا أَعْدِرُ), the intended message can be arrived at (Al-Zubaidi, 1983, Vol.20:317).

Discussion:

It is essential to pay great attention to the text whether it is positive or negative in function. In a nutshell, these two issues can give the opposite meanings if one does not take proper care of them. Pragmatically speaking, the maxim of the relation is violated to deliver an effective meaning to the text recipient. Clearly, the ellipsis of the negator (لا) carries a greater pragmatic load. Consequently, it is better for translators to keep track of such phenomenon in more depth to find out an appropriate way to translate the text appropriately.

Proposed Rendering:

I have promised not to betray in Jidah.

If I am tempted to possess the most luxurious houses.

Because the betrayal is shameful and one will be rewarded by nothing.

SL Text (4):

The Negator (لا) and the Imperfect Verb (أَبْرَحُ).

وَأَبْرَحُ مَا أَدَامَ اللَّهُ قَوْمِي بِحَمْدِ اللَّهِ مُنْتَظِقًا مُجِيدًا

Interpretation:

Firstly, it seems that the meaning of the whole text is inadequate. The negator (لا) could usually be omitted if there is the imperfect verb (أَبْرَحُ) in the text because, in Arabic, the verb (أَبْرَحُ) must be preceded by the negator (لا). In case, one tries to relocate the negator (لا) before the verb (أَبْرَحُ), the text does make complete sense. Actually, the negator can be deleted if there are, not only the verb (أَبْرَحُ) but also many verbs such as (زَالَ) and (تَفَنَّتْ) (Ibn-Hisham, N. D., vol.1., 234).

Discussion:

It is far better for the translators to exert all the energy to convey the sense of the negator (لا). If one looks at the text for the first time, s/he will imagine that there is no linguistic relevance between the imperfect verb (أَبْرَحُ) and the whole text. In other words, s/he may make quite certain that a sort of oppositeness takes place throughout the statement of the text. As a matter of fact, the violation of relation is practiced deliberately to point out to the phenomenon of pragmatic anomaly in which the text producer can attract the text recipient's attention. Accordingly, it is quite obvious that the pragmatic anomaly is experienced to create aesthetic values.

Proposed Rendering:

I will be continuously as long as my tribe is in a good condition.

Thanks to Allah, as they are eloquent speakers.

SL Text (5):

امسك الحائطَ أَنْ يَمِيلَ.

Interpretation:

It is crystal clear that there is a huge gap in the text above because it is anomalous in meaning when it is read for the first time. Al-Akhfash states that there was a negator between the accusative marker (أَنْ) and the imperfect verb (يميل). Consequently, the original construction must become [كي لا يميل], lit. so as not to lean, to raise any sort of vagueness in the text. Even the rational context, in one way or another, states that there was an ellipted negator. After all, the original text turns into the following (امسك الحائطَ كي لا يميل) (Cited in Muhammed, 2019:124).

Discussion:

Formally speaking, the source text under discussion seems that it is positive while it is, by origin, negative in function. The intended pragmatic meaning of the Aya cannot be attained unless the anomaly is spotted, throughout the process of translation, carefully by means of retrieving the ellipted negator (لا) and putting it in its actual position. Then, the translator must try all his best in order to render the text in a much more convenient way to avoid a great loss of translation as possible as s/he can. It also must bear in mind that, in one way or another, nothing is ellipted in a vacuum or in a random way, but there must be a certain stylistic intentionality to be injected in the text. Here, translators have to dig deep to detect such stylistic value (s) to render it into English with great carefulness.

Proposed Rendering:

Catch the wall so as not to lean.

SL Text (6):

The Ellipsis of the Negator (لا) with an Oath

تالله يبقى على الأيامِ ذو حَيْدٍ.

Interpretation:

In Arabic, when a certain form of an oath is packed with the text, e. g. "تالله", the negator (لا) could be deleted. Here, the context of situation can determine the location of such negator in the text. All in all, the above-mentioned poetic line cannot make any sense unless the negator is inserted before the imperfect verb (يبقى) to become (تالله لا يبقى على الأيامِ ذو حَيْدٍ) (Cited in Muhammed, 2019:124).

Discussion:

Clearly, any ellipted lexical item can affect the general or even specific meaning of the text. It will be much more effective to find out that the missing material is the negator (لا) which can alter radically the function of the text from positive into negative. It is also quite difficult to render the above poetic line literally without taking the ellipted negator (لا) into consideration. Moreover, it is very odd indeed to judge, with few exceptions, any text by means of its own surface structure. On the contrary, if the translator has the ability to relocate the ellipted negator (لا) in its right place,

s/he, without a moment's thought, will arrive at the intended meaning of the whole text. After all, s/he can propose an appropriate rendering so as not to distort the intended message of the source text.

Proposed Rendering:

By Allah, the just one will never remain alive.

SL Text (7):

فَأَقْسَمْتُ أَسَى عَلَى هَالِكٍ وَأَسْأَلُ نَائِحَةً مَا لَهَا

Interpretation:

The underlined verb [أسى] is implicitly preceded by an ellipted negator (لا) which can locate before it. It is also of crucial significance to state that there is some pragmatic anomaly in the whole poetic line under investigation. In fact, the pragmatic meaning cannot be arrived at unless one tries to find out a certain relevance between the meanings of the constituents of the construction and the whole text. The core meaning of the poetic line above becomes:

فَأَقْسَمْتُ لَا أَسَى عَلَى هَالِكٍ وَلَا أَسْأَلُ نَائِحَةً مَا لَهَا

(Al-Farahidi, 175H. vol.8: 349).

Discussion:

It is a must for the translator to recognize and identify that there is a deep-seated implication of negative in the source text. To obtain a fuller understanding of the intended message of the text under discussion, it is essential to retrieve the missing material successfully. On top of that, one must go a little bit deeper on the whole text to digest the core meaning. Accordingly, translator will be able to exhaust all the possibilities of the contextual variations to retrieve the missing material, i.e. the ellipted negator (لا) Finally, if the translator places a heavy emphasis on such ellipted negator, s/he can easily propose an appropriate rendering.

Proposed Rendering:

I took an oath that I would not get sad on any dead one.

And I would not ask the female crier the reason behind her crying .

SL Text (8):

وَأَلْقَى فِي الْأَرْضِ رَوَاسِيَ أَنْ تَمِيدَ بِكُمْ (النحل: ١٥).

Interpretation:

There is clearly something anomalous going on in the underlined construction. [أَنْ + تَمِيدَ]. Thus, it is straightforward to lay great focus on the reason why the existence of pragmatic anomaly (oddity) lies in the general meaning of the Aya above. As a matter of fact, the pragmatic meaning cannot be figured out if the violation of the maxim of relation could not be determined. Moreover, the literal meaning of the Aya, more specifically the surface meaning of the Aya under investigation, does not make complete sense (Ibn Adil, 2011, vol.12:31).

Discussion:

It is evident that, without a moment's thought, most translators may wrongly determine that the Aya under investigation is positive because there is no any explicit negator in the whole structure. If the translator identifies, in a systematic and principled way, that the Aya delivers a negative meaning, s/he will have the ability to render it appropriately. In doing so, the negator (لا) can enrich the meaning of the Aya in a sensible manner. If the Aya is rendered formally and literally, the text recipient will express a great deal of astonishment and surprising because the intended message is distorted and, at the same time, a great loss of translation takes place. Here, the translator must get well acquainted with the effective stylistic tools which enable him to manage the source text to deliver the negative meaning faithfully from Arabic into English.

Proposed Rendering:

Allah fixes mountains firmly into the earth so as not to shake with you.

SL Text (9):

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُمَسِّكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ أَنْ تَزُولَا (فاطر: ٤١).

Interpretation:

In the Aya above, the underlined construction [أَنْ + تَزُولَا] implies an ellipted negator (لا) which can be inserted in between to become [أَنْ + لا + تَزُولَا]. It is also of high importance to mention that there is some pragmatic anomaly between the construction under investigation and the whole Aya. As a matter of fact, the pragmatic meaning of the source text cannot be arrived at unless one tries to find out a certain relevance in meaning between the meanings of the constituents of the construction and the whole text (AL-Qurtubi, N. D. vol13-14:285).

Discussion:

Since it is obvious that pragmatic anomaly is practiced between the form and the function of the afore-mentioned Aya. In other words, the maxim of relation is violated because the Aya is positive in form whereas it is negative in function. It is far better to scrutinize the appropriate way in which one can extract the hidden meaning due to the ellipsis of the negator (لا). One can have a quick look at the Aya and its proposed rendering to identify the huge difference between the surface meaning of the Aya and the deep one. It is also a must for the translator who is in favour of producing an appropriate rendering to avoid the expected great loss of translation by means of realizing the ellipted negator, i.e. (لا) in a sensible manner. Finally, the translator can propose an appropriate rendering which can encompass the sense of negative.

Proposed Rendering:

Verily, Allah grasps the heavens and the earth so as not to move away from their places.

SL Text (10):

عَدِيٌّ وَتَيْمٌ تَبْتَغِي مَنْ تُحَالِفُ
مِنَ الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا أَنْتَ لِلذَّلِّ عَارِفٌ
أَلَا مَنْ رَأَى الْعَبْدَيْنِ إِذْ ذُكِرَا لَهُ
فَحَالِفٌ فَلَا وَاللَّهِ تَهَيَّبُ تَلْعَةً

Interpretation:

It is worth signaling out the maxim of relation, which simply says that we should be relevant. The lexical item [تَهَيَّبُ] above is implicitly negated by an ellipted negator (لا) which can insert before it. Importantly, it is necessary to state that there is some pragmatic anomaly between the construction under investigation and the whole poetic line. In fact, the pragmatic meaning cannot be extracted at unless one tries to achieve a certain relevance in meaning between the meanings of the constituents of the construction and the whole text (Al-Farahidi, 175H. Vol.8: 349).

Discussion:

A word of caution is necessary, on the part of translators, to look for the most convenient way so as to work out the communicative meaning to render the text in a proper manner. If the surface meaning is only taken into account, this signals a sort of anomaly in the general meaning of the text thoroughly. It seems that the literal meaning clashes, in one way or another, oddly and pragmatically with the communicative meaning. In addition to that, to give credence to the proposed rendering, the intended message must be accommodated in the target text.

Proposed Rendering:

Verily, who saw the two tribes, Adiu and Taymun, want to coalite.

Coalite, or else by Allah, wherever you live in an area, you face insults.

Conclusions:

The present paper arrives at the following conclusions:

1. Once the maxim of relation is violated, the text becomes anomalous pragmatically. In addition, this maxim is the one which is violated more than any other maxim .
2. The phenomenon of pragmatic anomaly could be exploited for yielding a great deal of aesthetic values in advertisements, commercial posters, political speeches and the like.

3. In general, the ellipsis is one of the main factors which can construct the pragmatic anomalies in the texts.
4. The linguistic context and the context of situation both play an active part in working out the communicative meaning of the pragmatic anomaly and maintaining the essence of anomaly in the source text.
5. Anomaly, if it is not quite understood, may lead to a great loss of translation or may sometimes give the opposite meaning of the source text.
6. The concept of contextualization is essential to be activated to any text before launching the process of translation.
7. Unlike Arabic, English, by any means, rarely permits the ellipsis of the negator "not".
8. There is no one-to-one correspondence between the phenomenon of the ellipsis of the negator in Arabic and English which, in turn, causes a great challenge to translators.
9. Most native speakers of Arabic occasionally express a great deal of astonishment when they come across a certain ellipted negator because they do not expect that the negator can be ellipted in such a way.

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