Negative Transfer of Meaning in Translated Literary Texts by Tunisian EFL Students

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Abstract

This article deals with the negative transfer of meaning in literary translated texts from Arabic into L3 English by "second-year" Tunisian EFL students at the Higher Institute of Humanities of Medenine. The study is mainly qualitative. Therefore, it analyzes a literary text (20 copies) from L1 Arabic into L3 English for Mahmud Taymur to find out the frequency of occurrence of the negative transfer of meaning and examine its impact on the source text (ST) and target text (TT) meaning. It also uses a semi-structured interview with teachers of translation (5) to elicit some teaching strategies that might help students avoid negative transfer from their mother tongue in translation tasks. The analysis of the texts shows that L1 meaning-based negative transfer is present in 35% of students' translations and that parts of the ST and TT meaning have been marred by such a phenomenon, especially by the extensive use of calques and semantic extensions. The interview data suggest that the negative influence of students' mother tongue in translated tasks could be overcome through peer learning and extensive practice on translation tasks by varying text types.

Keywords: negative transfer of meaning; translation; source text meaning; target text meaning.

1. Introduction
1.1. Background to the Study

Translation is the interpretation of a source text meaning and the production of an equivalent text in another language (Hassan, 2014, p. 1). It is thus a process that is concerned with meaning across languages. Translation, in its essence, is a science, an art, and a skill. It is a science in that it requires complete knowledge of the structure of the two languages under study. It is an art as it necessitates artistic talent to reconstruct the original text. It is also a skill as it demands the ability to overcome the difficulty during the process of translation (ibid, p. 1). The most important task for translation "lies in the preservation of 'meaning' across two different languages" (House, 1977, p.25). However, some learners of translation, especially at the early stages of learning, wrongly think that translation is a matter of word-for-word process. Hence, translation for them is no more than a mechanical process (Qassim, 2017, p. 10). In this way, they copy the ST phrases and words and translate them out of context (i.e., without taking into consideration the linguistic and cultural differences of the target language text (TLT). That is to say, they transfer meaning literally which results in a weak and boring translation. Such a phenomenon is known as transfer of meaning which is found to be more frequent in translation tasks than in free production tasks (Ringbom, 1987, p.118). Henceforth, the present study is undertaken within transfer research. It attempts to lay bare the phenomenon of negative transfer of meaning from learners' L1 Arabic into the TL (English) within the Tunisian context, an area that remains underexplored. The main purpose behind the current study is to illuminate the negative impact of L1 meaning-based transfer on the ST and TT meaning and offer some teaching strategies that might help learners of translation skip over the intrusion of their L1 in their translations.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

This paper seeks to investigate the presence of L1 lexical negative transfer of meaning in L3 written translation by Tunisian EFL students and its impact on the ST and meaning. It also attempts to offer some strategies that might be used to help learners of translation skip over the negative influence of their L1 when translating into English.

1.3. Research Aims

The present article is guided by the following aims:
1. Investigate the frequency of meaning-based negative transfer in written translated texts (from L1 Arabic into L3 English) by2[nd] year students at the Higher Institute of Humanities of Medenine.
2. Examine the impact of L1 meaning-based negative transfer on the ST and TT meaning.

3. Suggest some teaching strategies that might help students avoid such kind of transfer while translating from their L1 Arabic into L3 English.

1.4. Research Questions

In the light of the aforementioned aims, the present article seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How much do "second-year" students at the Higher Institute of Humanities of Medenine use L1-meaning- based features when translating from their L1 Arabic into L3 English?
2. To what extent does L1 meaning-based negative transfer distort the ST and TT meaning?
3. How can the occurrence of these interference phenomena (lexical) be avoided?

2. Literature Review
2.1. Interference and Transfer

Interference, known also as negative transfer, was one of the first terms used to describe L1 influence on L2 learning (Lado, 1957, Weinreich, 1953). Lott (1983) defined interference as "errors in the learner's use of the foreign language that can be traced back to the mother tongue" (p. 256). Similarly, Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) defined interference as "the automatic transfer, due to habit of the surface structure of the first language onto the surface of the target language" (p. 22). Interference is generally rarely used anymore and the phenomenon is now referred to as transfer or cross-linguistic influence.

As for the term transfer, shades of uncertainty and ambiguity revolve around it. There is disagreement among scholars in defining the concept of transfer and it is difficult to give only one definition for transfer that covers all the different associated aspects. One of the broad definitions of the term 'transfer' is offered by Odlin (1989). His definition is regarded as broad enough to encompass different viewpoints related to "transfer". According to Odlin (1989, p. 27), "transfer is the influence resulting from similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously (and perhaps imperfectly) acquired". Odlin's definition will be used in the present study.

Language transfer may be either positive or negative. The former takes place when the patterns of the L1 and the TL are similar and it facilitates the acquisition of the L2, while the latter type occurs when the patterns are different and it hinders the learning of a new language and thus leads to errors (Ellis, 1995, p. 29). As for this study, it only focuses on negative transfer that leads to lexical errors and the terms transfer and interference will be used interchangeably as the focus is on negative transfer.

2.2. Transfer in Translation

Translation is a human activity, thus the text that is translated into the TL should have a copy of the original one (ST) and have the same effect without any deformity. However, at the early stages of learning translation, some learners wrongly think that translation is a matter of word-for-word process. Hence, translation to them is no more than a mechanical way (Qassim, 2017, p. 10). This problem is most common when the SL and TL are typologically distant such as in the case of Arabic and English as they belong to two different language families (Semitic and Germanic, respectively).

Learners of translation most often take translation as a word-for-for-word or phrase-to-phrase process. This method of translation may not be acceptable and sometimes it may lead to absolute non-sense, particularly when they translate phrasal verbs, idioms or proverbs in the SL to their equivalent in the TT. This phenomenon of word-for-word translation is known as interference in translation (Benson, 2002, p. 69). According to Munday (2008, p. 5), the ST and SL are subject to change when translated into a TL; this is referred to as interlingual translation. He argued that, for this interlingual translation to reach the same or approximate meaning in the TT, there must be an "equivalence in meaning" (ibid, p. 37). Thus, there may be "some difference in the structure and terminology of languages" (ibid, p. 38).

According to Vijver (2007, p. 1), there are options of adoption and adaptation in translation. Adoption is a close translation of an instrument in a TL, while adaptation refers to the use of terms that approximate the target culture (ibid, p. 1). By adopting and adapting, new ideas and literary standards have influenced the TTs throughout the centuries by means of positive and/or negative transfer. In other words, there could be "valorization of the foreign language", "since the ST meaning is couched in language that is very culture-bound and to which the TL can never fully correspond" (Munday, 2008, p. 29) or even "devaluation of the translation" (as the TT may not reach the heights of the ST), making the TTs more accessible to cultures with less foreign terminology" (ibid. 29).

Negative interference may occur in literal translation. In this regard, Newmark (1988, p. 45) claimed that the word order of the ST is usually kept intact in the TT and the words are usually translated out of context into the TT in literal translation. Marina argued that the solid rules and patterns of one's native language tend to be the main cause for the interference phenomena between L1 and L2.

Traces of linguistic interference in translation have been attested in many studies. For instance, Galvao (2009) attempted to investigate traces of linguistic interference in English translated academic abstracts (50 abstracts selected from different fields: humanities, history, social sciences, natural sciences and technology) by native Portuguese speakers. Her study specifically sought to find out the most frequent types of linguistic interference (lexical, syntactical, and pragmatic) and provide solutions to avoid its occurrence. As the focus of the present study is on lexical transfer, only findings on this type of transfer will be reviewed.

The analysis showed that lexical intrusion is manifested mainly through the use of L1-L2 false cognates (e.g., L1 word '*espécie'* and L2 word 'specie') (Galvao, 2009, p. 14). Another manifestation of lexical interference found in Galvao's data is redundancy exemplified by the use of "the reason why" twice under the influence of a Portuguese common phrase. However, this resulted in a loss of meaning of the TT (ibid, p. 15). The occurrence of redundancy has been attributed to the lack of understanding of the ST and the level of fluency between the ST and the TT. In other words, the lack of understanding caused the translator to split the long sentence into smaller ones. Yet, not all information from the ST was translated into the TT. This is what Munday (2008,p. 115) called "laws of interference" and there was a literal translation of an ST word (Galvao, 2009, p. 15).

Regarding the frequency of occurrence of linguistic interference in the different types of abstracts, it is found that interference phenomena are more frequent in humanities, social sciences and history (44%) than in technology and natural sciences (12%). Galvao suggested that this could be because humanities, social sciences and history have wordier abstracts and tend to be much more subjective than the former ones. In other words, figures are generally more important than words and arguments in the areas of technology and natural sciences (p. 20).

In a different setting, Hanafi(2014) sought to investigate the role played by French in the frequency of errors made by Algerian university students in English- translated texts. To elicit transfer data, students were given two versions of written texts to be translated into English: a text to translate from French into English (version A) and then the same text is to be translated from Arabic into English (version B). The error analysis showed that the students produced more errors in the second version of translation than in the first one. Lexical errors made in version A were mainly manifested through the use of borrowing of French words, such as 'langue' instead of 'languages', '*fautes'* instead of 'mistakes, '*tache'* instead of 'task' (Hanafi, 2014, p. 34). As for the lexical errors made in version B, they were mainly marked by redundancy, such as in "language known as double or bilingual" which occurred three times (ibid, p. 35). The use of redundancy is attributed to the Arabic influence because redundancy is a typical feature of the Arabic language, while it is not the case in English.

Concerning the remedies to overcome the occurrence of interference phenomena in translation, Hanafi suggested that, from a teaching perspective, it is indispensable for the EFL teacher to find the most efficient ways to bring feedback and correction of the students' mistakes and errors (p. 37). Yet, the teacher should know when to interfere for such correction and this is complicated for the following reasons. First, there is the dilemma of fluency vs. accuracy. That is, if the purpose is basically communicative, it is better to postpone correction. Second, some teachers think that the correction depends on the type of errors produced by the learner. For instance, if they are pronunciation or grammatical errors, immediate correction is recommended because post-correction cannot make learners remember anything. In addition to knowing when to correct, the EFL teacher should also know how to correct the students' errors in a prudent way (ibid, p. 37). In this respect, James (1998, p. 90)recommended that it is advisable to follow the three principles in error correction. First, the techniques adopted for error correction should be

able to foster the students' accuracy in expression. Second, the students' affective factor should be taken into account; the correction should not be face-threatening to the students. Third, the class manager should be aware of the type of errors that need urgent and immediate correction. In this regard, (Burt, 1974, pp. 6-7)distinguished between 'global errors' and 'local errors'. The former hamper communication and dissuade the learner from comprehending some aspects of the message, while the latter only affect a single component of a sentence, but do not prevent a message from being heard. Therefore, the teacher should focus much on the correction of global errors (ibid, p. 7).

To sum up, translation is a powerful process that may distort or improve the understanding between nations or create new concepts and ideas, depending on how strong negative or positive the interference phenomena are. Besides, education seems to play a crucial role in the improvement of translation courses. Additionally, a good translation with almost no linguistic interference or bias depends on the kind of approach endorsed when translating.

2.3. Transfer of meaning

Transfer of meaning or semantic transfer was first introduced by Ringbom (1987, 2001) and then developed by Jarvis (2009) under the name of lemmatic transfer. Lemmatic transfer in Jarvis's conceptualization pertains to both the semantic and syntactic properties of words. It reflects the ways L2 learners build lexical representations in one language based on their knowledge of corresponding words in previously acquired languages (Jarvis, 2009, p. 113). Lemmatic transfer encompasses four different categories: semantic extensions, calques, collocational transfer and subcategorization transfer which will be described in the sections below.

2.3.1. Semantic extensions

Semantic extensions consist in the overextension of meaning or the use of a target word in the wrong context. They are produced when "the learner assumes that what is a homonym or a polysemous word in the L3 has a meaning corresponding to what is most commonly the core meaning of the equivalent L1 word" (Ringbom, 2001, p. 62). They are also referred to as generalization, as they reflect the use of TL word of a more restricted usage, with its broader SL meaning (Bouvy, 2000, p. 149). The statement below exemplifies such type of lemmatic transfer, as presented by Ringbom (2001, p. 64):

(1) 'He bits himself in the **language**' (from Finnish *kieli*= both English tongue and English language)

This utterance is produced by a Finnish learner of English who has extended the SL word meaning '*kieli*', which is used both for tongue and language, to the TL (English) word meaning 'language'. Here the learner is aware of the existing TL word 'language' but not of its semantic restrictions (Jarvis, 2009, p. 148).

2.3.2. Calques

Calques refer to the literal translation of certain lexical items or phrases from one language to another (James, 2013, p. 150). They can include the direct translation of compounds or more complex structures, phrasal verbs and idioms. They involve a hybrid of two or more lexical units resulting in the formation of a third unit based on L1 meaning that is different from the corresponding L3 word (Ringbom, 2001, pp. 61-62). Ringbom claimed that calques predominantly originate from L1 or possibly very advanced L2 proficiency (p. 64). The example below illustrates the use of this category, as presented by Duran (2016, p. 170):

(1) Both the woman and the man hmm@p meet in the **van of the police**

The learner, who is a bilingual Catalan/Spanish, has directly translated the Catalan/Spanish structure '*elcotxe de policia'*/*'elcoche de policia'* into English (ibid, p. 169).

2.3.3. Collocational transfer

Collocational transfer consists in the transfer of word combinations and associations (Jarvis, 2009, p. 116). The sentence below illustrates the use of collocational transfer, as presented by Duran (2016, p. 170):

She **makes the meal**[TF: cooks/prepares the meal]

The learner here uses the verb 'to make' instead of 'to cook' or 'to prepare' in combination with the noun 'meal', which originates from an L1 Catalan/Spanish collocation ('*ferel dinar'*/*'hacer la comida'*) (ibid, p. 170).

2.3.4. Subcategorization transfer

Jarvis (2009, p. 117) presumed that on the surface, this kind of lemmatic transfer could be viewed as a type of syntactic transfer since they involve a head of a phrase and their complement. This type of transfer involves two subcategories. The first subcategory consists of the choice of the wrong type of complement (e.g. noun phrase instead of prepositional phrase) or the wrong specific word within the complement (e.g. wrong preposition) (ibid, p. 117). Both cases "reflect the influence of the syntactic specifications of headwords in one language on an L2 user's understanding and application of the syntactic specifications of corresponding headwords in another language" (ibid, p. 117). The examples below illustrate the use of subcategorization transfer, as stated by Duran (2016, p. 171):

(1) Then he sees no@s the police hmm@ p calls [//] phones **to the police department**
    [TF: the police department].

This sentence exemplifies the first kind of subcategorization transfer, in which the Catalan/Spanish speaker uses a prepositional phrase (PP) instead of a noun phrase (NP). This reflects the type of complement the learner's L1 Spanish/Catalan makes use of ('*llamar a la policia'*/*'trucar a la policia*') (ibid,p. 171).

(2) He <hits again with the with the > [//] hits again **in the head**[TF: on the head]

The second example illustrates the use of the second kind of subcategorization transfer, in which the learner has chosen the wrong preposition within the PP. He used the preposition 'in' instead of 'on' to convey meanings that L1 English speakers would more often associate with the

preposition 'on'/'at'. This is because the core meaning of the Spanish preposition 'en' overlaps with the core meaning of 'in', 'on', 'at' (ibid, p. 171).

2.4.   The Theoretical Framework
The Semantic Transfer Hypothesis

The Semantic Transfer Hypothesis was developed by Jiang (2002) as an attempt to account for adult L2 vocabulary acquisition. It is based on the assumption that the semantic content residing in the L2 word is transferred from the L1, or that the concept onto which a L2 word is mapped is a L1 concept (Jiang, 2002, p. 419). That is, L2 words are mapped to existing meanings or concepts when these meanings are available and that the move from mapping to existing meaning to mapping to new concepts may not happen for many of the words (ibid, p. 419).

The model proposes three stages of adult vocabulary acquisition. The first stage is called 'lexical association' stage in which adult learners detect an orthographic or phonological form (as a word) by linking it to its L1 translation equivalent. The most important event that takes place at this stage is that a lexical entry is stored in the learner's mental lexicon (Jiang, 2004, p.417). Yet, whilst L1 word entry comprises all four types of lexical knowledge; meaning and syntax in lemma structure and morphology/phonology in the lexeme form, L2 lexical entry contains only form knowledge (morphology and phonology) and the other space is empty containing a 'pointer' that links the word to its L1 translation (Jiang, 2000, p.50). Lexical processing and production at this stage hinge upon the activation and mediation of L1 translation because there is no direct link between L2 words and concepts, or these links are so weak.

The second stage is the 'L1 lemma mediation' stage, in which the L2 entry contains a hybrid of L2 form specification and semantic and syntactic characteristics transferred from the L1 translation (ibid, p.52). At a processing level, this stage may be called L1 'lemma mediation' stage because the lexical processing and production are still mediated by the lemma information of its L1 translation, which now resides in the L2 entry. At the representational level, this stage may be called the 'hybrid-entry' stage because a L2 entry at this stage comprises a combination of L2 form information and L1 meaning and syntax information. This implies that there is still considerable influence from the L1 in L2 word use (Jiang, 2004, p.417).

Normally, there is a third stage which is the integration of the lexical knowledge specific to L2 word in its entry and discard of L1 information. Consequently, L2 words can be used with more automaticity and more idiomaticity, with little influence from its L1 translation. Yet, the model posits that many words fail to achieve this stage and L1 lemma mediation may become a steady state of lexical processing in advanced L2 learners leading to 'lexical fossilization' (Jiang, 2000, p.54). Jiang's (2000) model further assumes that once L1 semantic information has entered L2 lexical entries and occupied the lemma space, it is very hard for new meanings to get in (p.55). Lexical errors in L2 production are one type of evidence that confirms the continued mapping of L2 words to L1 meaning (Jiang, 2002, p.619).

Evidence of semantic transfer and L1 lemma mediation in advanced learners is easily found in L2 acquisition literature. For example, L2 learners are often found to use L2 words based on the meanings of their L1 translations, thus leading to lexical errors. Such errors are common when two L2 words share the same L1 translation (Jiang, 2004, p. 419). In this case, L2 learners, including proficient learners, often use the two words interchangeably (e.g., Martin, 1984; Ringbom, 1983).

In a nutshell, the Semantic Transfer Hypothesis postulates that L2 words are mapped to existing meanings and concepts when these meanings are available and that L1 lemma mediation often becomes the steady state of lexical performance in advanced learners. The Semantic Transfer Hypothesis will be applied to the present data to explain instances of semantic transfer and fossilization that might be manifested in the participants' translation from L1 Arabic into L3 English.

3. Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodology followed to answer the research questions that have guided this study.

3.1. The participants and Criteria Selection

20 Tunisian EFL learners of translation ("second-year" English students) from the Higher Institute of Human Sciences of Medenine took part in the present study. Their age ranged between 20 and 22. They were17 females and 3 males. They all had Arabic as their first language (L1), French as their L2 and English as L3. They all started learning English at the age of 9 and they have an intermediate level in English.

Second-year English students are chosen as the target population of this study for the following accounts. First, learners at this level are supposed to be able to translate long texts as they have learned the basics and different strategies of translation in their first year, meanwhile they have not yet grasped the task. Thus, they may face many challenges while translating and fall into the trap of transfer from their native language to compensate for lack of knowledge of the TT term or lack of understanding of the TT meaning and many cultural issues of the TL. Second, studies among such samples, especially in the Tunisian context, are relatively scarce.

3.2. The Corpus and Selection Criteria

The corpus of the present study is based on a literary text to be translated from L1 Arabic into L3 English by the respondents. It is a literary text taken from *Mahmud Taymur*. The text was analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively in terms of the number of transferred items, the different types of semantic transfer exhibited by the participants and its impact on the ST and TT meaning. The text is used to elicit transfer data. The choice of such text is defended by the following accounts. First, it is a literary text, thus it presents some challenges for learners. Second, it contains many lexical items, including idiomatic expressions, hence learners need to find the

appropriate target term and translate the items into context (i.e., take the target culture into account). However, this might not be an easy task for the majority of learners, thus they resort to literal translation or calque from the L1. The task was performed outside the participants' classroom sessions.

3.3. Research Instruments
3.3.1. The questionnaire

The questionnaire is used in this study to collect data on the participants' learning profile and demographic information, including their age, their proficiency level in English, their exposure to English and the age of acquisition of English. More importantly, it is used to elicit data on the presence of transfer in translation. For this purpose, students were asked about how they infer meaning when they translate from their L1 Arabic into L3 English by giving them a list of options to tick (through the context, copying the L1 meaning, making one-to-one correspondence). A final draft of the questionnaire was administered face-to-face to the participants in their free time after being piloted.

3.3.2. The semi-structured interview

The semi-structured interview is conducted with teachers of translation. The aim behind the use of the semi-structured interview is to elicit data on interference phenomena in translated texts from Arabic into English and its impact on the ST and TT meaning. It particularly seeks to explore the presence of L1 lexical transfer of meaning in literary translated texts, its frequency of occurrence, and the different teaching and learning strategies that can be employed to avoid the appearance of linguistic interference in translation. 5 teachers of translation teaching in the Higher Institute of Medenine participated in the interview. The interview was recorded using an MP3 player to be then transcribed for data analysis. The transcribed interview data were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. The interview was conducted in the TL (English) as it is shared between the researcher and the interviewees. The average time of the interview was about 30 minutes.

3.4. Coding Criteria of Transfer

This section outlines the criteria used to code an item as a transfer. The following criteria were used in the present study:
1. The lexical item had to be identified as an error in the target language
2. the error needed to be of the form, or meaning, or both
3. the erroneous item needed to be similar in form or meaning to its intended translation equivalent in one of the background languages

Neuser (2017, p. 131)

In an attempt to increase the credibility of the transfer analysis and reduce the subjectivity and bias of the coding as much as possible, a second rater was used who was a teacher of

translation. She was trained regarding the different types of transfer and was asked to use the same criteria the first rater applied in identifying instances of transfer.

4. Findings and Discussion
4.1. Amount of Transfer

Using this way of quantifying transfer instances: total number of transferred items,
Total number of words
the table below presents the total number of transferred items, the total number of words produced by all learners and the overall amount of transfer, both in terms of frequency and percentage:

Total Number of Words Produced	2.797
Total Number of Transferred Items	300
Total Amount of Transfer	107.25
Percentage of Transfer	35.75%

Table 1: Amount of Transfer

As can be seen in table 1, transfer of meaning occurred in 35.75% of the participants' translations. This confirms previous findings that the transfer of meaning can take place in advanced stages of language acquisition (Ringbom, 2001; Lindquivist, 2010; Duran, 2016). It shows the considerable difficulties that EFL students face when moving from one language into the other because of selection-restrictions and contextual rules of the language, especially in translation tasks. This is because when translating from one SL into the TL, learners need to translate words into context. Yet, this seems to be an intricate issue for most learners of translation.

The appearance of transfer of meaning in the present data substantiates the assumption that "L1 meaning tend to underlie L2 words until the learner becomes highly proficient in the L2" (Jarvis &Pavlenko, 2008,p. 78). Moreover, the occurrence of meaning-based transfer in the translated text from L1 Arabic, a language that is typologically distant from the English, upholds previous findings that transfer of meaning might occur when the languages are typologically distant (Jarvis &Pavlenko, 2008; Jarvis, 2009) and that transfer of meaning is induced by L1 influence: "whenever semantic properties of a word are wrongly transferred to the target language, they are not made on the basis of an L2, not even an L2 closely related to the target language" (Ringbom, 2005,p. 74). This finding is consistent with that of Hanafi (2014) who found that Algerian students made more interference errors when translating from L1 Arabic than from L2 French. The considerable amount of meaning-based L1 transfer found in the present data also corroborates the Semantic Transfer claim that L1 lemma mediation can be a steady state in

the production of advanced learners leading to lexical fossilization (Jiang, 2000, p. 54). Additionally, the appearance of such a phenomenon in the present data shows that L3 words are also mapped to L1 meaning.

The questionnaire data validates the negative influence of the participants' L1. For instance, the questionnaire indicates that 15 out of 20 stated that they infer meaning by copying the ST meaning. Equally, the interview data uphold the results obtained in the corpus data analysis. For instance, 4 out of 5 of the interviewed teachers asserted that L1 negative transfer of meaning is very frequent among second-year EFL learners' translation from L1 Arabic into L3 English. They maintained that it accounted for 70% of the mistakes of lexical transfer of meaning.

As for the distribution of meaning-based transfer, the following table displays the obtained results:

Types	Frequency	Percentage
Calques	210	70%
Semantic Extensions	75	25%
Collocational Transfer	10	3.3%
Subcategorization Transfer	5	1.7%

Table 2: Distribution of Semantic Transfer

As shown in table 2, calque (70%) is the most frequent type displayed by the participants. This implies that in most cases students copy the ST phrases and expressions into the TT without contextualizing them. This is known also as literal translation or word-to-word translation. The frequent occurrence of literal translation or calque is upheld in many studies on translation (e.g. Qassim, 2017; Hanafi, 2014; Galvao, 2009). This is because learners of translation wrongly think that translation is a matter of word-for-word translation (Qassim, 2017, p. 10).

The extensive use of calques was confirmed by the interviewees; all the interviewed teachers concurred that calque is the most common type of negative transfer of meaning displayed by learners when translating from their L1 Arabic to L3 English.

4.2.   The Impact of Transfer of Meaning on the ST and TT Meaning

This section aims to analyze the impact of meaning-based transfer from L1 Arabic on the ST and TT meaning. For this purpose, a set of examples illustrating the different types of negative transfer of meaning (calques, semantic extensions, etc.) are presented and analyzed.

Each transfer instance is marked in bold followed by its translation equivalent in L1 Arabic and the intended target expression is presented in brackets.

(a) Calques

The following examples illustrate the use of calques by the participants:

(1) '**Correct/true** choice': ختيار صحيح [TF: judicious choice]

In the example above, learners seem to have copied the SL lexical item by keeping the ST word order intact and translating the words out of their context. They extended the meaning of 'صحيح'to all contexts (semantic extension) which is not appropriate in the TT/TL. Such a translation, however, results in a non-target erroneous expression and the original meaning seems to be blurred, thus the intended purpose has been defeated. The intended translation, here, is 'judicious' and not correct or true. That is to say, the writer of the text intends to convey that the choice made is appropriate or judicious, and not true or correct.

(2) **I was amazed that the elevators haven't rested at all, they were always up and down and their cargo was all-time full** « وراعني أن المصاعد لا تهدأ لها حركة, فهي دائمة الصعود و الهبوط لا تكاد تفرغ حمولتها حتى تغص بحمولة أخرى
[TF: they were hardly empty when they were full again]

Similarly, in this example, the learner copied the ST words into the TT keeping the word order intact. Hecalqued the surface literal meaning without taking into consideration the context. It seems to bea word-for-word translation, especially caused by translating the word 'حمولة' into 'cargo', while the intended (TT) meaning is to say that the lifts were always full of people. Such a translation sounds unnatural, non-native and erroneous in the TL where the reader can be easily misled because the meaning remains blurred. Consequently, the TT meaning has been violated.

(3) « **I feel panic that the lifts did not stop moving**": وراعني أن المصاعد لا تهدأ لها حركة
[TF: I was amazed to notice that the lifts were always on the move]

Again, the learner here used a word-for-word translation without contextualizing the words. For instance, the learner translated the L1 word 'راعني' as 'feel panic', which is a literal or word-for-word translation. Here, the learner seems to understand that the writer is frightened, while the intended meaning was that the writer or speaker was amazed to notice that the lifts were all the time full of people or on the move. Such a translation triggered a total shift of the TT meaning (i.e., the intended target meaning of amazement has been distorted by the use of calque).

(4) '**exhibition/showroom book**': معرض الكتب [TF: stall]

Like the aforementioned examples, the learner here produced a word-for-word translation, where 'معرض' is translated into 'showroom' or 'exhibition' and 'الكتب' was translated into 'book'. However, such a translation resulted in a deviation from the ST meaning and a loss of the TT meaning. That is, the learner seemed to understand that the writer is in a showroom, while the word 'معرض' does not mean 'showroom', but a small shop with an open front that people sell things from (stall). Thus, the TT meaning has been defeated. This expression seems to have estranged the reader of the original meaning.

(5) 'It contained **a bit of everything**': حوى طرفا من كل شيء [TF: all sorts of things]

The learner copied the ST words into the TT without taking the context into consideration. Such a literal or word-for-word translation reflects a lack of understanding of the

ST meaning. That is, the learner seemed to have understood that there is little of everything, while the intended meaning is that there are all sorts of things. Consequently, the TT meaning was corrupted.

(6) 'we had to stay **still'**: ' كان علينا أن نلبث' [TF: we had to wait]

In example (6), the learner transferred the L1 words into the TT, keeping the original word order intact. However, it seems that the learner took the ST on surface without delving into the deep intended meaning. That is, the learner seemed to have inferred that the writer was obliged not to move through the word 'still', while the TT meaning was that the writer had to wait. Thus, such a translation induced a violation of the ST as well as the TT meaning.

So as can be seen through the aforementioned examples, the ST and the TT meaning have been violated by the extensive use of calques. This is what is known as 'laws of interference' (Munday, 2008, p. 115). Students seemed to have translated the ST literally, not paying too much attention to the understanding of the text as a whole. This is because learners of translation wrongly think that translation is a mechanical process of word-for-word translation (Qassim, 2017, p. 10). Additionally, the extensive use of calques is clear evidence supporting the semantic transfer claims that L2/L3 learners use L2/L3 words based on the meaning of their L1 equivalents.

(b) Semantic Extension

Semantic extension is the second frequent type of negative semantic transfer displayed by the participants of this study. The instances below exemplify the use of such type of transfer:

(1) 'in the mini market, there were many things: **cigarette'**: ' لفائف تبغ' [TF: tobacco]

In this example, the learner translated the L1 Arabic word ' لفائف تبغ' as 'cigarette', while the intended word is 'tobacco'. The learner extended the meaning of 'cigarette' (دخان) to 'tobacco', he assumed that the Arabic word ' سجائر' can carry both meanings (' تبغ وسجائر') in all contexts. So, the learner, in this case, is aware of the target form but not of its semantic constraints: he used both words interchangeably. Such a translation resulted in a non-target expression and the meaning remained somehow blurred.

(2) 'the corner looked as a **theatre'**: ' مسرح'[TF: stage]

The learner translated the L1 word ' مسرح' as 'theatre', while the intended meaning is 'stage'. So, he extended the meaning of ' مسرح' to 'theatre' and 'stage'. In this case, the learner is aware of the existing target form but not of its semantic restrictions. Such an extension of meaning violated the ST as well as the TT meaning.

(3) 'in the mini market, there were many things: cigarette, books, newspapers and **games'**: ' لعب'   [TF: toys]

The learner translated the L1 Arabic word ' لعب' as 'game', while the target context requires the use of the word 'toys''. This is because the Arabic word ' لعب'couldbetranslated as 'games' and 'toys' depending on the context. So, the learner assumes that the word ' لعب'means both 'toys' and 'games', the way it does in Arabic (MSA and TA). In other words, he extended the L1 meaning to the TT meaning without taking the context into consideration, using the two words interchangeably. Such a translation resulted in a non-target erroneous expression, and the

meaning is somehow blurred; the intended purpose seems to have been defeated (absence of lexical fidelity).

(4) 'I was amazed that the elevators haven't rested at all, they were always up and down and their **cargo** was all-time full: 'حمولة' [TF: they were on the move]

The learner extended the L1 meaning of 'حمولة' to all contexts: she carried over the L1meaning into the TT out of context. This indicates that she is not aware of its semantic restrictions. Such a translation is erroneous and it corrupted the ST as well as the TT meaning.

(c) Collocational Transfer

As mentioned previously, collocational transfer (word collocation) occurred in 3.3% of the participants' translations. One instance exemplifying the use of collocational transfer is the following:

(1) '**appealing light**': 'ضوء جذاب'   [TF: attractive]

Here the learner translated the L1 word 'جذاب' as 'appealing'. However, the English adjective 'appealing' does not collocate with the noun 'light', the way it does in Arabic: The Arabic word 'جذاب' can be translated as both 'appealing' and 'attractive', but not in all contexts and with all nouns. This translation resulted in a non-native expression, while the TT meaning was not corrupted.

(2) **Svelt corner**: 'ركنا رشيفا'   [TF: small]

In example (2), the learner translated the L1 word 'رشيقا' as 'svelt. Yet, the English adjective 'svelte', which is the literate equivalent of the Arabic adjective 'رشيق', does not collocate with the noun 'corner', the way it does in Arabic. Such a literal translation resulted in an erroneous collocation in English and distorted the TT meaning.

(d) Subcategorization Transfer

Subcategorization transfer is the least frequent type (1.7%) of negative transfer of meaning displayed by the respondents. The following statements illustrate the use of such type of transfer by the participants:

(1) 'We entered **to** the big hall': دلفنا الى الردهة الكبرى **:** [TF: the big lobby]

In the example above, the learner used the wrong type of complement. He used a PP Instead of a NP. This reflects the type of complement that the learner's L1 makes use of (transfer from the L1 Arabic prepositional phrase 'dakhalnaila'). That is, in Arabic, the verb 'enter' requires the use of the preposition 'ila' so that without this preposition the sentence will not make sense, while in English it does not. So, the learner inserted an unnecessary preposition because the Arabic context requires it. The use of the wrong complement under the influence of L1 prepositional system resulted in the production of an erroneous target expression, while the ST meaning was not lost.

(2) 'we arrived **to** the door of the hotel': 'وصلنا الى باب الفندق' [TF: at the hotel]

In example (2), the learner used the wrong preposition; she used the preposition 'to' instead of 'at 'to express a meaning that L1 English speakers would more often associate with the preposition 'at'. This reflects the transfer from the L1 Arabic preposition 'الى'. The use of such a

preposition resulted in an erroneous, non-native expression, while the ST, as well as the TT meaning, was not corrupted.

To sum up, the TT meaning and parts of the original meaning were lost or misinterpreted in the TT triggered by a negative transfer of meaning, especially by the extensive use of calques and semantic extensions. The interview data coincide with the corpus data analysis: the interviewees concurred that the use of L1 meaning-based negative transfer contributes to the corruption and violation of the ST meaning (i.e., it estranges the SL from the TL reader and, thus, defeats the intended purpose). The extensive use of calques and semantic extensions shows that students did not succeed in selecting what is appropriate to the context. So, the effect of negative transfer seems to be strong. This finding confirms the fact that if the meaning is translated literally, it will lead to a weak and boring translation, as it will not convey the exact effect of the ST language (Qassim, 2017, p. 14). According to Munday (2008, p.37), in order to reach the same or approximate meaning in the TT, there must be an 'equivalence in meaning'. Yet, the participants of this study seem to have failed to make such equivalence; they seem to be unaware of the differences in the terminology of languages. The extensive use of calques and semantic extensions is clear evidence of this.

Additionally, the violation of the ST, as well as the TT meaning under the influence of L1 negative semantic transfer, upholds the previous finding that translation, in the case of negative transfer, instead of being a learning and problem-solving strategy often results in a lack of lexical correspondence between the SL and the TL, inappropriateness to the context and even something not possible in the TL (semantically non-permissible) (Zahri, 1998).

In short, the appearance of negative transfer of meaning from L1 Arabic into L3 English resulted in an incomplete or partial translation of the ST into the TT which is one of the "laws of interference" in Munday(2008,p. 115). This finding supports Marina andSnuviškiene(2005)'s assertion that interference of the NL prevents speakers of a particular language from using a FL correctly by transferring the rules and standards of their NL to that FL (p. 2).

4.3.   Pedagogical Implications

This part aims to present and discuss some teaching strategies suggested by the interviewed teachers to guard against the occurrence of L1 negative transfer of meaning in translation.4 out of the 5 interviewed teachers suggested that increased exposure to the TL by varying the text types for translation (literary, economic, environmental texts, etc.) and assigning general information texts to the students (just to read and report on orally or in writing in the TL) could help students overcome negative L1 influence in their translation.

3 out of 5 proposed to conduct remedial courses after tests/exams where the students are given back their corrected examination scripts so that they can see their mistakes and learn from the examiner. They opined that students' awareness of the issue of L1 meaning-based transfer

may be raised during the translation course, but learning from such mistakes is better enhanced during post-test remedial courses.

Some others (4 out of 5) called for teamwork and correcting mistakes (peer-learning), in addition to raising students' awareness of language lexical specific differences (highlighting and explaining the lexico-semantic differences between the L1 and the TL). Most of the interviewed teachers (4 out of 5) emphasized that teachers of translation should always remind their students of the lexico-semantic differences between their L1 and the TL and encourage them to always take the TL context and culture into consideration when translating from one language to another. Similarly, Moghtadi(2016) argued that teachers should stress any cross-linguistic similarity and difference between the L1 and the TL, especially during the early stages of learning by making explicit references whenever possible to relevant aspects of the L1 (p. 424).

More importantly, all of the interviewed teachers warned against literal translation or calque and its negative impact on the quality of translation. They stressed that learners should be aware of the negative impact of word-for-word translation maintaining that the job of the teacher here is to encourage students to read the text as a whole, understand its overall meaning and then translate the whole text taking into account the TT context and culture. That is, teachers should make clear to the students that when they are asked to translate a text from one language to another, they should not translate grammar, words or sounds, but only meaning within the target context. In this sense, Qassim (2017) maintained that learners of translation should be aware of the negative effects of literal translation and be very careful to use a well-formed structure to write sentences that are both grammatically and semantically correct (p. 14).

In short, the interviewed teachers maintained that practice and mistake correction are the best remedies to skip over semantic transfer from the L1. Yet, as recommended by Burt (1974), the teachers should know exactly what errors to be corrected, when and how to correct errors (the focus should be on global errors). Munday (2008), on the other hand, argued that translation improvement should not be done through a rigid pedagogy. He stated:

> It is clear that teachers can only harm their students if they persist in limiting students' understanding of translation through a rigid pedagogy. Instead, teachers should be clear about the limitations of their premises and frameworks for translation, if only so that students will be prepared for a future that will inevitably entail changes in translation canons, translation strategies, and translation technologies as the definition of translation is increasingly elaborated (Munday,2008, p.199).

This is because translation is most often a subjective process depending on cultural factors, world knowledge and the translator's fluency in L1 and L2. For instance, some automatic translations do not demand much time from the translator to think of, such as fixed phrases in both the ST and TT. Moreover, there are no complete or full equivalent texts; the concept of equivalence is relative because of linguistic and cultural differences (Hassan, 2014, p. 11).

5.   Conclusion

The present article showed that the L1 negative transfer of meaning is present in 35% of students' translations, with calques and semantic extensions as the most frequent types. Such transfer distorted the ST meaning. To solve this problem, the majority of the interviewed teachers suggested that varying text assignments, correcting mistakes and extensive practice may help learners avoid L1 negative semantic interference while translating from their L1 Arabic into L3 English.

Overall, this article contributed to a small understanding of the negative transfer of meaning in translation and its impact on the ST meaning. Yet, as with any piece of research, this study is confined by some limitations. One limitation is that this article focused on only one type of transfer (meaning-based transfer), while other types of transfer (lexical transfer of from, syntactic/grammatical transfer, pragmatic transfer, etc.) are worth examining. Another limitation is that the present article is restricted to only one version of translation (from L1 Arabic into L3 English), whilst a comparison between two versions/directions of translation (L1 Arabic into L3 English and vs. L2 French into L3 English) is worth attention.

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