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All correspondence to be addressed in the name of the
Editor-in-Chief

College of Arts – University of Mosul – Republic of Iraq

E-mail: adabarafidayn@gmail.com

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The Translation of Some English Quantifiers into Arabic

Assist. Prof. Osama H. Ibrahim, M.A.*

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1.1 : Introduction

All languages share certain accounts in common in a way that makes languages approach from each other. However, each language takes on an amount of peculiarity that creates a case of no one-to-one correspondence between them. For example in Arabic we have *dual* category as far as the number system is concerned, whereas in English we have only *single* and *plural* categories. Once translation intervenes between these two languages there will be a semantic gap if these divergences were left unaccounted for; hence the miscommunication will on the corner. It requires the translator to make for syntactic and semantic differences aspect of the source language (SL) and target language (TL) text, which sometimes seem to be language specific. Thus one can argue that each language has its own specific organization within the whole macro discourse. More precisely,(in our study case) the difference between the quantifiers (few and a few) and (little and a little) is formal. At the same time, it is semantically based. It is one typical example of our study.

The problem uncovered in the present study is related to the questions that the study attempts to answer. Do the translators pay attention to the subtle differences between the quantifiers, particularly, (few and a few) and (little and a little) in their renderings? Are the translators aware of the positive and negative uses of these quantifiers?

The research hypothesizes that the usage of these quantifiers (*few and a few*) and (*little and a little*) is semantically based and used . Therefore unless a subtle distinction is made between these forms, the result would be inaccurate translations leading to inadequate rendering and hence to a misunderstanding on the part of the TL reader.

* Dept. of Translation / College of Arts / University of Mosul .

Conducting this study, the following procedure will be adopted:

- 1- Selecting ten (in 5 pairs) sentences containing these quantifiers that are predicted to have some ambiguities. Due to time and space limits the study will confine to these pairs of quantifiers (*few and a few*) and (*little and a little*).
- 2- Presenting five renderings for each sentence. These renderings were collected via a questionnaire given to the fourth year students at the Dept. of Translation in the College of Arts at the University of Mosul 2015-2016.
- 3- Analyzing these English renderings of each sentence under the study.
- 4- Suggesting a new translation if no successful rendering is found.

1.2 : A Bird's- eye view on Quantifiers in English

As all languages, English is not made up haphazardly; but rather it is well organized in systemic way via certain parts of speech, one of which quantifiers. In English grammar, a quantifier is a word (or phrase) which indicates the number or amount being referred to. Some quantifiers express a large or small quantity (Eastwood , 1994: 219). Similarly, Crystal (2008:399) states that quantifier a term used in semantic or logical analysis, referring to a set of items which express contrasts in quantity, such as *all, some, each*.

It is exigently needed to mention the various types of quantifiers so that to form a clear-cut conceptualization of the quantifiers in English:

(Eastwood, 1994: 219-230) and (Sportiche, 1988 :425-449) states that there are three types of quantifier:

1. Neutral quantifiers.
2. Quantifiers of large quantity.
3. Quantifiers of small quantity.

1. Neutral quantifiers:
Some and any are both quantifiers. In many contexts, some implies a limited quantity, and for this reason has the value of a quantifier. Some is used in affirmative statements; it is replaced with any negative and interrogative contexts.

Examples:

I've got some apples in my basket and some water in my bottle.

I haven't got any apples in my basket, nor any water in my bottle.

Have you got any apples in your basket? Have you got any water in your bottle?

(Quirk et

al,1985:262)

Several and a number of imply "more than one, but less than a lot"..

For example

There are several books / a number of books by J.Z. Plummerman in our library.

Several people / A number of people said that they'd seen the missing child.

(Ibid. :385)

Enough

Enough implies a sufficient quantity; it is used in affirmations, negations and questions. Let's consider the following:

We can get tickets for the concert, I've got enough money now.

Have you got enough money for the tickets?

(Ibid.:385)

2. Large quantity quantifiers:

much, many, lots of, plenty of, numerous, a large number of, etc.

Much and many: much is used with non count nouns (always in the singular); many is used with count nouns in the plural.

Examples:

I have many reasons for thinking that this man is innocent is acceptable, but rather formal; most English speakers would more naturally say:

I have plenty of / a lot of / a large number of reasons for thinking .

(Sportiche, 1988
:425-449)

Much milk is of very good quality. This sentence is technically acceptable, but not probable in modern English. Most people would say (and write):

A lot of milk / A good proportion of milk / Plenty of milk

Lots of, a lot of, plenty of, a large number of, numerous . These expressions all mean more or less exactly the same.

3. Small quantity quantifiers:

These quantifiers are normally only used in affirmative statements, to which they give a negative colouring like: *few, a few, little, a little, not many, not much, a small number of, etc.* It is to be noted that *little, a little, not much* are used with non-count nouns (always in the singular) *few, a few, not many* are used with count nouns in the plural.

Examples:

Few people can speak more than three languages

A few (of the) paintings in this gallery are really good.

There's little point in trying to mend it. You'll never succeed!

I've got a little money left; let's go and have a drink.

(Eastwood,
1994: 219)

1.3 : The grammatical usage (few and a few) and (little and a little) in English:

English like other languages has its own specific tools and articles According to Quirk et al. (1985: 384), English utilizes certain quantifiers and their post determiners including: *many, (a)few and several* usually co-occur only with plural count nouns to express the plural and paucal meanings. Also we use *much and (a)little* usually with non-count nouns. They (ibid) add that plural and paucal are antonyms with each other; for instance *many (a large number) contrasts with (a)few (a small number)*. The quantifier we use relies on the type of noun described.

I am acquainted with { **many**
 { **(a)few** } people in London.
 {
I have eaten { **too much**
 { **(a)little** } of the meat .

(Ibid.:388)

Moreover, (Radden and Dirven, 2007: 133) add that there are certain adverbs such as (very, too, so, as, quite, enough) which indicate the degrees of number:

There are quite a few students in the class.

In this sentence (quite) with the quantifier (a few) refers to a large quantity.

In contrast, (only) with (a few) gives the sentence a negative meaning:

There are only a few students in the class.

In this sentence (only) with (a few) denotes a smaller quantity.

1.4 :The Semantic Orientation of (few and a few) and (little and a little)

From the first glance at the two pairs of expression under study, it seems that they look alike apparently. However, as Eastwood (1994: 219) and (Dowty& Brodie 1984:77) state , the difference between the two expressions in each phrase is purely one of meaning, not of usage. Without the article, few and little (used respectively with count nouns and non-count nouns) have the meaning of "not much/ not many, and possibly less than one might hope for or expect". These expressions have a negative value to them. With the article, a few and a little have the meaning of "at least some, perhaps more than one might expect". These expressions have a positive value.

Examples:

Few of my friends were there, so I was disappointed.

A few of my friends were there, so I was quite happy.

Hurry up; there's little time left !

We have a little time to spare, so let's stop and have a cup of coffee.

(Eastwood,

1994: 219)

For positive and negative meanings , let's consider the following examples:

(positive) *a few letters a few of the letters= a small number of letters.*

a little money a little of his letter/our money

a bit of money a bit of that letter/money a small amount of money

Small *few letters few of our letters*

(negative) *not many* letters *not many of* these letters

little money *little of* the letter/money

not much money *not much of* that letter/money.

(Downing and Locke,
2010:225)

Murphy (1994: 172) adds that it is worth noting that there is a difference between (*few*) and (*a few*), (*little and a little*) states that (*few and little*) have a negative meaning, while (*a few and a little*) have a positive one as in the following examples:

Is this a holiday place? No, there are few tourists here.

(few) tourists means not many tourists.

Is this a holiday place? Yes, there are a few tourists here.

(a few) tourists means some tourists or a small number.

(Ibid. :175)

Moreover, (Quirk et al, 1985: 263) also adds that in the case (*a few* [a small number] and (*a little* [a small quantity]), there is positive/negative contrast according to whether the indefinite article is used or not. When a/an does not precede, *few and little* are stressed as in the following:

He wrote a few books [some, several]

He wrote few books [not many]

He wrote a little poetry [some]

He wrote little [not much]

Henching upon the afore-mentioned citations, one can sum up that the representation of quantity in English can be achieved by harnessing certain quantifiers that express the intended meanings. Similarly, their usage is semantically based. This does not depend on the number system category contrast in English. However, it is of significance that once translation intervenes between English and Arabic to clearly differentiate between them as far as their semantic contrast is concerned.

1.7: Translation and Loss of Meaning:

Translation theorists such as Nida (1964) argue that the equivalence is a key issue which should be maintained through the process of translation since it shows the relationships between (SL) and (TL) texts. Nida (1964: 159) proposes two types of equivalence:

1. Formal equivalence, in which (TL) item represents the closest equivalence in both form and content of the message.
2. Dynamic equivalence where the effect of the (SL) message on the (TL) reader is like that by the SL receiver. The latter would our model in this study since it is more (TL) oriented than the first type.

As a matter of fact Baker (1992: 82-110) discusses translation taking into consideration equivalence at different levels (at word level and above word level). Similarly, she mentions many types of equivalences like: (grammatical, textual, and pragmatic equivalence). The grammatical equivalence as Baker (ibid:84) states that grammatical equivalence refers to the multiplicity of grammatical categories across languages such as number , tense , aspects, voice, person, and gender. It should be paid due attention by the translator. She also adds that via the process of translation such divergence between (SL) and (TL) are generally involve some alterations in the meaning of the (TL) either by adding or omitting some information because of the lack of special grammatical devices , articles , or quantifiers (our study case) in the (TL) itself.

Gorjen, (1970: 21); and Haleem, (1999: 2) add that to attain equivalence in translation is not an easy task, since no two languages are similar in the meaning of the given quantifier or articles contain in the of the sentence. Similarly, Lyon (1981: 301) states that the divergence at lexical level structure makes adequate translation between languages difficult and consequently leads to linguistic and cultural untranslatability. Furthermore, linguistic untranslatability refers to the non-existence of a syntactic item in the (TL) for the (SL) counterpart. As for the cultural one, it refers to the shortage of a relevant spacio-temporal situational feature for the SLT in the TT culture (McGuire, 1980: 32).

It is worth mentioning as Trask (1993:157) adds that every language has its own lexical system which might pose disagreement in equivalence and loss of meaning or as the scholars and theorists call it "Lexical gap" that refers to the lack of the supposed word which might fit smoothly into the pattern indicated by existing surrounding words. Lehrer (1974:95) , as a semanticist, also states that the term

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'lexical gap' is multifold ambiguity in the sense that it has been applied to all types of cases where a word, in one way or another, is missing. Therefore, gaps can be of many types; realized at phonological (e.g.*pkly/pkli/), morphological (e.g.*ungood), syntactic (e.g.*informations) or semantic (e.g. *male dog) levels.

1.7: Paucity and Abundance meanings in Arabic:

Paucity and abundance meanings are realized in Arabic in different ways. They are either realized by certain morphological forms named the broken plural to denote paucity. Its forms are four ، افعال ، افعله ، فعله . Similarly; the abundance plural has many morphological forms (Al-Hadeethy, 1965: 294). Moreover, (Al-Ghiilaany, 1987:218) states that are some expressions sued to denote the meaning of paucity in Arabic like حسب which means (*fair enough*) as in اخذت عشرة فحسب . Similarly, (Al-Bekhitaawi ,2004 :3) also adds that that are certain expressions named as كنيات العدد denoting within their nuances paucity in Arabic like:

كذا ، كم ، كأين ، انما ، بما ، مما ، رب ، قد ، لو ، الا ، كلا ، قلما ، قصرما ، كثرما ، طالما .

Ibn Nazim (n.d:292) mentions that كذا , كم , كأين all denote the abundance meaning such as ملكت كذا وكذا الفأ I have such and such thousands . كم as in : ! كم عالم رأيت I have seen so many scholars. كأين as in :

وَكأَيْنَ مِّنْ قَرْيَةٍ أَملَيْتُ لَهَا وَهِيَ ظالِمَةٌ نَّمُ أَخَذْتُهَا وَالْيَ الْمَصِيرُ . الحج : {٤٨}

And many a township did I give respite while it was given to wrong-doing. Then (in the end) I seized it (with punishment). And to Me is the (final) return (of all).(Al-Hilali and Khan, 1996:427).

(Al-Bekhitaawi, 2004:90-96) mentions that the articles انما , بما both denote paucity whereas مما denotes both paucity and abundance as in the following examples:

انما انفقته درهماً .

I have spent only a dirham.

لبما ترى وانت خطيب .

You may come across as you are a preacher.

كان مما يفعل كذا وكذا.

He used to do such and such.

As-Saamuraa'i (1991:37/3) states that **رب** is among the expressions which may denote paucity and abundance meanings at the same time according to the contextual clues as in:

ورب أمل في صفاء الزمان قد خاب

Many hopes for good period have disappeared (Abundance).

رب غاية مأمولة دنت بغير سعي

Few ends come effortlessly (paucity).

Moreover, Az-Zarkashy (n.d: ٣٠٥- ٣٩٨/4) adds that the article **قد** denot either abundance or paucity as in: **قد يوجد البخيل** a miser may sometimes become generous. **قد**, he adds, lessens the occurrence of the action. While it refers to abundance in the following verse:

(قَدْ نَرَى تَقَلُّبَ وَجْهِكَ) البقرة : ١٤٤

Verily! We have seen the turning of your (Muhammad's SAW) face towards the heaven. (Al-Hilali and Khan, 1996: 37).

(Al-Bekhitaawi, 2004: 80) state that **كثرا** and **طالما** refer to abundance meanings as in: **كثرا/طالما تقول ذلك** you usually say that, whereas **قلما** and **قصرما** refer to paucity as in : **قلما/قصرما يخرج زيد** seldomly Zaid gets out.

1.8: Data and Text Analysis:¹

Concerning the organization of our data, ten sentences in five pairs along with five translations of each have been chosen. New renderings will be suggested if no effective translation is found. In what follows we will discuss our data. Theses sentences were rendered by the fourth year students at the department of Translation 2015-2016 at the University of Mosul. In order to highlight the similarities and differences, these sentences are to be arranged in pairs. Therefore we will discuss each pair together.

¹ It is to be mentioned that the data are taken from the following website:<http://www.englishclub.com>

Text 1: 1st pair

1. It's a great pity , but hospital has **little** medicine . They can't help many people .

- ١ . انها شفقة عظيمة ولكن المستشفى لديه كميات **قليلة** من الدواء لذلك لايمكنه مساعدة كثير من الناس .
- ٢ . المشافي منبع الرحمة ولكنها **تفتقر** للدوية لذلك تعجز عن مساعدة الناس .
- ٣ . انه لحزن كبير فالمستشفى **بالكاد لديها كميات** من الدواء تكفي لمساعدة كثير من الناس .
- ٤ . انه امر محزن جدا لكن المشفى تحوي على **القليل** من العلاج حيث لايمكنه مساعدة اناس كثيرون .
- ٥ . انها رافة كبيرة ولكن العلاج **قليل** في المستشفى ولايمكنهم تقديم المساعدة لكثير من الناس .

2. There is **a little** milk left in the fridge. It should be enough foe our coffee.

- ١ . هناك **قليل** من الحليب في الثلاجة ينبغي ان يكون كافيا لقهوتنا .
- ٢ . في الثلاجة **القليل** من الحليب ولكنه يكفي لصنع القهوة لنا .
- ٣ . هناك **قليل** من الحليب في الثلاجة يجب ان يكون كافية لقهوتنا .
- ٤ . بقي **القليل** من الحليب في البراد . يجب ان يكفي لصنع قهوتنا .
- ٥ . هناك **القليل** من الحليب المتبقي في الثلاجة ، وينبغي ان يكون كافيا لقهوتنا .

Discussion: A glance at the renderings, it seems that most translators fell short at giving the appropriate translation for both quantifiers, namely, (little and a little). The first implies negative meaning, since it is usually used in partial negation, whereas the latter implies positive one. However, all translators translate them in a way that confusing them as if they were the same. As a matter of fact only the subject no. 3 was accurate in his rendering who used the phrase **بالكاد لديها** which gives the shades of partial negation. It is the most appropriate one among the translators.

The proposed translation:

- ١ . انه امر محزن فالمستشفى **بالكاد لديها كميات** من الدواء تكفي لمساعدة كثير من الناس .
- ٢ . ثمة **القليل** من الحليب بقي في الثلاجة ينبغي ان يكون كافيا لقهوتنا .

Text 2:2nd pair

3. I have **a few** good friends, I'm not lonely.

١. انا لست وحيدا فلدي **بعضا** من الاصدقاء الجيدين .
٢. انا لست وحيدا لان لدي **قليل** من الاصدقاء .
٣. انا لست وحيدا لان لدي **العديد** من الاصدقاء .
٤. لدي **القليل** من الاصدقاء الجيدين. لست وحيدا .
٥. لدي **بضع** اصدقاء جيدين. انا لست بمفردى .

4. There are **few** people she really trusts. It's a bit sad.

١. هناك **قليل** من الافراد بإمكانك ان تثق بهم حيث انه الواقع الحزين .
٢. من المؤسف حقا انه هناك **قليل** من الناس تثق بهم .
٣. هناك عدد **قليل** من الناس التي تثق بهم انه لشي محزن .
٤. هناك **القليل** من الاشخاص الذين تثق بهم حقا انه امر محزن نوعا ما .
٥. هناك عدد **قليل** من الناس التي تثق بهم وهذا امر محزن .

Discussion: It is to be mention that the quantifier *a few* equals to some whereas *few* refers to insufficient quantity. Scrutinizing the above renderings, It seems that only some subjects differentiate between the two quantifiers, namely, the translators no. 1 and no. 5 who give **بعضا** and **بضع** respectively. By utilizing these two Arabic quantifiers, there will be a clear cut line between them. Therefore, one can notice the difference as far as the meaning is concerned.

The proposed translation:

١. انا لست وحيدا اذ لدي **العديد** من الاصدقاء الجيدين .
٢. من المؤسف حقا انه ثمة **نزر يسير** من الناس يمكن ان تثق بهم حقا .

Text 3: 3rd pair

5. Julia gave us **a few** apples from her garden. Shall we share them?

١. اعطتنا جوليا **القليل** من التفاح من بستانها ، هل نتقاسمها ؟
٢. اعطتنا جوليا **قليل** من تفاح بستانها ، هل بإمكاننا مشاركتها ؟
٣. جوليا **اقتسمت** التفاح مع اصحابها .
٤. جوليا اعطتنا **القليل** من التفاح من حديقته ، هل نتشارك به ؟
٥. اعطتنا جوليا **عددا** من التفاحات من حديقته ، هل نتقاسمها ؟

6. There are **few** women politicians in the UK. Many people think there should more.

١. هناك **قليل** من النساء يعملن في سلك السياسة في المملكة المتحدة لهذا كثير من الناس تفكر في وجوب تزايدها .

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٢. في بريطانيا العديد من السياسات ويعتقد الناس انه يجب ان تشارك الناس بوتيرة اكبر .
٣. هناك قليل من النساء الذين يعملون في السياسة في المملكة المتحدة .الكثير من الناس يطلبون ان يكون لهم دور اكبر .
٤. هناك القليل من النساء في مجال السياسة في المملكة المتحدة .العديد من الناس يعتقدون بانه يجب ان يكون هناك عدد اكبر .
٥. هناك قليل من النساء السياسات في المملكة المتحدة .والعديدون يعتقدون يجب ان يكون هناك اكثر .

Discussion: From the first sight, it seems that the most translators don't differentiate between them as far as their meaning is concerned. By doing so they resulted into the same rendering for both. Hence a case of loss of meaning occurred. It is worth noticing that the translator no 5 gives the word عدد for *a few* which suggests a sort of distinction apart from the other translators.

The proposed translation:

١. اعطتنا جوليا بعض تفاحات من حديقتها ، هل نتقاسمها ؟
٢. ثمة نزر يسير من النساء في مجال السياسة في المملكة المتحدة .العديد من الناس يعتقدون بانه يجب ان يكون هناك عدد اكبر .

Text 4: 4th pair

7. I've got a few cakes to give away. Would you like one?
 ١. لقد حصلت على قليل من الكعك في التبرع ، هل ترغب بواحدة منها .
 ٢. انا لذي القليل من الكعك هل تريد واحدة .
 ٣. تبقى عندي القليل من الكعك ، هل تريد واحدة ؟
 ٤. لذي القليل من الكعك لاعطيه ، هل ترغب بواحدة ؟
 ٥. عندي القليل من الكعك لاعطيه ، هل تريد واحدة ؟
8. Few children from this school go to University, unfortunately.
 ١. لسوء الحظ ، ان عددا قليلا من الاطفال هذه المدرسة يذهبون الى الجامعة .
 ٢. قليل من اطفال هذه المدرسة سيلتحقون بالجامعة للاسف .
 ٣. لسوء الحظ عدد قليل من اطفال هذه المدرسة يذهبون الى الجامعة .
 ٤. للاسف فان قليل من طلاب هذه المدرسة يرتادون الجامعة .
 ٥. مع الاسف فان القليل من الاطفال ذهبوا الى الجامعة من هذه المدرسة .

Discussion: Again the same case the translators delve into. To put more precisely no fine distinction observed by the translators to put clear cut line between both quantifier under discussion.

Consequently, the same renderings were given for the two, namely, قليل or قليلا . Thus a case of loss of meaning lies in their renditions. This leads to a case where the shades of meaning of both quantifiers faded away and didn't appear in the process of translation.

The proposed translation:

- ١ . لقد حصلت على بعض من الكعك للتبرع بها ، هل ترغب بواحدة منها .
- ٢ . بالكاد لن يلتحق الا القليل من اطفال هذه المدرسة بالجامعة للاسف .

Text 5: 5th pair

9. Unfortunately, I have a few problems at the moment.

- ١ . لسوء الحظ لدي عدد مشاكل في هذه اللحظة .
- ٢ . لسوء الحظ انا واقع في المشاكل الان .
- ٣ . لسوء الحظ لدي القليل من المشاكل الان .
- ٤ . للاسف فان لدي القليل من المشاكل في هذه الاثناء .
- ٥ . ان لدي عدد المشاكل حاليا مع الاسف .

10. She's lucky. She has few problems.

- ١ . لديها عدد قليل من مشاكل لانها محظوظة .
- ٢ . هذه الفتاة محظوظة ولكنها تقع في المشاكل .
- ٣ . هي محظوظة لدينا القليل من المشاكل .
- ٤ . انها محظوظة فليس لديها الا القليل من المشاكل .
- ٥ . هي محظوظة لدينا القليل من المشاكل .

Discussion: unfortunately, most translators are unaware of the positive and negative meanings of the both quantifiers under discussion. Therefore one may notice they most of them mix them up in a way as if were the same. This may lead to lessen the peculiarity of each quantifier. The translator no. 1 and 5 give the word عدد which denote more acceptable meaning as compared with قليل .

The proposed translation:

- ١ . لسوء الحظ لدي بعض المشكلات في هذه اللحظة .
- ٢ . انها محظوظة اذ ليس لديها الا القليل من المشكلات .

Conclusions:

From analyzing different translations of the sentences, it has been found the usage of these quantifiers is semantically based to some extent. Likewise being unaware of the issue of fine distinction between pairs of quantifiers (*few and a few*) and (*little and a little*) on the part of the translators causes them to produce inaccurate translations. Peculiarity of each quantifier has not been observed well. As a result case of loss of meaning is on the corner. Similarly, the shades of meaning of each quantifier were not highlighted. These translations have been reviewed, as far as the meaning of quantifiers is concerned. The study has come up with the conclusion that taking these fine meanings of the quantifier into consideration plays a significant role in achieving insightful understanding on the part of the TL reader.

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ترجمة بعض الواصفات من الانكليزية الى العربية

أ.م. أسامة حميد ابراهيم *

مستخلص

يتناول البحث موضوعاً وهو الواصفات من الجانب النحوي في اللغة الانكليزية بالإشارة إلى الترجمة العربية. ويهدف إلى دراسة كيفية تعامل المترجمين مع معاني هذه الأدوات في ترجماتهم، إذ إنّ استعمال هذه الواصفات استعمالاً دلاليّاً إذ إنّ هذه الواصفات تختلف معانيها قلة وكثرة تبعاً لورود اداة التتكير (a) مع الأداة بمعنى أن few و a few يختلفان من ناحية المعنى ، وكذلك القول ينطبق على little و a little. يفترض البحث أنه مالم يتم التفريق بدقة بين معاني السلبية والايجابية في استعمالات هذه الواصفات ستكون الترجمة غير دقيقة. وتحليل ترجمات مختلفة لجمل الاستبانة التي تحتوي هذه الواصفات توصلت الدراسة إلى استنتاج مفاده أن أخذ هذه المعاني بنظر الاعتبار يؤدي دوراً مهماً في تحقيق فهم متبصر أفضل لدى القارئ الهدف .

* قسم الترجمة / كلية الآداب / جامعة الموصل .