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# Beyond Words:
# The Impact of Pragmatic Instruction on Arabic-English Translation Skills

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**Abstract**
This study explores the significance of pragmatic competence in translation education among first-year Algerian students majoring in Arabic–English translation. It highlights the difficulties these learners encounter when relying heavily on literal translation strategies that overlook culturally embedded meanings and contextual nuances. Such strategies often result in pragmatic failure, particularly when students transfer communicative norms directly from Arabic into English or vice versa without considering differences in politeness, directness, and social expectations. The research procedure involved a two-phase assessment. Initially, students were asked to translate a set of carefully selected expressions and short situational utterances before receiving any formal instruction in pragmatics. Their translations revealed frequent breakdowns in meaning, especially in rendering speech acts such as requests, refusals, and compliments. The instructional phase then introduced explicit pragmatic principles grounded in Speech Act Theory and Grice's Cooperative Principle. These frameworks were used to explain how meaning extends beyond literal wording and how implicature, politeness strategies, and conversational maxims shape interpretation across cultures. Following explicit instruction, students' translations were reevaluated. The findings demonstrate statistically significant improvement in their pragmatic performance. Learners showed greater awareness of differences between Arabic politeness conventions and English communicative directness, improved identification of culture-bound speech acts, and enhanced sensitivity to register and levels of formality. They also became more capable of selecting contextually appropriate equivalents rather than mechanically transferring lexical items. The study recommends integrating pragmatic competence into first-year translation curricula through contextualized translation tasks, cross-cultural awareness activities, corpus-based analysis of authentic discourse, and collaborative learning projects that explore pragmatic variation. In Algeria's multilingual context (Arabic–Berber–French), strengthening pragmatic awareness is essential for improving translation accuracy, intercultural communication, and overall professional competence in language mediation.

**Keywords;** Arabic-English translation; Cross-cultural communication; Pragmatics; Speech acts; Translation pedagogy.

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## Introduction

In the diverse field of translation training, language-based competency is not adequate to ensure accurate translations that are culturally appropriate. This is especially the case with Arabic- English translation where profound cultural and pragmatic differences may cause drastic miscommunication (Hatim & Mason, 1997; Nord, 1997). A pioneering study, devoted to first year translation students in Algeria has proved the empowering effect of explicit pragmatic instruction on these impediments and consequently that pragmatic competence is not only a superstructure but a prerequisite for translation teaching (House, 2015; Kasper & Rose, 2002). It is argued that the importance of pragmatic competence has been highlighted by several translation theorists, since translation does not simply imply language transference but communicative mediation between cultures (Baker, 2018; Pym, 2003). As Hatim and Mason (1990) observe, "*translators are mediators between cultures and languages*" (p. 223), a position requiring the ability to comprehend sophisticated pragmatic variations.

## 1. Literature Review: Defining Pragmatic Competence

Pragmatic competence, as defined by Leech (1983) and Thomas (1983), two major dimensions: pragmalinguistic competence (knowledge of the linguistic repertory of tools for carrying out speech acts) and sociopragmatic competence (awareness to social variables that shape appropriate language use). Both facets are deemed to be of paramount importance for translation (Bachman, 1990; Kasper & Roever, 2005). Pragmalinguistics, more specifically, concerns the resources that serve to convey communicative acts and relational/interpersonal meanings such as pragmatic strategies, routines and a wide array of linguistic features.

According to Bardovi-Harlig (1999), pragmatic competence is characterized by "*the ability to use language effectively in order to achieve a specific purpose and to understand language in context*" (p. 677). This skill must be bidirectional for translators (referring to source and target language pragmatic systems). This twofold demand is unique, since the translator not only has to identify pragmatic meanings in the source text but also to re-create them adequately in a target language and communicate sociocultural apt utterances expected by the intended audience. Pragmatic competence has developed as a construct from its early formulation. In their model of communicative competence, Canale and Swain (1980) incorporated pragmatic knowledge among the variety of competencies necessary for language proficiency, whereas other recent theorists such as Bachman and palmer (1996) have further classified communicative knowledge into functional knowledge (ideational, manipulative, heuristic and imaginative functions) and sociolinguistic knowledge (sensitivity to dialects, registers naturalness and cultural references). Recent work has shown the pragmatic skills needed go beyond plain literal meaning into more implicit meanings, alternative expressions and lexical choices. This broader conception is of special relevance to translation studies, since the translator needs to operate between pragmatic systems without losing communicative efficiency. The ability to move across different pragmalinguistic strategies in the light of context dependency involves a higher degree of linguistic adaptation Cross-Cultural Pragmatics: Arabic and English.

## Specific Pragmatic Phenomena in Arabic-English Translation

**Politeness Strategies:** Politeness theory For instance, the politeness of Brown and Levinson (1987) has been used to analyze Arabic in that it is used as a way to exhibit how speakers employ positive politeness strategies such as using honorifics, formulaic expression and indirectness in order not lose face (Emery, 2000; Samarah, 2015). The Arabic concept of *wajh* (face) runs through the network of collectivist ties that influence the maintenance of a harmony based on group relations and hierarchical affiliation, which differs drastically from its more individualist counterpart in Western contexts. This contrast poses translation difficulties in translating Arabic titles, honorifics or deferential language to English, as an inappropriate level of formality may sound stilted or insincere.

**Speech Acts:** This supports findings by Al-Issa (2003), and Nelson et.al. (2002), and Farghal and Al-Khatib (2001) that Arab EFL students realize requests, refusals, apologies, and compliments differently from English speakers by elevating indirectness with more reinforcements. The generation of linguistic expression by way of speech acts differs much more between the two languages. As a case in point, stylistic variation among requests tends to be more marked since Arabic speakers are more likely to perform pre-request developments including elaborate pre-sequence and religious invocations, and extensive groundwork to minimize imposition, whereas English requests are more direct and retain politeness markers as options. Refusal strategies in Arabic frequently take the form of a refusal formula containing mitigations such as explanations, alternative proposals, or expressions of regret to reduce face threat.

**Discourse Patterns:** Johnstone (1991) and Ostler (1987) have accounted for the fact that Arabic discourse is inclined towards parallelism and repetition, which are considered redundant in English academic/professional settings. In Arabic rhetoric, for which none of this is new, *balagha* (literally "eloquence") involves the use of complex metaphors, parallel structures and rhythmic patterns that can serve not only an aesthetic purpose but a persuasive one. The thematic recirculation and embellishment characteristic of Arabic discourse, with the repetition of themes at different angles, is discordant with the linear thesis-driven structure prevalent in English academic writing.

**Conversational Implicature:** Conversational implicature, developed by Grice (1967), refers to meaning generated by inference on the part of a speaker and not contained in the linguistic message. In this sense, Grice (1967) pinpoints that successful communication is based on the so-called the Cooperative Principle, according to which speakers and hearers normally cooperate in order to build mutual understanding during conversation. This rule rests upon four principal maxims. The Maxim of Quantity demands that speakers give just the right amount of information — not too much, and not too little. The Maxim of Quality states that a speaker should say only what he or she believes to be true and for which s/he has adequate evidence. The Maxim of Relation stipulates the information shared to be relevant, and the Maxim of Manner promotes clarity, brevity, and precision.

## 2. Research Methodology: A Two-Phase Approach

### *2.1 Research Questions and Objectives*

The significance of this research lies in responding to call for investigating translating teaching methodology for Algerian students that poses a great discrepancy in its practical application. The first question regards the degree to which explicit pragmatic instruction enhances the performance of first year translation students in dealing with pragmatic contrasts between Arabic and English when translating. Furthermore, the study tackles how increased pragmatic knowledge helps in the translation learning process among Algerian students who are transferring between Arabic (L1) and English (L2). Finally, a further dimension looks at which particular pragmatic transfer errors exemplify the initial efforts of Algerian translation trainees to produce the Arabic-English translation and how specific teaching can remedy this.

These questions are prompted by the observation that successful communication in the target language requires L2 users to mobilize and comprehend grammatically appropriate discourses as they produce sociocultural meaningful utterances. For the Algerian students in a multilingual environment as such with Arabic, French, and English languages of instruction where they operate; pragmatic competence is indeed an intricate challenge that needs to be addressed systematically in pedagogical support.

### *2.2 Participants and Research Context*

The sample for the case study comprised 90 first-year translation students at the Department of English at the University of Hassiba Benbouali, Chlef, Algeria. The following methodological considerations explain the rationale for this choice and prove the validity of the research design. First-year students are fairly homogeneous in English proficiency, about intermediate to upper-intermediate level with novice translation experience that makes it possible to control better for the effects of instruction. The research

was done as part of their Linguistics module which is a course in the first year curriculum that offers an introduction to basic linguistics concepts and models. This course was an ideal pedagogical environment in which to introduce pragmatic instruction as it naturally includes the study of language use in context, speech act theory and sociolinguistic variation. There was strategic need for this intervention at the point in time of the Linguistics course, because students were developing their metalinguistic consciousness and theoretical application of language systems.

### *2.3 Research Design*

The research study was conducted using a systematic pre-test and post-test quasi-experimental design approach to determine the effect of pragmatic instruction, which is consistent with other protocols set forth for interlanguage pragmatics (Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003; Rose & Kasper, 2001). This design was selected in order to be able to capture the particular effects of the instructional treatment, minimizing intervening variables that would alter translation performance.

#### Phase 1: Diagnostic Assessment (Pre-test)

Students were requested to translate the set of target utterances (Prescribed Expressions) with no exposure to pragmatic principles, which was adopted as a baseline in their translation competency. The diagnostic phase encompasses several instruments for capturing multiple aspects of pragmatic competence. The participants performed a translation test of 20 items which were chosen for their potential to result in pragmatic transfer, that is speech acts such as requests, apologies refusals and compliments, culturally-bound expressions and idioms, text samples sensitive to register (academic writing/business correspondence/informal correspondence), or discourse markers and cohesion with pragmatic functions. A subset of 20 participants who undertook think-aloud protocols also offered verbal reports as they performed translation tasks, which provided crucial information about their decision-making and pragmatic reasoning. This diagnosis phase has identified similar transfer errors for pragmatic issues as those reported on Arabic learners in previous studies (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 2005), such as the use of over-polite strategies, inappropriate register crossing, direct translation of culturally-bound formulas and misalignment of speech act realization patterns.

#### Phase 2: Instructional Intervention and Post-test Assessment

This instructional intervention involved 8 weeks (16 contact hours) of explicit pragmatic instruction, also including features derived from Ishihara and Cohen's (2010) teaching pragmatics framework and consciousness-raising strategies recommended by Schmidt (1993, 2001). The intervention incorporated theoretical components which involved: Introduction to pragmatic aspects such as speech acts, politeness theory, and the Grice's maxims Contrastive analysis of Arabic-English pragmatic system exploring cultural dimensions of communication featuring high/low context demarcation and directness/indirectness measures. Practical applications embraced authentic parallel text analysis to indicate differences in pragmatic features, role plays setting out translation situations, peer-reviews of pragmatic appropriateness and examples of pragmatic failure in professional translations. The metacognitive development involved small group discussions on pragmatic choices in translation and construction of personal strategies for dealing with pragmatic transfer. After the instructional manipulation, students were again tested on translation using parallel items to those used before training but avoiding practice effects; pragmatic judgment activities for students (in which they had to judge whether the translation was adequate); and new production tasks including translation of larger texts, in a sustained intense exercise of pragmatics.

## 3. Data Analysis Procedures

Quantitative and qualitative analyses were exerted to generate a vivid picture of the effects of pragmatic instruction. Quantitative methods comprised paired-samples t-tests to compare pre-test and post-test scores, effect size measurement using Cohen's d to consolidate the extent of treatment effects, item

analysis aiming at revealing any local or narrow areas of pragmatic difficulty, as well as correlation tests examining the relationship between participants' awareness scores on pragmatics and their performance in translating. With regard to qualitative analysis, thematic analysis of the think-aloud protocols was carried out to determine the translation strategies used; error analysis was used to classify types of pragmatic transfer (combined with an error typology); content analysis was performed on reflective journals so as to monitor metacognitive development and compare this from baseline situations to post-instruction in any key areas where differences were noted.

### *3.1 Quantitative Analysis: Overall Performance Improvement*

#### *3.1.1 Pre-test/Post-test Comparison*

The analysis of the 90 first-year translation students' performance indicates that all components of pragmatic competence significantly improved after an eight-week period of instruction. By the end of the course, participants scored an average of 73.6% on the translation task up from 52.4% in their pre-test. This is a large mean increase of 21.2 percentage points. A paired-samples t-test for this improvement was crucial ($t(89) = 14.82$, $p < .001$) and a very high effect size (Cohen's $d = 1.56$), which means that the pragmatic instruction exerted considerable practical value.

**Table 1: Overall Translation Performance Scores**

| Assessment Phase | Mean Score | SD | 95% CI | Range |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pre-test | 52.4% | 12.3 | [49.8, 55.0] | 28-76% |
| Post-test | 73.6% | 9.8 | [71.5, 75.7] | 55-92% |
| Mean Improvement | 21.2% | 8.7 | [19.4, 23.0] | 8-41% |

### *3.2 Component-Specific Analysis*

#### *3.2.1 Pragmatic Appropriateness Improvements*

The most marked changes were reported at the level of pragmatic adequacy, where students moved from a correction average of 45.2% to mean score 78.3%. This component had the highest effect size ($d = 2.14$), and this could be interpreted as a reflection of how intervention, focusing on speech act realization patterns and politeness strategies is particularly powerful.

**Example 1: Request Formulation**

**Pre-test translation:**

English source: I wonder if you could possibly pass me the salt

Arabic translation: أتساءل عما إذا كان من الممكن أن تمرر لي الملح؟

**Post-test translation:**

English source: I wonder if you could possibly change your place?

Arabic translation: هل يمكنك تغيير مكانك من فضلك؟

**Example 2: Academic register**

**Pre-test translation:**

Arabic source: رأينا في المحاضرة الأخيرة

English translation: What we have seen in the last lesson

**Post-test Translation:**
Improved translation: What we have discussed in the last lecture

**Example 3: Apology Sequences**
As was observed in the pre-test, the use of literal translation led to 78% of students producing highly formulaic Arabic apologies that were stylistically awkward when conveyed in English:

**Pre-test translation:**
Arabic source: أنا آسفة جدا جدا وأرجو من حضرتك أن تسامحني وأقسم لك بأن لا تكرر هذا الخطأ

English translation: I am very very sorry and I hope your presence forgive me and you have my word that I will not repeat this mistake

**Post-test Translation:**
Arabic source: أنا آسفة جدا جدا وأرجو من حضرتك أن تسامحني وأقسم لك بأن لا تكرر هذا الخطأ

Improved translation: I'm really sorry for my mistake and I swear it will not reoccur/ I deeply regret this error, and apologize. I promise it will never happen again

**Example 4: Compliment Responses**
**Pre-test translation:**
Arabic source: شكرا لك الله يحميك ويحفظك هذا من ذوقك

English translation: Thank you God protects and preserves you, this is your taste

**Post-test Translation:**
Arabic source: شكرا لك الله يحميك ويحفظك هذا من ذوقك

Improved translation: Thank you, may God protect you, this is kind of you

**Example 5: Expressing Condolences**
**Pre-test translation:**
Arabic source: البقاء لله. الله يرحمه ويغفر له ويسكنه فسيح جناته

English translation: May God have mercy on him, forgive him, and grant him a place in Paradise/ God remains and have mercy on him and forgive him and make him lives in his large paradises.
**Post-test Translation:**
Arabic source: البقاء لله. الله يرحمه ويغفر له ويسكنه فسيح جناته

Improved translation: May he rest in peace. I am terribly sorry for your loss.

**Example 6: Invitation Responses**
**Pre-test translation:**
English source: I will be happy to have you over for dinner this Saturday
Arabic translation: سأفرح لأحصل عليك لتناول العشاء هذا السبت

**Post-test translation:**
English source: I will be happy to have you over for dinner this Friday
Arabic translation: سأكون سعيدا بدعوتك لتناول العشاء معنا يوم الجمعة

**Example 7: Declining Food Politely**
**Pre-test translation:**
English source: Thanks a lot, I am full
Arabic translation: شكرا جزيلا انا ممتلئ

**Post-test translation:**
English source: I am full. Thank you very much
Arabic translation: لقد شبعت الحمد لله. شكرا لك

**Example 8: Congratulations with Religious Overtones**
**Pre-test translation:**
Arabic source: مبارك عليك النجاح وفقك الله في حياتك العلمية والخاصة
English translation: Blessed graduation, God made for you a success in your scientific life and private
**Post-test Translation:**
Arabic source: مبارك عليك النجاح وفقك الله في حياتك العملية
Improved translation: Congratulations on your success, I wish you all the best in your career

**Example 9: Religious Condolence Expressions**
Arabic source: الله يرحمه ويغفر له ويسكنه فسيح جناته
English translation: May God have mercy on him, forgive him, and grant him a place in Paradise/ God remains and have mercy on him and forgive him and make him lives in his large paradises.
**Post-test Translation:**
Arabic source: البقاء لله. الله يرحمه ويغفر له ويسكنه فسيح جناته
Improved translation: May he rest in peace. I am terribly sorry for your loss.

***4.*** **Pragmatic Transfer Patterns in Arabic-English Translation**
The comparative analysis between pre-test and post-test translations displays systematic transfer errors of pragmatic nature in nine translation examples. These are the mistakes through which the Algerian first year students of translation dealt with it at first prior to the inferring pragmatic application, and after undergoing the exercise for eight weeks.

**4.1 Register and Formality Mismatches**
**Example 1 - Request Formulation Analysis:**
The pre-test report of the English 'I wonder if you could possibly pass me the salt' being interpreted as "أتساءل عما إذا كان من الممكن أن تمرر لي الملح؟" supports both a translational approach and direct transfer from source to target, because at least in this case, lexical and structure translation occur in Arabic. This translation is syntactically accurate but leads to various pragmatic oddities due to the fact that "I wonder if..." construction in daily requests. After they were taught the students translated a parallel item (I wonder if you could possibly change your place?) as "Can you please to move aside?" noting awareness that Arabic requests commonly are not formulated according to polite indirectness, but using modal verbs followed with politeness rather like in English. This enhancement seems to buttress Blum-Kulka's (1989) cross-cultural study on request realization strategies, where it was found that different ways of linguistic re-formulations were employed across languages to achieve the same illocutionary force.

**Example 2 - Academic Register Awareness:**

The translation "in the last lesson" would imply multiple register mismatches. In the first point, 72% of students have rendered "محاضرة" into "lesson" rather than lecture indicating a lack of knowing that the Arabic word is specifically used to represent formal academic instruction. Second, the choice of the verb "seen" rather than "discussed" for ناقشنا exhibits literal translation without respect to cognitive versus perceptual process in academic discourse. Post-test translations demonstrated a 68% gain in register-appropriate use, with students translating "What we have talked about the last lecture." This enhancement unveils the increasing sensitivity to what Hyland (2009) refers to as "disciplinary discourse communities" with their own particularized lexical/ grammatical and rhetorical practices.

The statistical findings based on register appropriateness report a pivotal development in students' written performance after the assessment. All participants reached a pre-test average of 45.1%, this number increased to 79.4% in the post-test, with a distance of improvement of 34.3 percentage points. This substantial increase in performance was reflected in a Cohen's d effect size of 1.92, which represented a very large practical significance of the intervention.

**2. Culture-Bound Speech Act Realization**

**Example 3 - Apology Sequences:**

The Arabic apology (أنا آسفة جدا جدا وأرجو من حضرتك أن تسامحني وأقسم لك بأن لا تكرر هذا الخطأ), several pragmatic items specific to Arab cultural customs such as intensified markers (i.e., very, very), honorific address forms (i.e., حضرتك), explicit requests for forgiveness and oath-taking are included in the overall apology formula. The pre-test-literal translation exhibits an intensity transfer because the pair of intensifier "very very" is deemed to be childish in English professional interaction while it serves as the right emphasis for Arabic communicative norms. Along this line of reasoning, Tagliamonte (2008) demonstrates that the reduplicated intensification pattern is characteristic of informal, colloquial speech and reflects casual register. The honorific literalization creates significant difficulties, as translating حضرتك as "your presence" creates stilted formality and grammatical incoherence that obscures the intended respectful tone of the original Arabic expression.

Moreover, the face threat of direct request for explicit forgiveness also seems to transgress the English negative politeness strategy that tends to eschew placing pressure on interlocutor to respond in a forgiven response. A further cultural script mismatch is evidenced in the formula of oath making, namely, أقسم لك 'I swear to you', which echoes Arabic collectivist strategies of face saving strategies that maintain a certain level of sincerity by making solemn oaths, but sounds stilted and removed from colloquial language in English individualist contexts where highly credibly commitment utterances are reserved for only the most serious situations. This illustration indicates that a literal translation bereft of awareness of pragmatic cues can turn the contextually fitting Arabic expression of apology into offensive English and violate a number of these norms. This engenders failing indeed to attain the expected illocutionary force endeavour of sincere remorse and willingness to change behaviour. This pattern of improvement is consistent with Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory (1987), which stipulates that positive politeness cultures such as Arabic, and negative politeness cultures like English should utilize contrasting face-work strategies.

**Example 4 - Compliment Response Strategies**

The Arabic reply to compliment "شكرا لك الله يحميك ويحفظك هذا من ذوقك" consists of three ingrained culture-specific components: saying thanks, wishing religious blessing for protection from *Allah*, and redirecting credit deflection to the compliment- giver. The pre-test literal translation 'Thank you God protects and preserves you, this is your taste' illustrates pragmalinguistic failure in terms of absent punctuation resulting in run-on sentence form, the religious formula simply transferred directly without

regard for English secular norms, and a lack of semantic equivalence of the phrase 'your taste' in an English speech act. Post-instruction participants generated "Thank you, may God care for you, It's very nice of you," indicating several pragmatic generalizations: a punctuation mark to separate specific illocutionary acts; re-lexicalizing the blessing as a subjunctive expressed wish (syntactically allowed in English), and reinstalling 'من ذوقك' into its communicative meaning without adhering strictly to the literal sense.

This enhancement seems to tally with Nelson et al.'s (2002) study of Egyptian Arabic compliment responses, which found marked cross-cultural differences between Arabic and English speakers in strategies of acceptance/deflection, demonstrating how expressions of thanks in Arab culture are highly inflected with religious formulas and deflection tactics that need to be culturally transposed if they are to resonate in the other language, and do not exist symmetrically in both languages.

**Example 5 & 9 - Condolence Expression Adaptation:**

These expressions appeared most pragmatic challenge for religious condolence, where the rate of pre-test errors was 89%, but dropped to 8% in post-test demonstrating with an improvement of 91%. The Arabic expression "البقاء لله. الله يرحمه ويغفر له ويسكنه فسيح جناته" combines a religious statement of belief "البقاء لله", and a sequence of three prayer formulas, imploring divine mercy, forgiveness and entrance to paradise respectively. It is conspicuous that the pre-test translation aims to maintain literal meaning such as "May God have mercy on him, forgive him, and grant him a place in Paradise" or the grammatically challenging "God remains and have mercy on him and forgive him and make him lives in his large paradises".

After instruction, 91% of students produced culturally adapted equivalents such as "May he rest in peace. I am terribly sorry for your loss," expressing functionally equivalent forms that emphasize communicative effect rather than literal correctness. This finding is in line with Wierzbicka's (2003) who claims that expressions of emotion are culture bound and need to be pragmatically rather than semantically translated. A statistical analysis indicated that this function category proved the largest degree of improvement of all speech act categories (91%); explicit religious discourse instruction was highly correlated with acquisition ($r = .71$, $p < .001$) – , which means that the most substantial increase of translation competence has been achieved through specific pedagogical intervention in culturally-bound communicative contexts.

**Example 6 - Invitation Acceptance:**

Due to the lack of knowledge or the difficulty to understand the appropriateness of the Arabic language, the literal translation created an inappropriate semantic content, where the phrase "أحصل عليك" suggests acquisition rather than hospitality. Post-test translation marks on "سأكون سعيدا بدعوتك لتناول العشاء معنا يوم الجمعة" show recognition that English-specific hospitality idioms require functional rather than formal equivalence. As revealed, students learned to employ the Arabic invitation frame "دعوة" rather than trying to achieve the transfer of the verb directly. This is in line with Dagut (1976)'s claim that idiomaticity represents a particularly challenging case of translation, due to the fact that idioms convey culture-specific conceptual metaphors which do not necessarily correspond to target languages.

**3. Hospitality and Food-Related Speech Acts**

**Example 7 - Declining Food Politely:**

The translation of "I am full" in pre-test as "انا ممتلئ" reflects insensitivity to Arabic hospitality discourse conventions, including those involving food-related contexts. Although semantically correct, this translation does not employ culturally-expected religious gratitude items and uses a stative adjective

with physical and vulgar connotations and fails to thank the host sufficiently adhering to Arab cultural norms. By way of contrast, the post-instruction translation "I'm full. Thank you" also exhibits a high level of pragmatic awareness, as it possesses the right lexical item "شبعت" (satisfied) instead of "ممتلئ" (filled), religious gratitude term "الحمد لله" (praise be to God), and sequencing of discourse with the satisfaction expression preceding the marker of expressing gratitude.

This finding mirrors Samarah's (2015) research in the integration of religious discourse into Arabic daily interactions, where religious formulae are utilized as politeness markers rather than purely theological utterances. Furthermore, the fact that 67.2% of refusal strategies were not literal intends to demonstrate that students have been able to internalize how in Arabic eating discourses one must engage in an intricate face-saving activity convention, underlining the crucial algorithm of transferring speech acts within hospitality texts when a direct semantic match might lead to pragmatic failure, albeit with lexical fidelity.

## 4. Celebratory Speech Acts with Religious Content

**Example 8 - Congratulations Translation:**

The Arabic congratulation "مبارك عليك النجاح وفقك الله في حياتك العلمية والخاصة" combines congratulations and religious wishes, causing challenges in translating when target audience knowledge expects a secular professional discourse. The pre-test translation "Blessed graduation, God made for you a success in your scientific life and private" incorporated numerous errors attributable to lexical, grammatical, register and cultural mismatch (e.g., creating confusion about "scientific" as compared to academic/career ("العلمية"); divergences in the verb tense as seen through the malformation of the verb pattern "God made for you"; misrepresentation due to direct usage of nominalized awkward phrase "blessed graduation" ; and cultural deficiency inconsistencies ("and private") with the incomplete phrase "and private" (truncated translation of "والخاصة").

Conversely, the post-test translation "Congratulations on your success, I wish you all the best in your career" illustrates a strategic pragmatic adaptation via secularization that caters to various professional practical audiences; generalization of 'حياتك العلمية والخاصة' to "career," and addition of idiomatic formulas for well-wishing expressions. This 73% gain in felicitous negotiation of religious formulas represents students' growing ability to make suitable decisions as to when religious material should be retained, transformed or secularized in relation to the communicative context and audience anticipation. This denotes that competent translation of celebratory speech acts stipulates a conjunction between cultural authenticity and target-audience pragmatic norms.

## 5. Qualitative Analysis: Think-Aloud Protocol Insights

Verbal protocols of 20 students were analyzed, and their strategic behaviours before and after instruction were markedly different. In the pre-instruction condition students exhibited a word-bound strategy consisting of: word- level focus strategy (82% of all decision points involved lexical comparison), extensive dictionary use (76% of subjects used bilingual dictionaries for direct translations) and minimal consideration of cultural issues (only 14% mentioned cultural factors in their verbal reports). A typical pre-instruction verbalization included the following, chosen from Student 23: "I will translate word by word carefully so that I don't miss anything."

### *5.1 Discussion: Theoretical and Pedagogical Implications*

#### *5.1.1 Speech Act Theory Validation*

The results clearly endorse Austin's (1962) and Searle's (1969) speech act theory as a platform for translation pedagogy, including student greatest gains in speech act categories characterized by highly divergent Arabic-English realization patterns such as requests (67.6% improvement), apologies (75.6% improvement), condolences (91.0%).The relatively large enhancement on the condolence expressions in

particular can be interpreted in light of Searle's (1976) classification of illocutionary acts as being expressive acts whose perlocutionary effect (of consoling the bereaved) hinges on cultural appropriateness more than propositional content. Once this had been accomplished, and students were aware that the illocutionary force of "الله يرحمه" could be obtained by a secular utterance like "May he rest in peace", which does not carry religious content overtly or at all literally. The quality of translation improved substantially, thereby highlighting that successful translation is contingent upon acknowledging that equivalent communicative intentions can be fulfilled by culturally-attuned linguistic forms rather than through strictly lexical references.

### *5.1.2 Politeness Theory Applications*

Brown & Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory explains that these differences of request and apology production are systematic between Arabic and English, where Arabic is a positive politeness culture marked by reliance on in-group solidarity and elaborate face-work that adopts high level of mitigation even for minor imposition while English professional discourse tends to use negative politeness strategies based upon reducing imposition through both brevity and directness. The marked increase in request translations (67.6%) also implies that explicit instruction on the politeness strategy continuum, or the range from direct, through conventionally indirect to non-conventionally indirect forms yields a rich supply of target language appropriate forms. This extends and underpins Sifianou's (1992) work on the same issue in demonstrating that it is not enough for translation students to master different methods of politeness, need to learn when they should transfer act strategies versus cultural norms when translating requests, pinpointing the intricate interplay between linguistic form and cultural expectations to achieve effective cross-cultural communication.

### *5.1.3 Gricean Maxims in Translation*

The errors in translation demonstrate the violations of Grice's (1967) Maxim of Manner (be brief, avoid ambiguity), observed with both those translations that were also incorrect in the pre-test invitation translation "سأفرح لأحصل عليك", and those who created unintended semantic content through a close approximation to the original speech act, and thus violating the Maxim of Quality when translating words -that he/she would be wishing for-, which semantically mismatches English contexts. Post-instruction improvements indicate that students became sensitive to the differing ways in which Gricean maxims function in different languages with a preference for Arabic discourse towards the Maxim of Relation through heavy contextualizing and English professional discourse privileging Quantity and Manner through brevity. This train of thought is consistent with Keenan's (1976) findings on cultural variance regarding cooperative principles which reads that effective translation must not only be based on perceived linguistic rules guiding communication in the respective languages but also how these are weighted and balanced in different ways across cultural settings, thus compelling translators to negotiate which principles to prioritize to promote functional equivalence.

## Conclusion

This study yields compelling evidence that teaching explicitly the pragmatics as a core base for translation competence among first year Arabic-English translation students. Findings indicate the students shifted perspective from literal, word-for-word translation mode to function-oriented difference approach to translational strategies based on communicative efficiency and cultural appropriateness, with pragmatic appropriateness as the most responsive factor in terms of instruction. Furthermore, the systematic features of pragmatic transfer types found (namely register incongruence, culture-bound speech act realizations and inappropriate handling of religious discourse) supports the idea that translation competence is much more than mere knowledge of bilingual lexicon, especially when dealing with culturally-laden genres like condolences, apologies and hospitality offers. Theoretically, Speech Act

Theory, Politeness Theory and Gricean Maxims can be considered as cornerstones in translation pedagogy in which effective translation is based on rendering similar illocutionary force instead of retaining surface linguistic forms. Besides, the qualitative analysis denotes that there is a hypothesized underlying cognitive shift from dictionary-supported, word-driven processing to strategic use of context (informed by expectations of an audience and cultural knowledge). Consequently, the pedagogical implications are hence straightforward: pragmatic competence should be taught from the earliest phases of translator training on, incorporating real life examples of culture-dependent speech acts with a high potential for pragmatic failure, particularly religious expressions and face-threatening acts.

However, the fact that this study is set in a single institutional context and language pair reduces its external validity. Hence, future research should dissect longitudinal development of competence, among comparison with different pairs and the application of pragmatic competence in an authentic professional context. Ultimately, this study corroborates that translation is an act of intercultural communication and that a high degree of knowledge is imperative to construct meaning in certain contexts. This study also serves to inform the reconceptualization of translation competence as a multifaceted entity with pragmatic awareness at its core and proves that such competence can be gradually constructed through catered pedagogic interventions that better equip students for complex communicative tasks in the world of professional practice.

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