

End of Chapter Exercises- Chapter 4

1. Choose a notional category such as time reference, gender, countability, visibility, modality or animacy and compare the way it is expressed in your target language with the way it is expressed in English. Comment in particular on the sort of problems that could arise in translation from differences in the way the notion in question is expressed in the two languages. You may find it helpful to refer to grammars of your source and target languages and to base your discussion on an analysis of authentic translated texts.

- Modality.

Translating modality from English into Arabic, and vice versa, is rather problematic due to the fact that while modals in English are “grammatical auxiliaries”, in Arabic they are mostly “lexical”. Modals in English can be divided into “Action” modals and “Belief” modals. By “action” modals, we mean modals which express permitting, recommending or prohibiting. “Belief” modals, on the other hand, express the speaker’s beliefs about the likelihood of a certain situation.

This classification is very important, as translation students/trainees usually identify all modals as action ones, which results in misleading translations into Arabic especially if the modal used is a “belief” one, as modals in Arabic use expressions that denote the meaning. Hence the necessity of clearly identifying the meaning and function of the modal used in English.

Modality in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is more often than not non-verbal. Verbal modals are rare:

Verbs	يرجح – يحتمل – يمكن – يجزم – يجب – يتوجب – يلزم – يتحتم – يتعين – ينبغي
Prepositional Phrases	من المرجح – من المحتمل – من الممكن – من الجائز- باستطاعته – بإمكانه – في وسعه – بمقدوره
Adverbs	ربما – لعل – عسى
Negative nominal expressions	لا شك – لا ريب – دون شك – لا محالة – لا بد
Comparative expressions	أغلب الظن – الأرجح
Articles	قد

Examples:

• **Can:**

Action Modal: means “ability” or “capacity”

He can swim --- يستطيع/ يمكنه/ بإمكانه/ باستطاعته السباحة

: means “permission”

You cannot stay out late --- لأسمح لك بالعودة متأخرا

Belief Modal: means “possibility”

It can be the thief who killed the guy ---

من الجائز/ الممكن/ المرجح/ المحتمل أن يكون اللص هو الذي قتل الرجل

• **Must:**

Action Modal: means “obligation”

You must study hard --- يجب عليك/ يجب عليك أن تستذكر دروسك

Belief Modal: means “certainty”

He must be home --- من المؤكد / أغلب الظن أنه بالبيت

(*) The opposite of must as a belief modal is “can’t”, and in this case, it can be translated by negating the sentence.

• **Should:**

Action modal: means “advisability”

He should go to the doctor --- ينصح/ يستحسن أن يذهب إلى الطبيب

: means “necessity”

We should change the plan ---

ينبغي/ من الضروري/ علينا أن نغير الخطة

Belief modal: means “probability”

It should be sunny tomorrow ---

أغلب الظن/ من المرجح/ على الأرجح/ من المفترض أن يكون الجو مشمساً غداً

• **Have to:**

Action modal: it is like “must” except that it denotes internal obligation.

: All I have to do is drive my car slowly ---

كل ما يتعين علي فعله هو أن أقود السيارة ببطء

: I have to go --- يتعين/ يتحتم/ يجب علي الذهاب

: We will have to cancel the trip (i.e. we are compelled) ---

سنضطر إلى إلغاء الرحلة

Belief modal: It is exactly like “must”, denoting “near certainty”

: He has to be home --- من المؤكد / أغلب الظن أنه بالبيت

• **May/Might:**

Action Modal: means “permission”

: You may come in --- بإمكانك الدخول

Belief Modal: means “possibility”

: It might snow tomorrow ---

قد/من الجائز/من الممكن/ من المحتمل أن يتساقط الجليد غداً

2- Imagine that you have been provisionally asked to trans-late John Le Carré’s *The Russia House* (1989) into your target language. Before you can sign the translation con-tract, the publishers insist that you provide a sample translation of a couple of pages to allow them to assess your competence as a translator of this type of literature. They choose the following extract and ask you to submit a target version of it, stating that they appreciate that you may not have had time to read the whole novel but that they just want to see how you might handle Le Carré’s distinctive use of language. They provide you with a short summary of the context to help you assess the tone of the extract.

Note to the translator:

John Le Carré’s *The Russia House* is a spy thriller which revolves around the then new era of glasnost in the Soviet Union. The general feeling that one gets from reading this novel is that nothing much has changed and that the cold-war machinations are still at play and are as irrelevant and as brutal as ever. The narrator in the following extract is Palfrey, legal adviser to the British secret service or, in his own words, „Legal adviser to the illegals” (p. 47). In this passage, which is very near the end of the book, he ironically sums up the manner in which the hypocritical bureaucrats of Whitehall and Washington dealt with their own inadequacies when their major spying operation went wrong. The various people mentioned, such as Ned and Barley, had all been involved in the operation in one way or another.

Extract for translation:

Oh, and note was taken. Passively, since active verbs have an unpleasant way of betraying the actor. Very serious note. Taken all over the place.

Note was taken that Ned had failed to advise the twelfth floor of Barley’s drunken breakout after his return from Leningrad.

Note was taken that Ned had requisitioned all manner of resources on that same night, for which he had never accounted, among them Ben Lugg and the services of the head listener Mary, who sufficiently overcame her loyalty to a brother officer to give the committee a lurid account of Ned’s high-handedness. Demanding illegal taps! Imagine! Faulting telephones! The liberty!

Mary was pensioned off soon after this and now lives in a rage in Malta, where it is feared she is writing her memoirs.

Note was also taken, if regretfully, of the questionable conduct of our Legal Adviser de Palfrey – I even got my *de* back* – who had failed to justify his use of the Home Secretary’s delegated authority in the full knowledge that this was required of him by the secretly agreed Procedures Governing the Service’s Activities as Amended by etcetera, and in accordance with para-graph something of a deniable Home Office protocol.

The heat of battle was however taken into account. The Legal Adviser was not pensioned off, neither did he take himself to Malta. But he was not exonerated either. A partial pardon at best. A Legal Adviser should not have been so close to an operation. An inappropriate use of the Legal Adviser’s skills. The word injudicious was passed around.

It was also noted with regret that the same Legal Adviser had drafted a glowing testimonial of Barley for Clive’s signature not forty-eight hours before Barley’s disappearance, thus enabling Barley to take possession of the shopping list,** though presumably not for long.

In my spare hours, I drew up Ned's terms of severance and thought nervously about my own. Life inside the Service might have its limitations but the thought of life outside it terrified me.

(pp. 412–413)

* Palfrey's full name is Horatio Benedict de Palfrey, but, as he explains earlier (p. 47), „you may forget the first two [names] immediately, and somehow nobody has ever remembered the “de” at all”.

** A document detailing information required by White-hall and Washington from the informant/potential defector on the Russian side.

When you have translated the above text into your target language, discuss any differences between the source and target versions in terms of grammatical meaning, paying particular attention to the use of passive structures²² and the reflexive *take himself to Malta* (paragraph 6). You may also wish to use this opportunity to consolidate your knowledge of other areas covered so far, namely semantics and lexis. Consider, for instance, the evoked meaning of an expression such as *all over the place* (paragraph 1), or the impact of an unusual collocation such as *lives in a rage* (paragraph 4); how well do these expressions trans-late into your target language?

Comment at length on the strategies you used to over-come difficulties at the grammatical level in particular.

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3- *Miss Smilla's Feeling for Snow* is the title of one of two English translations of an award-winning novel by the Danish author Peter Høeg, which first appeared in 1992. On the surface, the story revolves around Smilla Qaaviquaq Jaspersen, daughter of a Greenlandic Inuit mother and a rich Danish dentist, who becomes suspicious about the death of a Greenlandic child in Copenhagen and decides to investigate it. At a deeper level, the story is about Denmark's colonial history and the relationship between different groups in Danish society today. In the following extract (Høeg 2005:262–263), Smilla switches from reflecting on her current situation to remembering aspects of her past life.

Imagine that Peter Høeg and the English publisher of this novel have commissioned you and various other translators to render a number of passages, including this one, into your target language(s) in order to establish whether the English translation can serve as a source text in situations where translators from Danish (for example into languages like Ukranian or Kurdish) are unlikely to be avail-able. When you have translated it, comment on the relevant difficulties and the strategies you used to convey the function(s) of each tense and the impact of the switch in tenses. Your comments need to be clear and accessible, because they will be passed on to the translators who will eventually be commissioned to render the full novel into a range of languages. These translators will need to be sensitized to the impact of the interplay of tenses, among other things, in the English translation – because they will use this English translation as a source text.

I put on my tracksuit. I knot the steel ball into a long white bath towel that I've folded double. Then I hang it back on its hook. And I sit down to wait.

ارتدي بذلتي الرياضية الفضفاضة. أقوم بربط الكرة الفولاذية في فوطة الحمام البيضاء الطويلة والتي كنت قد قمت بطيها على نصفين. ثم أعلقها مرة ثانية على الخطاف. أجلس لأنتظر.

Comments: The tense here is present simple describing what she is doing at the present moment. The translator opts for the present tense المضارع in order to highlight the coming part, where she travels back in time to the past.

If you have to wait for a long time, you have to seize hold of the waiting or it will become destructive. If you let things slide, your consciousness will waver, awakening fear and restlessness, then depression strikes, and you're pulled down.

إذا كانت مضطرا للانتظار لفترة طويلة، فمن الأفضل أن تحكم قبضتك على الإنتظار هذا وإلا سيكون سببا في دمارك! فإنك إذا سمحت لأي شيء أن يتسلل خلسة إلى وعيك، فلسوف يختلّ وعيك، ويوقظ مشاعر الخوف والاضطراب بداخلك. وعندها يسدد الأكتئاب ضربته ليجزك إلى غياهب اليأس.

Comments: The same applies here. She is speaking to the invisible reader in this part about the waiting in general and how to deal with it using the present tense for facts.

*To keep up my spirits I ask myself, What is a human being? Who am I?
Am I my name?*

وحتى أحافظ على معنوياتي مرتفعة مرفرفة، سألت نفسي: ما الإنسان؟ من أنا؟ وهل لي نصيب من اسمي؟

Comments: The same as the paragraph before.

The year I was born my mother travelled to West Greenland and brought home the girl's name Millaaraq. Because it reminded Moritz of the Danish word mild, which didn't exist in the vocabulary of his love relationship with my mother, because he wanted to transform everything Greenlandic into something that would make it European and familiar, and because I apparently had smiled at him – the boundless trust of an infant, which comes from the fact that she still doesn't know what's in store for her – my parents agreed on Smillaaraq. With the wear and tear that time subjects all of us to, it was shortened to Smilla.

في العام الذي ولدت فيه، سافرت أُمِّي إلى "وست جرينلاند" لتعود وفي جعبتها اسم فتاة هو "ميلاراك". ولأن الاسم كان يُدكّر "موريتز" بالكلمة الدنماركية "مايلد" أي "معتدل" أو "اللين الجانب"، وهي الكلمة الضائعة من قاموس علاقته بأُمِّي، ولأنه أراد أن يضيف الطابع الأوروبي والمألوف على كل ما هو من أصل جرينلاندي، ولأنه يبدو أنني كنت قد ابتسمت في وجهه – بكل ما يحمله قلب طفلة من ثقة واطمئنان لا حدود لهما، مصدرهما جهلها بما يخبئه لها القدر – فقد قرر والدي تسميتي "سميلاراك". ولكن عوامل الزمن التي لا تترك شيئا على حاله دون أن يَبلى، اختصر اسمي إلى "سميلا".

Comments: Here she takes the trip to the past talking about her mother and father calling her "Smillaaraq". The tense the translator opts for here is the past just like the English to highlight this time travelling, except for the part where she speaks about the "boundless trust of the an infant, which comes from the fact that she still doesn't know what's in store for her" and "the wear and tear that time subjects all of us to". In these two parts, she somehow moves back to stating facts from present experience. That's why the translator has shifted to the present in Arabic as well.
