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tes female inferiority and weakness as well as taboo while the word "woman" does not.

### **Conclusions:**

In the preceding discussion we have tried to shed light on one problem that faces people translating from English into Arabic and vice versa. The difficulties arising from the non-congruence between English and Arabic terms results from the expansion of meanings terms are used to indicate. These multi-function terms do not have exact equivalents in both languages as have their original meanings, and an Arab or English reader faces a dilemma when he or she is unable to accurately translate the meaning from one of these languages into the other. From the above statement and from our discussion we have concluded that:

1- Lexical incongruence makes it important to find in the target language the closest equivalent term to the one in the source language, especially if we know that there are terms that are partially equivalent, that is, they share with the source language term only some components of meaning.

2- Arabic is more specific than English in certain areas of meaning, especially as regards the kinship system, while English uses more than one term in order to specify this kind of relationship.

afternoon”, we are then using “نؤوم الضحى”, the classical phrase which has association with poems and prose of classical Arabic. We can compare the above sentence with a sentence of identical meaning but different stylistic level, “ليلى تنام الضحى” in which the concept of a pampered woman sleeping late is modernized by using a different structure. Another example is “كان يَخْتَلِفُ الى الكتاب”, “He used to go to school”. Here, the verb “ذهب” which is the equivalent of go differs stylistically from “اختلف الى” and the above translation is from the literary point of view not perfect.

(iii). *Terms with the same referential meaning but different connotation:*

Connotation is a generic term involving aspects such as emotiveness, intensity, moral approbation, etc., features which we will deal with separately. We know that words are verbal symbols standing for objects and concepts of any given culture, which have to be interpreted in relation to other words and concepts in the same culture. Languages possess alternative ways of expressions at the disposal of the speakers or writers and there can be one way that reflects better the speaker's attitudes. Since there is in every linguistic community an agreement about the associations and connotations of words, the hearer normally does not find difficulty in understanding the nuance of the speaker. Words acquire connotations because human beings attach certain sentiments to certain concepts. The word حُرْمَةٌ for example, whose referential equivalent in English is “woman” derives from the verb حَرَّمَ which means sacredness. In modern Arabic however it has pejorative meaning. Yet, translators do not find other than “woman” to be the equivalent, because English does not have another word to be used pejoratively; the word حُرْمَةٌ indica-

ctative. In comparing the two texts on the lexical level, the study will differentiate between those items which have similar referential meaning but different stylistic values, connotations, or degree of intensity.

(ii) *Terms with the same referential meaning but different stylistic value:*

Sometimes, the only available equivalent to an Arabic word is that of a different level of usage, and consequently has a different stylistic value. It may be possible to draw the same level distinction for English and Arabic, yet, the gap between some of the Arabic levels are greater. This might be because a proportion of Arabic vocabulary is a highly literary echoes. This is because Arabic has had a long uninterrupted literary history making it possible for certain words and phrases to retain their literary context. Pre-Islamic poetry, the Qur'an and the poetry of later ages are sometimes quoted in everyday language. The following diagram shows pairs of standard language words and literary words:

standard	literary
قلم	يراع
الشفاه	اللمى
نحيل	اعجف
أبغض	شأ
اختبر	بلا
ابتعد	ازور

On the other hand, we can take complete sentences which contain words of literary value and see how they are translated. For example, if we say "Layla usually sleeps well into the

There are other words which share the same meaning but they differ in expressing the intensity of meaning. The English word "love" can be rendered in Arabic by *حب*, *هوى*, *علاقة*, *كلف*. The semantic non-congruence of "love" and *حب* shows that translation inadequacy of such non-congruence entails undertranslation, for it fails to express some of the delicate variation of feeling and passion present in the original.

Arabic is said to have a large number of synonymous terms.<sup>(1)</sup> This may be true, but so have English. Some linguists say that English is rich in synonyms or quasi-synonyms. But semantic comparison between English and other languages - as far as synonymous expression are concerned are not available. Regarding Arabic, one may ask: Are Arabic synonyms total synonyms? It is more likely that they are near synonyms of different words for "camel" *بعير*, *ناقة*, *جمل*, each having a specific meaning. Likewise, each of the following English words: *quick*, *dast*, *swift*, *rapid*, *speedy*, differs from all others in some conventional features of its meaning. Differentiating the meanings of synonyms could be more difficult than establishing the meaning of single words, simply because of the very exacting nature of the analysis. The most reliable criteria would be formal, i.e., isolating the linguistic contexts in which each of the pair appears. In differentiating Arabic synonyms for the purpose of assessing the adequacy of their English translations, it is necessary to group them according to the features which are missing from these translations.

Connotative meanings can be overlooked if the target language cannot meet them. This explains the fact that the major part of the lexical non-congruence is stylistic or con-

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1. Beeston; A.F.; *The Arabic Language Today*, P.

specificity of a given language can be discussed only in relation to another language.

To give an example herewe have chosen the Arabic kinship word "cousin". For this term Arabic has eight designations :

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cousin

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ابن العم    ابن العمّة    ابن الخال    ابن الخالة    بنت العم    بنت العمّة    بنت الخال    بنت الخالة

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The above-mentioned descriptions between English and Arabic result in problems that face translators of these languages. These problems are discussed as follows:

**Translation problems arising from Lexical Incongruence.**

Lexical incongruence makes it imperative to find the closest equivalent term to that in the original. The following types of equivalence can be distinguished:

(1) The term which is only partially equivalent, that is one which shares with the term in the source language only some components of meaning. The term uncle as a translation of both *خال* and *عم* is an illustration of this. In uncle, the component of paternal or maternal relationship is not specified. Another instance of this is the use of generic words instead of one of their hyponyms. Names of animals, local food and articles of dresses (which are culture-specific) usually are not given precise English equivalence, but rendered instead by generic terms, e.g., He struts off, dressed in his robe(1). "Robe" here is a term more general and inclusive in its applicability than the more specific Arabic terms.

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1. Zuqaqu I-Midaqq, p.7.

ارض	درجة
land	grande
area	rank
ground	class
earth	step
floor	mark
	degree

In order to avoid the vagueness of the expression "semantic" or "metaphoric" extension, a more formal approach can be employed in describing the relationship between the original concrete meanings of words and their development. This can be referred to as "collocative". For example, while English uses a single word "break" in collocation with many objects and concepts, Arabic employs a different word for each of them. The following diagram illustrates this:

break						
spell	promise	record	engagement	law	string	glass
ابطل	نكث	حطم	فسخ	خالف	قطع	كسر
back	silence	fast	news	habit	blow	egg
قصم	بدد	افطر	اعلن	اقلع	خفف	فقس

The following diagram deals with another verb of a related meaning:

cut						
lecture	price	finger	heart	ribbon	bread	wire
قاطع	خفف	جرح	حز	قص	قسم	قطع

As it has been mentioned, Arabic specifies the relationship between the kinship terms (e.g., the examples of عمّة and خالة) more than English does. The degree of generality and

used unspecifically as a component of meaning to indicate paternal or maternal relationship, while Arabic specifies this kinship as *عمة* and *خاله* to indicate paternal and maternal relationships respectively. For the purpose of illustration we have chosen some objects which are easily identifiable in which there is a certain area of overlap in their development and their English equivalents. Our concentration will be on the divergences between them since this aspect is what produces translation problems .

The following list shows the difference in the transferred meaning of *head* : رأس

<u>Head</u>	<u>رأس</u>
chief; director	top
froth	tip
side of a coin	beginning
length of a head	chief part
title	initiator
brain	leader
leader	chief
imagination	summit
ruler	
master	

In the absence of specific contexts, the above example indicates how the vocabularies of the two languages can be distinguished by the one-to-many lexical equivalents . This confirms the hypothesis that languages categorize areas of meaning differently and that they often do not coincide in recognizing the same relationship between objects and processes. The word *ارض* for instance can be rendered by at least five English terms. The same is also true for the word *درجة*



polysemy, which most linguists contend is a result of metaphoric extension that is every term originally had only one meaning, then some terms were later used to indicate other components of meaning (1). In polysemy the meanings are related... and this means that there is an intelligible connection between the meanings:

e.g., *paper*: 1. material 2. piece of paper 3. newspaper  
4. piece of research....

*kitab*: 1. book 2. marriage contract....

Further, in polysemy, there are two types of relationships between the meanings: (2)

a- Recurrent difference:

e.g... a pocket/to pocket

(conversion)

a garage/to garage

b- Non-recurrent difference:

e.g., mouth (human) ————— mouth (river)

arm (human) ————— arm (chair)

polysemy in Arabic is generally of type (b)

e.g., *maqta'*: 1. crossing 2. ford 3. intersection 4. syllable  
5. group of animals...

The above examples and their likes have resulted in lexical incongruence between both Arabic and English, which makes it difficult for translators to find in the target language the closest equivalent term to that in the original. The above means that there are terms which are only partially equivalent, i.e., they share only some components of meaning with those terms of the source language. The English word *aunt*, for example, is

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(1) Al-Antaqi, M., (1969) *Al-ajiz fi Fiqhi L-luga*, pl 38.9

(2) Emery, P. G. (1982) Handout.

# Lexical Incongruence between English and Arabic

Dr. Zuhair Ghanim and Mohammad Abdullah  
Introduction

Finding a word or expression in a given language that is totally equivalent to a word or expression in another language is not as easy as one would imagine... and translators should be careful as to choose the closest equivalent. Speakers of any language use a large stock of vocabulary in order to express their needs and interests; and a word, which is to a great extent the basic unit of learning, can sometimes be used to convey more than one meaning, thus creating a complex of associations and connotations, which makes it even harder for translators to find an equivalent for such an ambiguous instance when the context is of no help.

The aim of this paper is to study this kind of incompatibility as applied to English and Arabic vocabularies and its relevance to the degree of translatability between them. In order to do this, we have chosen a number of Arabic terms and we will try to study their equivalence to their English counterparts.

It has been revealed through recent research in the fields of semantic and lexical systems in different languages that exact equivalence of meaning does not exist between the terms of these languages. Earlier linguists have remarked that certain areas of experience may be categorized in a totally different manner by different languages and that certain semantic distinctions made in one language may not be made by another (1). Moreover, it is important to note that languages do not follow the same system of semantic development. Thus two corresponding words in the SL and TL do not share the same polys-

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(1) Culler, Jonathan (1976) *Saussure*, p. 51.