

The Influence of Translation on the Arabic Language Among College Students

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influence of translation on the Arabic language among college students, focusing on key translation resources that impact their daily lives, students' perceptions of translation quality, and their ability to identify Arabic structures influenced by foreign languages. Using a quantitative approach with questionnaires and tests, the study found that internet-based translation resources are the most popular among students, and the quality of translation is perceived as generally good to neutral. However, students struggle significantly to recognize translation-influenced Arabic structures. The study highlights the importance of addressing this issue and urges college students and translation professionals to seek practical solutions.

Introduction

Translation plays an essential role in peoples' lives in the modern age. However, it is regarded as a major factor in impacting every language around the world including the Arabic language in both positive and negative ways. As the translation influence on the Arabic language continues to take different shapes and adjust with the technological advancements, it is crucial for researchers to study this influence among the new generation, especially college students.

Statement of the Problem

As translation started to seize every aspect of our lives, great influence began to appear on the Standard Arabic Language used today, especially by Arab college students. This claim has been supported by many scholars who observed the influence of translation on Arabic from many sides: the linguistic side, the sociolinguistic side, and even the technological side. Additionally, Arabic speakers' reaction to this influence has been studied by many researchers. In their studies, different groups of Arabic speakers have been chosen such as journalists, book authors, and news announcers.

However little attention was paid to college students who work with standard Arabic every day of their study

journey and their usage will potentially shape the future of the Arabic language. Therefore, this research paper examines the problem of the translation influence on the Arabic language, focusing on college students' reaction to this phenomenon.

The Research Objectives

This study was conducted to achieve two main objectives. Firstly, it aims to identify the main resources of translation that have a considerable influence on the Arabic language among college students. Secondly, it measures the students' capability of distinguishing between well-formed Arabic sentences and Arabic sentences that have been influenced by the foreign language of the source.

The Research Questions

This study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What are the main resources of translation that impact the daily life of college students?
2. How do college students rate the translation they encounter in different media channels?
3. Can University of Aden students distinguish between well-formed Arabic sentences and Arabic sentences that have been influenced by the foreign language of the source?

The Research Significance

This research fills gaps in past literature by exploring the influence of new media channels, such as subtitled movies, series, and fan translations on social media, on Arabic translation. It highlights the impact of technological advancements on translation and language while providing valuable numerical data on college students' trends and attitudes, offering insights for future studies focused on this demography.

The Research Limitation

This study on the influence of translation on the Arabic language among college students is limited in scope due to several factors. The vast population of Arab college students and the logistical challenges of selecting a sample from multiple countries led the researcher to focus on students in Yemen, specifically at the University of Aden. Time constraints further necessitated limiting the study to one semester and a smaller sample size. Additionally, the study examines the impact of English translation only, as the researcher specializes in the Arabic-English language pair and considers English the most influential among foreign languages like French and Turkish. Lastly, due to the increasing number of translation resources, the study is restricted to four key sources: books, news, series and movies, and social media translations.

Literature Review

Translation in the Modern Age

The history of translation dates back to ancient times, but it became an academic discipline in the 1950s and 1960s, focusing on the process, theory, and application of translation. The past century witnessed a significant shift in translation's role in daily life, with globalization making translation indispensable, as "globalization necessitates translation" (Abdalla, 2018, p.8). The digital age further revolutionized translation, replacing traditional tools with advanced technology like high-tech computers and electronic documents (Odacioglu & Kokturk, 2012, p.1086). Translation now plays a pivotal role in connecting languages, media, and ideologies, as noted by Bassnett (2014): "a prime mover in this global

world is the translation between languages, media, cultures, and ideologies" (p.16). This evolution has greatly impacted Arabic media, with English's dominance in globalization and technology influencing Arabic through translation and direct contact, as observed by Ababneh and Al Rousan (2020): "Arabic media [has been] greatly influenced by it" (p.19). These changes, combined with the unique characteristics of the Arabic language, make the influence of foreign languages on Arabic particularly distinct.

The Negative Impact of English on Arabic through Translation

Recent studies in translation and linguistics have highlighted both the positive and negative effects of translation on Arabic. Positively, translation is viewed as "a way of enriching the vocabulary of the Arabic language and keeping pace with the latest scientific, social, and economic developments across the world" (Abdalla, 2018, p.36). However, scholars like Darwish (as cited in Abdalla, 2018) argue that Arabic has suffered from linguistic transference, particularly from English, noting that "all languages are bound to suffer at the hands of inexperienced and inept translators" (p.35). Additionally, there is a consensus among scholars that Arabic, being the language of the Holy Quran, is considered sacred, and its speakers believe it should be preserved in its purest form (Abderrahman, p.224).

The Letter/Sound Level. The lowest level of the linguistic influence is the letter or sound level. Regarding this level, Asfour (2017) provides examples of new sounds that he believes entered Arabic through translation. Although he describes the entrance of additional sounds like the v and p sounds as not negative at all, he confirms that neglected Arab translators caused huge damage to the language by ignoring short vowels of Arabic (الحركات) and replacing them with long vowels (حروف العلة) in English nouns as Clinton كلينتون and William ويليام. This led in his opinion to distorting not only English proper nouns but also some Arabic ones like نورا and رولا.

which should be spelled correctly as نورة and زلي, as he described.

The Word Level. The linguistic influence of translation at the word level is one of the most noticeable aspects, particularly through loanwords, which are a natural result of intercultural communication (Hoffer, 2005, p.53). Arabic, like other languages, has both lent and borrowed words for centuries, but some scholars criticize the usage of loanwords in Arabic today as being "tacky and shaded with vagueness compared to the Arabic style" (Hashani, 2013, p.7). Despite efforts by Arabic language academies to introduce Arabic equivalents for foreign words, Arabic remains heavily influenced by foreign languages, especially English, due to "the problem [being] with the popularization and usage, not the Arabic word itself" (Ahmad, 2017). Translators have struggled with new English terms lacking direct Arabic equivalents, using techniques like Arabicization through affixation and derivation, leading to the creation of unusual affixes like *بي* (inter) and *تد* (under), which sound foreign to Arabic morphology (Asfour, 2017, p.195). Similarly, derivation has resulted in strange terms such as *ينزور* (defoliate) and *يزقطب* (depolarize), which are often rejected by Arabic speakers (Asfour, 2017, p.200). The negative impact arises because "the great majority of Arab translators are more qualified in the source language but less so in the target language" (Abderrahman, 1995, p.231), compounded by some translators' insistence on translating one English word with one Arabic equivalent, a strategy that is not always suitable (Asfour, 2017, p.198).

The Phrase Level. This particular level, the phrase level, was less considered in past research, but gained more attention in the recent years. It drew the attention of many translators and linguists. For example, Anani (2000) demonstrated that English is a structural language that uses the words order to convey a specific meaning (p.45), while Arabic depends on the tools of *E'rab* (الإعراب) to determine the word meaning. Therefore, the main rule to deal with English phrases in Anani's view is the

transformation and trying not to commit to the English structure. Lack of awareness of this rule caused Arabic phrases to sound weak and strange in many translations and even some original Arabic writings. Asfour (2007) presented four characteristics of the English impact on the phrase level of Arabic:

- (i) using أكثر+مصدر (More + gerund) to translate more + adjective/adverb structure instead of using the original Arabic expression اسم التفضيل (the noun of preference). For example, more apparent is translated into أكثر دقة instead of أدق.
- (ii) using اسم+صفة (Noun + Adjective) to translate the English structure adjective + noun without using the Arabic equivalent المضاف والمضاف إليه (the added and the added to) For example, awareness seminar into ندوة توعية instead of ندوة توعية.
- (iii) following the English style in using similes where it considered arbitrary usage in the Arabic style. For example, expressions like "الواقعية" and "البرلمان كسلطة تشريعية".
- (iv) using the structure بشكل/بصورة + صفة (in + adjective +way/manner) to translate English adverbs instead of using the Arabic equivalents المفعول المطلق (A unique past of speech in Arabic). For example, translating "The city developed largely" into "تطورت المدينة بشكل كبير" instead of "تطورت المدينة تطوراً كبيراً".

While Asfour (2017) focuses more on the syntactic impact of English on Arabic phrases, Darwish (2009) would rather discuss the metaphoric and collocational impact. He believes that the translation of some English metaphors and collocations does not respect the Arabic way of conveying incorporeal expressions. To support his claim, he provides examples of the English collocation "jump to conclusions" which combines a metaphorical relationship between "jump" and "conclusions" to create a vivid mental image. However, its literal Arabic translation (يقفز إلى النتائج) fails to produce a meaningful metaphor, as "jump" and "results" do not collocate in

Arabic, leading to epistemic dissonance and an inane expression (pp. 226, 227).

However, the main problem with these expressions is that they easily become very popular and spread all over the Arabic media, news, books, and even the writings of Arab college students, although they lack basic forms of Arabic eloquence.

The Clause Level. In the past years, a growing interest among scholars in studying structural impact of English on the Arabic language became evident especially after a number of scholars suggested that “the syntactic level of Arabic has begun to deviate from the original norm of Standard Arabic” (Ababneh & Al Rousan, 2020, p.20).

The impact of English on Arabic clauses has been addressed in three main areas of research: word order, passive voice, and idioms. Arabic traditionally follows a (Verb + Subject + Complement) structure, but the (Subject + Verb + Complement) order, common in English declarative sentences, has become dominant in Arabic news headlines due to translation influences (Abdalla, 2018, p.47). In passive constructions, English allows mentioning the agent using a by-phrase, unlike Arabic, which traditionally uses the passive voice only when the agent is unknown (Anani, 2000, p.68). However, weak translations, such as قُصِفَتِ الْمَدِينَةُ بِوَسْطَةِ طَائِرَاتِ الْعَدُوِّ (The city was bombed by enemy planes), have gained acceptance despite their awkwardness (Naguib, 2005, p.84). Regarding idioms, Ghazala (2008) defines them as "a fixed phrase whose form is usually unchangeable and whose meaning is always the same, inflexible, metaphorical and indirect" (p.128). Translating idioms poses challenges, with Arab translators employing idiom-to-idiom equivalence, paraphrasing, or literal translation—the last being the most harmful approach when widely accepted equivalents exist (Abdalla, 2018). Literal idiom translations have become widespread through cinema and TV subtitles, despite being criticized for neglecting the figurative meaning (Anani, 2000, p.123).

The Research Design

A multi-quantitative design was used to investigate the research problem, aligning with the study's objectives of examining college students' contact with translation in daily life, their perceptions of translation quality, and their ability to distinguish between well-formed Arabic sentences and those influenced by foreign languages. The test was deemed ideal for assessing this ability. Unlike previous studies, which primarily employed qualitative methods and focused on specific media or published works (e.g., Darwish, 2009, who studied Al Jazeera), this research addressed a specific community—college students—through a quantitative approach. This need for quantitative research was highlighted by the lack of similar studies in the literature, except for works like Abdalla (2018), who studied journalists.

The Population and Sample of the Study

To investigate the influence of translation on Arabic from a college student perspective, the study population was selected from the University of Aden due to its accessibility and diversity. As Yemen's second-oldest university, it attracts students from southern governorates (e.g., Abyan, Aden, Hadramaut) and northern areas affected by civil war-induced migration since 2015. The sample included 50 students with varying levels of Arabic and English proficiency, divided into three groups: those specializing in English (Business department, Faculty of Languages and Translation), those studying both languages (Translation department, Faculty of Languages and Translation), and those using both languages in their studies but not specializing in either (Biology and Chemistry department, Faculty of Applied Science).

Data Collection Instruments

To achieve the research objectives, the researcher chose a multi-quantitative design which requires the usage of more than one instrument to collect measurable and numerical data. The first instrument was a structured questionnaire. The second instrument was a test with a closed-end question.

The Questionnaire Design. The questionnaire aimed to collect numerical data on University of Aden students' attitudes toward the presence of translation in their daily lives. It consisted of four main sections: personal information, frequency of media and translation use, the proportion of translated media versus native Arabic media, and students' evaluation of translation quality across media channels. Questions about news were included based on scholarly claims that Arabic news language is heavily influenced by foreign languages, as discussed in the literature review (Chapter 2, p.2). The questionnaire design drew insights from prior studies, such as Gambo and Onyenegecha's (2017) survey on English versus Turkish use in North Cyprus social media, and templates from websites like SurveyMonkey.

The Test Design. The test, based on past studies by Abdalla (2018), Asfour (2007), and Ababneh & Al Rousan (2020), addressed key linguistic issues like passivation, spelling, and structure. It included 12 sentence pairs, requiring students to identify well-formed Arabic sentences versus those influenced by translation. Designed to answer the third research question, the test aimed to assess students' ability to distinguish accurate Arabic from translation-affected text.

Validity and Piloting of the Questionnaire and test

The validity of the questionnaire and test was confirmed by a panel of three Ph.D. judges, who agreed they were fully aligned with the research objectives. They praised their clarity and organization, with one suggesting linguistic refinements to enhance coherence. Additionally, a pilot study with three participants identified and resolved phrasing issues, resulting in a clearer and more understandable final draft.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The Questionnaire Results

The questionnaire consisted of eight questions. The first, second, and third questions are expected to gather demographic data (gender, age, and college name). The fourth question deals with students' trends toward translation resources. The fifth, sixth, and seventh

questions focus on the percentages of translation in students' daily lives. The eighth question asks students to rate the quality of translation in several resources. On the other hand, the test deals with the students' ability to distinguish between well-formed and translation-impacted sentences.

The First, Second, and Third Question (Demographic Data). As mentioned earlier, the first three questions collected the demographic data of the sample including the students who responded to the questionnaire and test at the same time. Table 1 shows a noticeable variation in the gender of students. Whereas female makes up the vast majority of the sample, the male makes up only 4%. This is due to the fact that the majority of students in the Faculty of languages and translation and the Faculty of Applied Science are females. Therefore, the participants' gender aligns closely with the majority in both faculties.

Table 1 Gender Data of the Sample: <i>Gender Data of the Sample</i>		
Gender	Frequency	Percent
Female	46	92.0
Male	4	8.0
Total	50	100.0

Table 2 provides information on the age of students who participated. Most students fill in the 21-25 category which is predictable for a BA student. However, there are exceptions with 11 students who fill in the 18-20 and 26-30 categories.

Table 2 Age Data of the Sample: <i>Age Data of the Sample</i>		
Age	Frequency	Percent
18-20	10	20.0
21-25	39	78.0
26-30	1	2.0
Total	50	100.0

Table 3 presents the departments of the participants with percentages of each one. The translation department scores the highest percentage because it is the researcher department therefore collecting participants in there was easier.

Table 3 Students' departments: <i>Students' departments</i>

Department	Frequency	Percent
Translation	20	40.0
Business	15	30.0
Biology & Chemistry	15	30.0

The Fourth Question of the Questionnaire

In the question four, students were asked to choose the amount of time they usually spend using different types of translation resources. The amounts of time were classified into five categories: (1) every day, (2) more than once a week, (3) once a week, (4) once a month, (5) not at all.

Table 4 Students' answers to the Fourth Question: Students' answers to the Fourth Question						
Question 4: Translated Media		Every day	More than once a week	Once a week	Once a month	Not at all
A	read translated books into Arabic (printed or electronic)	12%	10%	12%	38%	28%
		Often: 22%		Not Often: 50%		
B	watch subtitled or dubbed series and movies in Arabic	10%	30%	24%	28%	6%
		Often: 40%		Not Often: 52%		
C	watch Arabic news on TV	22%	14%	8%	16%	40%
		Often: 36%		Not Often: 24%		
D	read or watch Arabic news on the internet	20%	20%	18%	8%	32%
		Often: 40%		Not Often: 26%		
E	read Arabic news in the newspaper	10%	2%	8%	6%	74%
		Often: 12%		Not Often: 14%		
F	depend on Arabic machine translation	24%	28%	14%	12%	22%
		Often: 52%		Not Often: 26%		

	to understand posts and videos in English on social media						
G	read Arabic fan translation s on social media?	18%	38%	4%	20%	20%	
		Often: 56%		Not Often: 24%			
	Total Average:	37%		31%		32%	

Note: For (b) and (d), there is a 2% for the participants who left the section without choosing.

Students show little interest in newspapers, unlike the older generation, who values them greatly. While students initially struggled with identifying fan translation, further clarification helped resolve this issue. Statements (f) and (g) recorded the highest "often" percentages at 52% and 56%, reflecting the growing role of technology and social media as primary sources of information and translation. Conversely, translated series and movies had the lowest "Not at all" responses, highlighting the significant influence of visual media on language and behavior. Figure 1 displays the frequency of students' use of translation resources, from lowest to highest.

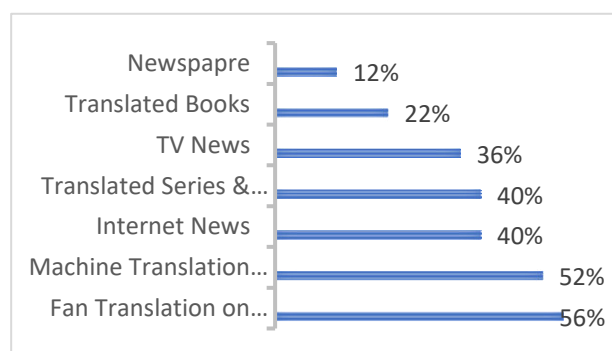


Figure 1 Students' Usage of Translation Resources
Students' Usage of Translation Resources

The Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh Questions of the Questionnaire. In the questions five, six, and seven, students were asked to think of all books, series, and

movies they watched. Then they have to identify approximately the percentages that represent how many translated books they read, and subtitled or dubbed series and movies they watched. The choices of the percentages were 100%, 80%, 50%, 30% and 0%.

Regarding translated books, students preferred to choose a 30% percentage that represents the amount of translated books they have read as shown in Table 4. It is clear that reading, in general, is less popular among the new generation. However, with counting academic papers that are compulsory on college students, we can say that reading is a daily practice for a college student.

Table 5 Students' Answers to Question Five: Students' Answers to Question Five		
Translated Books	Frequency	Percent
100%	4	8%
80%	6	12%
50%	12	24%
30%	24	48%
0%	4	8%
Total	50	%100

Concerning series and movies, students' choices presented in Table 5 range between 80% and 50% percentage. That shows their great interest in translated media with subtitles.

Table 6 Students' Answers to Question Six:		
Subtitled Series & Movies	Frequency	Percent
100%	9	18.0
80%	19	38.0
50%	13	26.0
30%	9	18.0
Total	50	100.0

Dubbed series and movies are less interesting to the students than the subtitled ones, as presented in Table 6. However, it gained between 50% and 30% percentage

which is regarded as a considerable result comparing other types of media.

Table 7 Students' Answer to Question Seven		
Dubbed Series & Movies	Frequency	Percent
100%	6	12.0
80%	8	16.0
50%	13	26.0
30%	16	32.0
0%	7	14.0
Total	50	100.0

The Eighth Question of the Questionnaire. In question eight, students were expected to think about the quality of translation they received through several types of media and papers, then rate their quality on a scale of five levels: excellent, good, neutral, bad, or very bad. The 5 stars rating technique has been chosen to add some joy to the questions answering process.

Concerning books translation, as presented in Figure 2, most students decided to rate it as neutral, not good, not bad. And this is very interesting because books translation is regarded as the type of translation that gets the most editing and revising before it gets published.

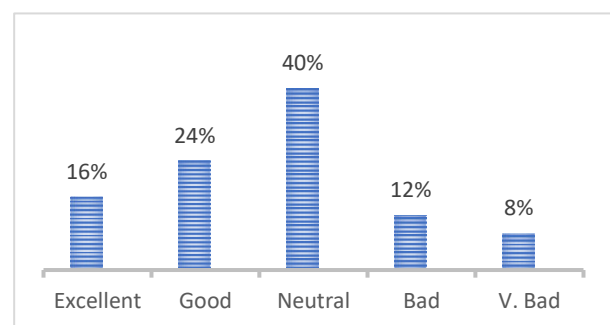


Figure 2 Students' rating for books translation
Students' Rating for Books Translation

As shown in Figure 3, students appear to be satisfied by the quality of translation they received in series and movies subtitles. As the Excellent, Good, and neutral categories are the highest percentages. In addition, the Very Bad category got 0% as no student believed that series and movies subtitled are very bad.

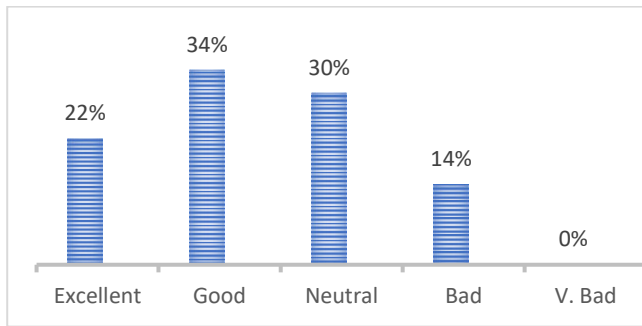


Figure 3 Students' Rating for Translation Series & Movies

Figure 4 below shows the diverse and non-constant results since students could not agree on the quality of translation they received through machine translation on social media. However, the majority chose the good category to describe machine translation quality on social media.

Students' Rating for Machine Translation in Social Media

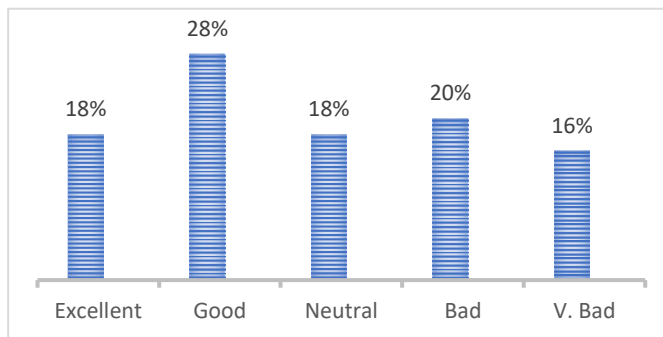


Figure 4 Students' Rating for Machine Translation in Social Media

In Figure 5 results are diverse too but for a different reason. As the researcher observed the students' hesitation in answering the fan translation question. That is because students have different expectations of the term. Therefore, every student described the quality of translation he/she received based on his/her expectation of fan translation.

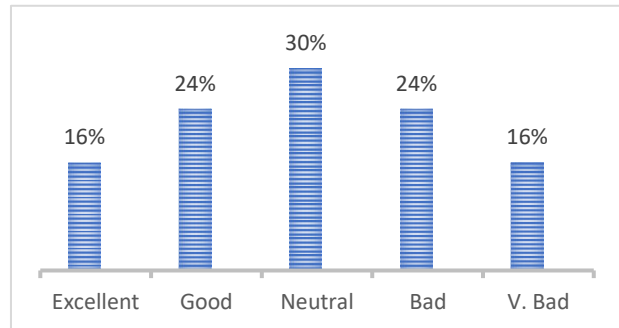


Figure 5 Students' Rating for Fan Translation in Social Media

Regarding news languages, Figure 5 below shows students' ratings of the Arabic news language. Excellent and Good categories were the most chosen as news language is regarded by many people as very formal and standard.

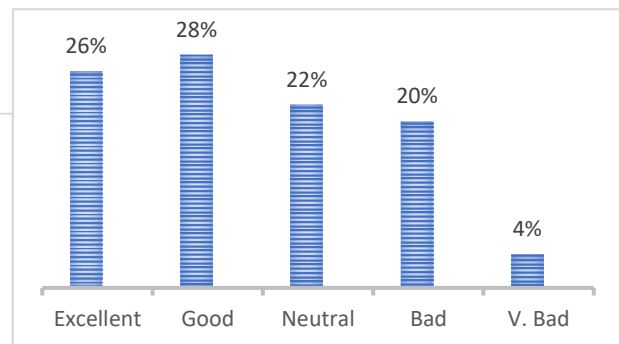


Figure 6 Students' Rating for News Language

The Test Results

The test has consisted of twelve pairs of sentences. One sentence is well-formed according to Arabic grammatical and syntactical rules. The other sentence is impacted by translation, especially by the English language.

Table 7 shows how students performed in the test, how many students chose the well-formed sentences, and how many chose the sentences that have been impacted by translation.

Table 8 Students' Choices of Well-formed Sentences			
Sentences Pairs of the Test		Well-formed	Impacted by Translation
1	رأيت زلي ونورة في السوق . رأيت رولا ونورا في السوق.	20%	80%

2	سرق اللص النقود الذهب الأجهزة والأثاث. سرق اللص النقود والذهب والأجهزة والأثاث.	80%	20%
3	قصفت طائرات العدو المدينة. فُصفت المدينة بواسطة طائرات العدو.	30%	70%
4	ألقي القبض على المجرم. جرى إلقاء القبض على المجرم.	84%	16%
5	خاصة أن حالات الاعتداء أخذت بالزيادة. خاصة أن حالات الاعتداء زادت.	54%	46%
6	بدأت الشرطة تحقيقاً في الجريمة. فتحت الشرطة تحقيقاً في الجريمة.	29%	71%
7	استأجرت السلطة المحلية سفينة جديدة. قامت السلطة المحلية باستئجار سفينة جديدة.	33%	67%
8	قام الشاهد بدور مهم في كشف المجرم. لعب الشاهد دوراً مهماً في كشف المجرم.	10%	90%
9	رتب الطلاب الكراسي بشكل عشوائي. رتب الطلاب الكراسي ترتيباً عشوائياً.	73.5 %	26.5%
10	ذهبت أنا وأخي إلى ندوة توعوية. ذهبت أنا وأخي إلى ندوة توعوية.	24%	76%
11	أصبح اللاعب أكثر جمالاً بعد الترميم. أصبح اللاعب أجمل بعد الترميم.	30%	70%
12	أنا لأنني مواطن عربي أهتم بتحسين لغتي العربية. أنا كمواطن عربي أهتم بتحسين لغتي العربية.	6%	94%
The Total		39%	61%

Note that the well-formed sentence is in bold.

Regarding pairs 2, 4, and 9, well-formed sentences were recognized and chosen by the majority of students as they achieved 80%, 84%, and 73.5 respectively. While pair 8 and 12 was the most difficult ones and students could not recognize them easily since only 8% and 6% of student respectively were able to choose them.

The total average of students' answers shows that most students could not choose the well-formed sentences and would rather choose the sentences impacted by translation. Figure 6 represents the total average.

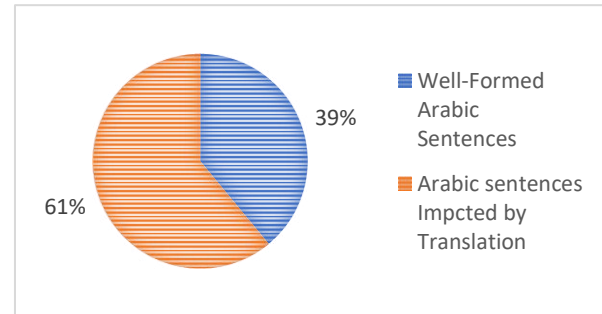


Figure 7 Students' Choices of the Well-formed VS Impacted Sentences

Findings

The study revealed that University of Aden students rely heavily on internet-based translation resources, with social media translations (52%-56%) and internet news/translated series (40%) being the most popular. Subtitled series/movies (50%-80%) were preferred over dubbed ones (30%-50%), while newspapers and translated books received minimal usage (12%-22%).

Students rated translation quality in books, series, and social media as mostly neutral to good, with news translations scoring highest in the "excellent" category (26%). Most students struggled to differentiate between well-formed Arabic sentences and those influenced by foreign languages, though some could identify overly strange structures, which are becoming more accepted in media over time.

Recommendations

For College Students:

- Focus on high-quality, professional translation resources to preserve the Arabic language.
- Avoid entirely relying on machine translations to prevent distorted Arabic structures.

For Translators:

- Prioritize safeguarding Arabic heritage by following updates from language academies.
- Avoid machine translation due to its lack of respect for Arabic form, style, and coherence.

For Translation Trainers:

- Stay informed about translation issues and address errors to prevent their spread.
- Emphasize producing eloquent, accurate translations, even for commonly used but incorrect structures.

For Media Providers:

- Ensure Arabic's future by hiring skilled translators proficient in both source and target languages.

Suggestions

Future studies could focus on analyzing specific media types like social media, web content, and series, which are popular among students and including a larger, more diverse sample from all University of Aden faculties for better validity. Additionally, they can use a mixed-method design with interviews to gather insights from professionals and testing with real examples from translated books, movies, posts, and other media.

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