

TRANSLATING ENGLISH BBC NEWS INTO ARABIC: MORPHOSYNTACTIC ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the morphological changes that occur when translating English political news into Arabic. It attempts to find the answer to the research question, “What is the nature of the morphological changes that occur in the Arabic translation?” Towards this end, it examines the morphological changes that are attributable to various reasons in Vinay and Darbenet (1995) procedures, among them transposition or shift. Thus, each data item is examined on the basis of the ideas of Vinay and Darbenet (1995) as well as Culicover (1997) using both X'-Theory representation either as phrase markers (tree diagrams) or in linear structures using label bracketing and narrative descriptions.

KEYWORDS: Morphology; syntax; shift; tree diagram; linear structure.

1. Introduction

1.1. Methodology

For the purpose of this article, we employ a composite methodology derived from the ideas of Vinay and Darbelnet (1995) and Culicover (1997) which are summarized below.

1.1.1. Vinay and Darbelnet (1995)

Vinay and Darbelnet (1995) consider comparative analysis an essential applied linguistic approach to translation, as it is a more direct approach. They focus on the pragmatic stratum which determines the choice of lexical and grammatical devices in the text. In their approach, they offer two strategies: direct translation and oblique translation. The

former strategy comprises three procedures: (a) borrowing, (b) calque, and (c) literal translation. They employ direct translation whenever a structural and conception parallelism exists between both languages. The latter strategy, oblique translation, has four procedures: (a) transposition, (b) modulation, (c) equivalence, (d) adaptation which is used whenever grammatical, lexical, structural divergences are required due to certain stylistic effects in the source text.

1.1.2. Transposition (shift)

For Vinay and Darbelnet (1995: 36), this involves replacing one word class with another without changing the meaning of the message. They add that besides being a special translational procedure, transposition can also be applied within a language. They note that in translation there are two type of transposition: (a) obligatory transposition and (b) optional transposition,

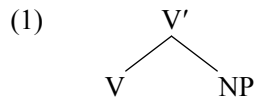
They also indicate that this method requires the translator to change the grammar of the source language (SL) text; and the translator needs to shift the grammatical make-up of the SL to fit that of the target language (TL) to achieve an equivalent effect or to produce the same effect on the readership of the translation as was obtained on the readership of the original.

From a stylistic point of view, the base and the transposed expression do not necessarily have the same value. Translators carry out a transposition if the translation obtained fits better into the text or allows a particular nuance of style to be retained. The transposed forms are generally more literary in character than the original (Vinay and Darbelnet 1995: 36).

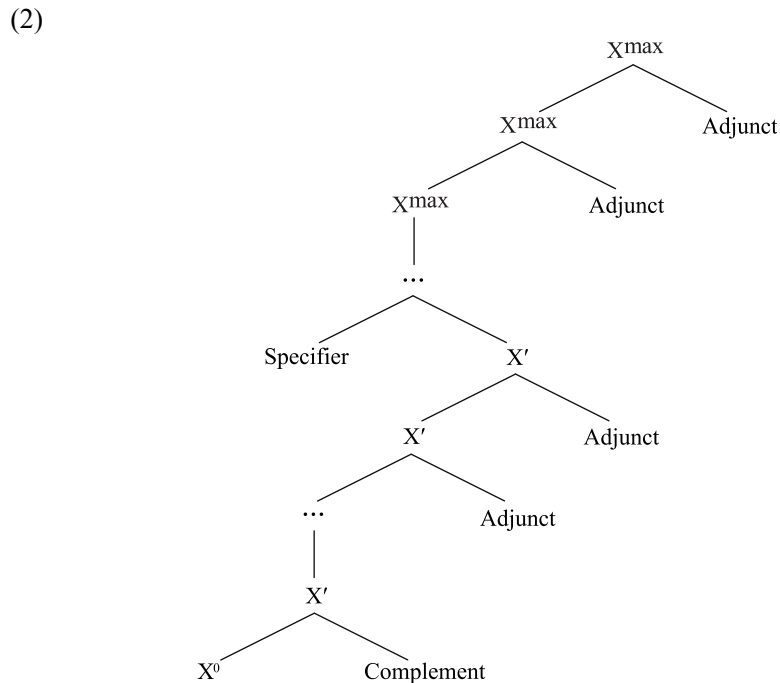
1.1.3. X' Theory

According to Culicover (1997: 134), X' Theory is a theory of phrase structure; that is a theory which constitutes a possible phrase in natural language. He adds that, within this theory, phrase structure concerns the hierarchical and left-to-right relationships between syntactic categories. He further suggests that every phrase has a head; certain heads take complements; and such a relationship is characterized by the fact that they are sisters: each c-commands the other, and they are dominated by the same node (Culicover 1997: 135), as in (1) below, where in V' (verb phrase), V (verb) is the head while NP (noun phrase) is the complement. Within this theory, as in the diagram in (1) below, the V', V and NP are all nodes, and the V and NP nodes are sisters, and V' and NP c-command the other, which means some grammatical relationships exist between them.

He also contends that "an important principle of X' Theory [...] is that across syntactic categories, complements, specifier, and adjunct bear the same configurational relationship to the head" (Culicover 1997: 136). Further, "in English [...] the complement



of the head appears adjacent to it and to the right of it, while the specifier appears to the left” (Culicover 1997: 136). In other languages, the sequence may be the reverse; that is, instead of V-NP as in (1) above, like in the case of *eat cake* for English, it may be V-...-NP for the Arabic *أكلة علي الكعكة* ‘ate Ali the cake’. In the theory that he proposes, all phrases have structure as in (2), called the X’ schema (Culicover 1997: 137).



It can be noted that a complement is the sister to X^0 , an adjunct is adjoined to X' , and all branching is binary (i.e., dual branching; Culicover 1997: 137). The derivation of a sentence by a grammar can be depicted as a derivation tree. Linguists working in generative grammar often view such derivation trees as a primary object of study. According to this view, a sentence is not merely a string of words, but rather a tree with subordinate and superordinate branches connected at nodes. Essentially, the tree model works something like in example (2), in which S is a sentence, D is a determiner, N a noun, V a verb, NP a noun phrase and VP a verb phrase (Chomsky 1957, 1965, 1987a).

As this paper is not a study about theoretical syntax *per se*, but rather of styles and messages on the surface structures, X' theory is merely employed in this paper as a representation of the sequential order of elements (words, phrases and clauses) in the surface (S-Structure) only without any bearing or implication to any theory of syntax especially the deeper D-Structure.

2. Data analysis

The data of this investigation is comprised of 9 political news articles from the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) and their corresponding Arabic translations. The BBC news broadcasts were chosen because they are documents for public consumption in which the readers are not a specialized group of people; instead, they are nonprofessionals. These news articles are not of general nature; instead, they are news on political events. All these articles were taken from the Internet, since parallel versions in Arabic can be accessed easily.

2.1. Stylistic change due to transposition

In subsections 1 through 9, we will present some stylistic changes due to the changes in tenses and changes in syntactic constituents.

2.1.1. Stylistic change to past continuous

Consider the following data in (3a) and its Arabic translation in (3b):

- (3a) ST: Iraq's President Jalal Talabani has asked Shia politician Jawad al-Maliki to form the country's next government.

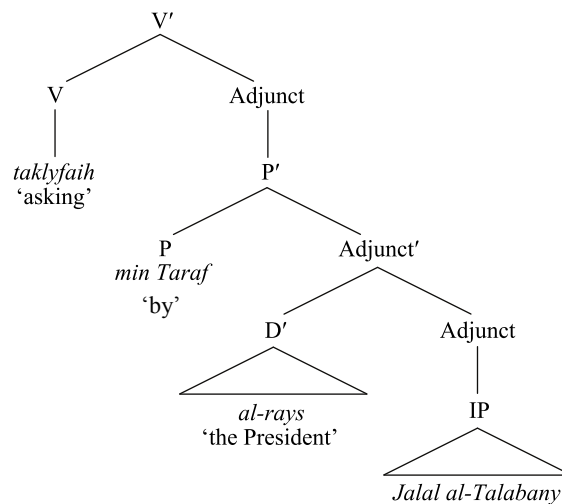
(“Maliki endorsed as new PM”, BBC, 22 Apr 2006.)

- (3b) TT:
و قال المالكي في اول كلمة يلقيها بعد تكليفه من طرف الرئيس جلال الطالباني بتشكيل الحكومة المقبلة انه ينوي

Transliteration: ... *ba 'da taklyfaih min Taraf al rays jalal al Talabany* ...

With respect to the data in (3a) above, we are concerned with the clause *Iraq's President Jalal Talabani has asked*. Its linear structure is as in (3a') below and the structure of its corresponding Arabic translation in a phrase marker is in (3b').

- (3a') Iraq's President Jalal Talabani has asked...
 [[Iraq's President] [[Jalal Talabani]] [has asked]...]
 IP N' IP V'
- (3b') [...[taklyfaih min Taraf al rays jalal al Talabany...]



It is noticed that the translator made stylistic changes that lead to optional transposition. From the above data, it is noticed that the English phrase *has asked* in the ST is in the present perfect tense, and to translate this into Arabic, the translator could have used the past simple. This is because Arabic has no corresponding tense for the English present perfect. It is noticed, however, that the translator used the past continuous tense translating *has asked* into تكليفه (taklyfahu) 'was asking'. If the translator had translated *has asked* into the past simple, the stylistic structure would have been acceptable. The translator, however, made an optional stylistic change by using the past continuous tense in the TT text.

The verb phrase *has asked* consists of the verb *has* and the main verb *asked* in a past form. On the other hand, the same structure in the TT consists of two lexical words which are the main verb تكليف (taklyf) 'asked' and the pronoun (hu) 'his' (colloquially as -ih) that refers to the PM, al-Maliki. Looking at both (a') and (b') above in broader syntactic terms, the English ST is of the structure [N'-Subordinate sentence-Predicate...], where the sentence begins with a genitive noun phrase; the corresponding Arabic translation has the structure [V'-P'-D'-[Subordinate sentence]], where the sentence begins with a verb.

2.1.2. Stylistic changes to the past simple tense

We will now consider the English data in (4a) and its Arabic translation in (4b) below.

- (4a) ST: US officials believe it has helped bolster Iranian nuclear know-how.
(“US warns Russia over aid to Iran”, BBC, 19 Apr 2006.)

- (4b) TT:
وساعدت الاحيرة في تعزيز قدرتها النووية.
المسؤولون الامريكيون ان الخبرات الفنية التي تقدمها روسيا لايران

Transliteration: ... *saa'dat al-akhyra fi t'azyz* ...

The linear structures in labeled bracketing in (4a') and (4b') show a syntactic difference between the ST and the TT:

- (4a') [... [it] [has [helped [bolster [Iranian nuclear know-how]]]]
IP Spec I' V' V'

- (4b') [... [saa'dat [al-akhyra [fi t'azyz...]]]]
IP V Adv P

From the above examples, it is noticed that the present perfect tense *has helped* in the ST has been translated into the past simple tense in the TT. The translator does not retain the original tense as there is no similar tense in Arabic; instead, he has to resort to changing it to the past tense. It is an obligatory change when translating a present perfect phrase like *has helped*.

2.1.3. Stylistic changes to future simple tense

We will now move on to consider the English sentence containing a continuous tense in (5a), and its corresponding Arabic translation and transliteration in (5b).

- (5a) ST: Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas has announced he is moving his office to Gaza until the completion of Israel's withdrawal from the territory.
(“Abbas moves to Gaza for pull out”, BBC, 25 Jul 2005.)

- (5b) TT:
اعلن الرئيس الفلسطيني محمود عباس انه سينقل مكتبه الى غزة حتى انتهاء الانسحاب
الاسرائيلي من القطاع

Transliteration: ... *inahu sayanqul maktabahu* ...

The linear structures in (5a') and (5b') in labeled bracketing show a difference.

- (5a') [... [he] [is [moving [his office]]]]
 IP Spec I' V' N'
- (5b') [... [inahu] [sa [yanqul [Maktabahu]...]]
 IP Spec I' V' N'
 'de will move office his'

It is noticed that in (5a'–b') above, the translator changed the present continuous tense of the ST to a future simple tense *س* (*sa*) 'will' and *ينقل* (*yanqul*) 'move'. Besides, the translator kept the sentence structure [Spec- I'-V'-N']. While the basic structure remains similar, the shift in the tense is in keeping with the inherent style of the Arabic language.

2.1.4. Style in past continuous tense of the ST

In this subsection we will show three cases of the behavior of the past continuous tense of the ST when translated to Arabic TT. The first case is exemplified by the data in (6a–b) below, where a past continuous of the ST becomes a present continuous in the TT.

- (6a) ST: He said he was studying projects to free up the party system and draw more Syrians into the political process.
 ("Syria decries Hariri probe 'bias'", BBC, 21 Jan 2006.)

- (6b) TT:
 واكد الاسد في خطابه عزمه على اجراء اصلاحات سياسية وقال انه يدرس خطة
 لتعديل قانون الاحزاب و اتاحة المجال امام المزيد من المواطنين للانخراط في العمل
 السياسي.

Transliteration: ... *wa qala inahu yadrus khuTa* ...

The underlined part of the ST and the TT can be assigned the linear structures in (6a') and (6b') respectively.

- (6a') [... [he] [was [studying projects...]]]
 IP Spec I' V'
- (6b') [... [inahu [... [yadrus [khuTa...]]]
 IP Spec I' V' (+continuous, +present)

The syntactic structure is basically the same in (6a') and (6b') above. The difference that remains is in the change of the tense from a past continuous in the ST to a present continuous in the TT. The Arabic verb form *yadrus* 'yadrus' '+male, studying' is in the present continuous and is recording the third person male subject noun phrase.

2.1.5. Stylistic change in prepositional phrases

In this subsection we will consider three cases of stylistic changes due to changes in prepositional phrases. First, we consider (7a–b) below:

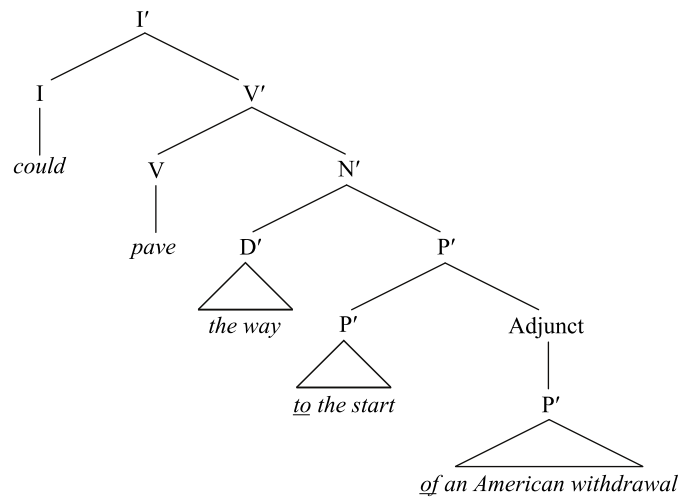
- (7a) ST: President Bush also hinted that the agreement on Iraq's new leaders could pave the way to the start of an American withdrawal.
("Maliki endorsed as new Iraqi PM", BBC, 22 Apr 2006)

- (7b) TT
و اضاف بوش " مع تشكيل المزيد من القوات العراقية, ستسحب القوات الامريكية ".

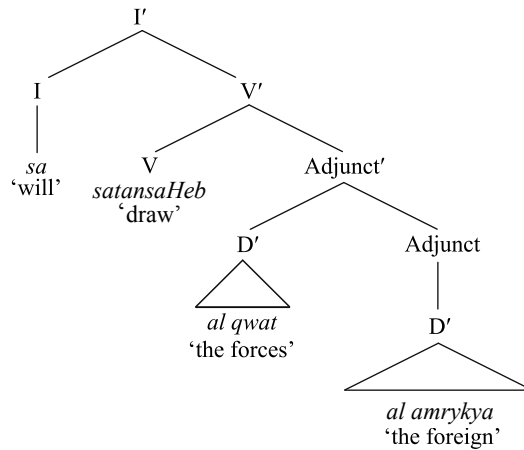
Tranliteration: ... *satansaHeb al qwat al amrykya*.

We are concerned with the underlined constituents in (7a–b) above. The trees in (7a') and (7b') show the difference in the prepositional phrases under the P' nodes.

- (7a') could pave the way to the start of an American withdrawal



(7b') satansaHeb al qwat al amrykya.



Noticeably, in translating the prepositional phrase of the English ST *to the start of an American withdrawal* into Arabic, the translator did two things: (a) dropped the preposition *to* in the English prepositional phrase and replaced it with the future modal *س* (*sa*) 'will', and (b) reorganized the English prepositional phrase *of an American withdrawal* into Arabic inflectional phrase *ستسحب القوات الامريكية* (*satansaHeb al qwat al amrykya*) (literally, 'will draw the forces the foreign'). Overall, what was a [I'-V'-D'-P'-P'] constituent sequence of two prepositional phrases in English has been changed stylistically in Arabic to be [... I'-V'-D'-D'] without a prepositional phrase.

2.1.6. Stylistic changes in adverbial phrase

In this subsection we will show three examples of stylistic changes in adverbial phrases. Consider the first case in (8a–b) below.

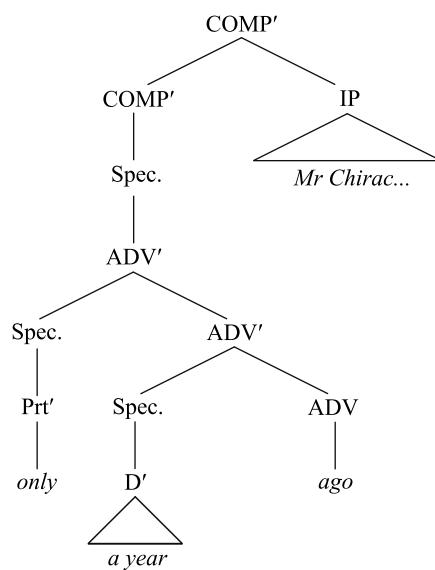
(8a) ST: Only a year ago, Mr. Chirac was making it plain that Mr. Sharon was not welcome in Paris.
(“Sharon arrives in Paris for talks”, BBC, 26 Jul 2005.)

(8b) TT:
 قبل عام واحد فقط، كان تصرف شيراك يوحى بوضوح بان شارون غير مرحب به في باريس.

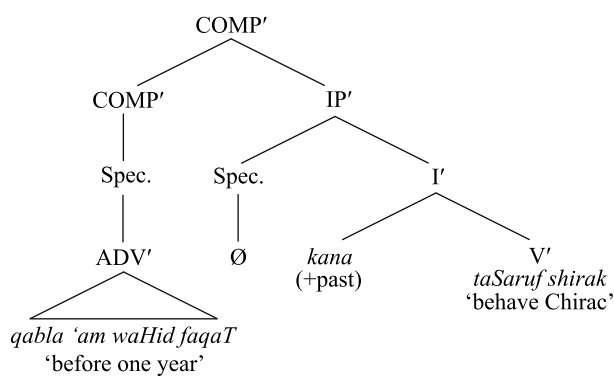
Transliteration: qabla 'am waHid faqaT kana taSaruf shirak...

The trees in (8a') and (8b') below show the syntactic similarity between the ST and the TT.

(8a') Only a year ago, Mr Chirac...



(8b') qabla 'am waHid faqaT kana taSaruf shirak...



That is, in both ST and the TT texts, the sentential adverb phrase is positioned at the beginning of the sentence. A closer look at the structures, however, shows that the Arabic adverbial phrase also consists of four lexical words (*qabla 'am waHid faqaT*) compared to the ST's three, *a year ago*.

2.1.7. Stylistic change in noun phrases

In this subsection, we will look at stylistic changes in noun phrases or determiner phrases (i.e., a noun phrase containing a determiner). Consider the data in (9a–b) below.

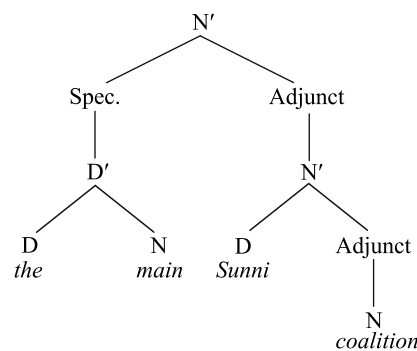
- (9a) ST: The main Sunni coalition, the Iraqi Accord Front, has shown initial agreement with Mr Maliki's nomination, a spokesman said.
 ("Iraq poised to choose new premier", BBC, 22 Apr 2006.)

- (9b) TT:
 وكانت جبهة التوافق العراقي وهي ابرز الجماعات السنية قد ابدت يوم الجمعة موافقتها
 المبدئية على ترشيح جواد المالكي لمنصب رئيس الوزراء.

Transliteration: ... *wa hya abraz al jama'aat al sunya*...

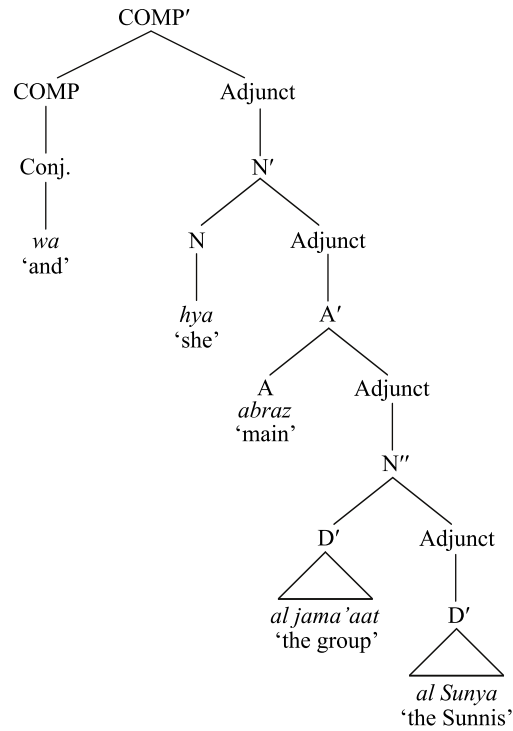
The trees in (9a') and (9b') below show the difference between the structure of the noun phrases.

- (9a') the main Sunni coalition



The noun phrase of the structure [D'-N'] in *the main Sunni coalition* of the ST has changed into a complex conjoined noun phrase [conj-N-A-D'-D'] in the Arabic TT – *و هي ابرز الجماعات السنية* (*wa hya abraz al jama'aat al sunya*) 'and-she-main-the group-the Sunnis'. Here, the translator translated the above noun English phrase into Arabic with a different structural form as perceived by him and in congruence with his perception of the Arabic language. In particular, he begins his phrase with the conjunction *و* (*wa*) 'and' and adds the necessary determiners *ال* (*al-*) 'the' for each of the nouns so that it becomes grammatically acceptable and easily understood by an Arabic reader.

(9b') wa hya abraz al jama'aat al sunya



2.1.8. Stylistic change in verb phrase and complex clauses

In this subsection, we will examine the stylistic changes that affect the English ST data with respect to verb phrases and verb phrase complements. First, we will consider the data in (10a), which contains a verb phrase complement, and its translation and transliteration in (10b) below.

(8a) ST: Members of Iraq's new parliament meet on Saturday to vote on a new prime minister and other posts after months of wrangling over candidates.
("Iraq poised to choose new premier", BBC, 22 Apr 2006.)

(8b) TT:
تعقد الجمعية الوطنية العراقية (البرلمان) اجتماعا اليوم السبت للمصادقة على عدد من المناصب السيادية في الدولة بما فيها أكثر هذه المناصب اثارة للجدل و هو منصب رئيس الحكومة.

We are concerned with the underlined constituents of the ST and the TT. The linear structures in (10a') and (10b') show the syntactic difference.

(10b') [[al ywum] [al sabt] [lil muSaadaqa 'la 'adad
D' D' P'
he da the Saturday for endorsement

What used to be a verb phrase complement in the ST, *on Saturday v [to vote on a new Prime Minister]* has been translated into Arabic TT as a series of determiner phrases and prepositional phrases. There is no verb. So, the structure is completely changed. The verb *to vote* in the ST text has been translated into TT as a postposition determiner phrase *على المصادقة* (*lil muSaadaqa 'la*) 'the endorsement on', [D-N-P]. Apparently, the translator translated it in accordance with his perception of the Arabic language, hence making it appropriate to the Arabic readers, which is a reflection of the socio-cultural values and orientations of its speakers.

In this section, we will present the variation of stylistic changes in an adjectival phrase, namely *sharp opposition*. Consider first the case on the adjectival phrase *sharp opposition* as in (11a–b) below.

(11b) TT:
 وكان ترشيح الجعفري قد واجه معارضة شديدة من جانب الاكراد و السنة و الجماعات العلمانية.

Transliteration: ... *qad wajaha mu'aaraDa shadyda*...

We are concerned with the underlined constituent. The linear structures in (11a') and (11b') below show the differences.

(11a') [... [had [raised [sharp [opposition] [from Sunnis]]]]].
 IP I' V' A' N' P'

(11b') [... [qad [wajaha [[mu'aaraDa] [shadyda...]]].
 IP CONJ' V' A' N' A
 and faced opposition hard

There is a difference in the order of the noun and the qualifying adjective: in English it is [A'-N'] while in Arabic it is [N'-A']. Also in Arabic, significantly, the adjective phrase begins with the conjunction *wa* ('and') which is structurally typical in Arabic.

8. Conclusion

It has been found that the translator does not seem to give much attention to the grammatical tenses of the ST messages when translating English ST into Arabic. Instead, due to an absence of similar tenses in Arabic to match the tenses of the ST, especially the perfect (past/present) tense, the translator's main concern seems to be to transfer the general content or to convey only the gist of the ST message to the Arabic reading public, taking cognizance more of their cultural, sociolinguistic and social backgrounds. In addition, in the process of translation there were a significant number of stylistic changes. Most of these changes are within the realm of syntax (sentences, clauses and phrases). Some other stylistic changes are due to morphological functions (tenses and verb morphology).

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