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ARABIC IN CERTIFIED TRASLATORS’ WORK

Abstract: The present paper concerns Arabic in certified translators’ work. The paper contains a selection of examples translated from Arabic into Polish from a large domain of translation studies. I would like to underline that the present examples concern Polish language, with the English version not being a primary focus. This paper will deal with two important points (i) suitable words which express exact meanings and terms and (ii) the correctness of administrative style in some Arabic documents. The author will also examine the composition of Arabic texts and selection of information during the translation process.

Key words: certified translation, Arabic, Polish

The present paper concerns Arabic in certified translators’ work. The paper contains a selection of examples translated from Arabic into Polish from a large domain of translation studies. I would like to underline that the present examples concern Polish language, with the English version not being a primary focus.

There are numerous translation terms which have a large impact on the translation process and the quality of translation. However, different methods of translation are related to the rule of clearness of the text and with conditions and preferences of the audience. In addition, the Arabic language imposes other exigencies and requirements such as traditional, religious, cultural, social, administrative aspects.

In my presentation I will refer to two important points. In the first, I will pay attention to suitable words which express exact meanings and terms. The second problem affects the correctness of administrative style in some

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Arabic documents. We will examine the composition of Arabic texts and selection of information during the translation process.

To begin, I will detail suitable Arabic vocabulary. It is difficult to express and determine the meanings of words from different domains such as new technology and computer science. We will examine many calques from English and French which help to solve this problem. Words like *burjer, sbaysî, fîza, tâksi, fidîù, telewizjûn, sîdi, kasît, hard disk, ultrafiolet* are universally used in everyday Arabic. At the same time, corresponding words in Arabic are: *ta’ shîra* (a visa), *sayyâra ujra* (a taxi), *sharî* (a CD, a cassette), *qurş šalbi* (a hard disk) become less frequently used. Calques can prove an advanced poverty of Arabic language and a huge influence of English taking the place of local languages in the future. We must add that the exaggeration of calques is treated as a methodological mistake during the translation process. On the other side, that situation is a comprehensible effect of globalization and conscious choice of Arabic speakers.

Some models and schemas help to avoid the calques in Arabic. They support the building of new terms and meanings too. Many examples are related to technology, physics and chemistry. We find, for instance, an Arabic model *fa’îl* which refers to some machines and installations like *dabbâba* (a tank), *sayyâra* (a car) and *ghawwâša* (a submarine). This schema also refers to the names of professions like *khabbâz* (a baker), *rassâm* (a drawer, a designer), *khayyyât* (a tailor). Another model, *miʃ’al*, refers to machines engaging in an activity such as *miʃ’ad* (a lift) or *mikbaḥî* (a brake). There is also a schema called the hybrid (ar. *naḥt*). It consists of words combinations which contain an Arabic and European subjects like the word *fikrulujiya* (an ideology). It is a connection of two separate words: the Arabic word *fikr* (an idea) and the European word *logia*. We can observe a similar situation in the example: *kahrahârâri* (thermoelectric) composed of two Arabic significations: *kahraba* (electricity) and *ḥarâra* (temperature).

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3 The arabization of words and borrowings from different languages was a natural process in the history of Arabic. Famous philologists like Sibawayh (d. 796), Abû ’Ubayda (d. 825), Ibn Qutayba (d. 869) and Al-Jâhiz (d. 869) proved that many words had come from Persian, Hindi, Latin etc. Cultural, economic and political devolopment in Islamic Empire increased research in a huge domaine of Arabic words and significations from different languages. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-ʿAzîz 1985: 140-150.


6 Ibidem: 18-19, 34.
It should be mentioned that a large group of suffixes retain particular meanings. Suffix ḳ, for instance, signifies acids like ḥāmid kibritīk (sulfuric acid) or ḥāmid fussfurīk (phosphoric acid). There are also many meanings that correspond to European prefixes: dawi (photo), mutā’addad (multi) or fawki (hyper).7

However, all of those methods are not sufficient for the huge domain of Arabic meanings and words. In fact, one word cannot determine multiple meanings. Among the many examples, there is the word hawd. It means a bath, a washbasin, a sink etc. The essential meaning comes from a reservoir in a mosque for an ablution before the prier. Hawd has new meanings as a result of semantic displacement. Nevertheless, it does not contain every detail related to bathroom equipment. A similar situation can be found in the expression: athathu al-bayti, which means furniture but more generally refers to all equipment in a house. The distinction between these meanings is important in judicial cases like divorce and division of property. The two parties involved often mention each type of furniture such as a book-case known in Polish language as meblościanka. The word khizāna is an Arabic equivalent of that meaning but it also refers to other furniture in the house like a chest of drawers, a wardrobe, cupboards, etc. Also relevant is the word miftāh which means a key and a switch like in the phrase: miftāhu al-kahrabā’i (electricity switch). The precision of that term is important in electrical systems. There can be confusion about if the object being referred is a switch or a key placed in some installations.

Word meanings cannot always be developed from the Arabic context. It not only takes into consideration particular meanings, but also different situations, circumstances and a deeper sense of the text too. We may draw attention to the word rizq which signifies food as well as a gift. At the same, time rizq has religious connotations related to the Grace of Allah and a gift coming from heaven. Words mātar and ghayth mean rain but the first example holds a negative connotation effected by dangerous floods and natural disasters. Instead, ghayth defines positive connotations of the rain in the desert.

The question of the context is also obvious in translations of media language. The concept of Jihād is a good example of this. It loses its religious connotations and gains contemporary, useful translations. This is why Jihād often means The Holy War or even terrorism.8

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8 The notion Jihād needs deeper explanations of course. However, we must remark that Arabic word
The precision of words and Arabic context can be solved by the generalization of meanings. This is especially useful in difficult and less frequently used terminology from law and exact sciences. These generalizations are justified because of the clearness of communication between Arabic and Polish audiences. Moreover, additional meanings do not have to be taken into consideration.

The term *a complaint* brings some difficulties in translation. The Arabic words *shakwa* and *iddi‘ā* correspond with this phrase but they also introduce negative connotations related to sorrow, pretentions, and complaints. In order to avoid discussions about these deeper meanings, we can adopt the word *talab* (a request) which responds with a simple proposal or a request due to family cases or heritage. Arabic audiences should know that this meaning does not complain or accuse, but proposes a request or an argument to the court.

A similar situation occurs in the term *a judgment*. It can be translated as *ḥukm* or *muḥākama*. The first equivalent has an archaic sense and is rarely used. The second one concerns criminal cases and accusations. In this situation the word *qarār* (a decision) should be used to generalize the meaning and remain clear and legible for Arabic audiences.

The generalization of meanings is evident in the terms *adoption* and *preparation*. The word *tabann* refers to both of them, but it does not separate the questions of natural, biological parenthood and adoption of a child by new parents. *Tabann* embraces just the general problem of a child’s adoption.

During the translation process, we must adopt different stylistic constructions and expressions composed of two or three words in order to detail particular Arabic notions. This is an effect of imagery and metaphor in the Arabic language. Expressions like *Bintu shafatin* (lips’ daughter) and *Ibn awa* (shelter’s son) are good examples of this. The first phrase signifies *a word* and the second one *a jackal*. The sense of those expressions is based on impressions following the common marks between each word of the phrase.

Descriptive constructions help to precise and complete technical and audiovisual terminology. This is evident in the following examples.

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*jihād* means an effort and self-sacrifice. The meaning is related to moral struggle in order to reach religious and spiritual purity. *Jihād* is also a self-defence against the danger for the faith. That defence is usually based on rational explanations of Quran and logical argumentations. Violence in that case is condemned and criticized. See more: Tahar Gaïd 1982: 100-103.

The Arabic equivalent of the phrase: *remote control* is expressed by the
description *waḥdatu at-tahakkumi an buṭdin* (a unit for remote control). The
word *waḥda* (a unit) which not only indicates a general meaning of remote
control, but also especially the mechanism.

The translation of the term *a notebook computer (laptop)* corresponds
with the Arabic equivalent *ajhizatu kumbyūtarin al-maḥmūlatu* (a mecha-
nism of a mobile computer). The word *ajhiza* (a mechanism) is essential in
that phrase. It determines the kind of installation and its small size. A note-
book computer can be compared with installations like a camera (ar. *jihāzu
at-taṣwīrī*) or a video-camera (ar. *jihāzu kamīra*).

We should also pay attention to some translations of commands in diff er-
ent audiovisual installations. The phrase *azrāru ikhtiyāri al-qanāti* (buttons for
selecting the channels) is an Arabic version *channels button*. The word *ikhtiyār*
(choice) describes the function and application of the mechanism. A similar situ-
ation is present in the example *azrāru l-bahthi al-ważīfati* (buttons for searching
the function) which defines the function *search buttons*. The command is com-
pleted by the word *ważīfa* which defines the function of searching. Particular
words give clear information concerning the application of certain mechanism.

We should also mention the phrase *miqyāsu surāti ar-riyāhi* (wind
speed gauge) which is the equivalent to the term *an anemometr*. The word
*surā* (speed) explains the activity of the mechanism. The anemometr not
only measures the wind, but also the speed.

The phrase *a passenger vehicle* is oft en translated as *sayyāratu naqlī
ar-rukkābi* (a vehicle for passenger transport). The expression *sayyāratu
ar-rukkābi* (passenger vehicle) seems more acceptable and efficient but it
defines possession of a vehicle. The mentioned phrase with the word *naql*
(transport) distinguishes the membership and allocation of the vehicle.

Sometimes the precision of meaning rests on the replacement of par-
ticular words. This is evident in a questionnaire concerning an application
for a visa to Tunisia. The application contains the following expression *Bilād Tūnisiyya*
(Tunisian Lands) or *Turāb Tūnisiyy* (Tunisian Soil). These kinds
of names make a distinction of the Arabic word *Tūnis* which defines the
capital and name of the state. The exact meaning of the expressions are im-
portant due to questions concerning the stay in country as a whole or only
the capital. On the other side, there is an official name *Al-Jumhuriyya at-
Tūnisiyya* (Republic of Tunisia), but it is usually used in certain situations
and is treated as a separate name in some documents.
The second question of the present paper concerns the formal style in Arabic documents and requirements related to culture, tradition, religion and administration. I would like to take into consideration these stylistic forms.

Administrative style depends on certain terminology such as formal functions of Arabic institutions. The terms: mudir, muważżaf, amin, mukhtár, sembler are generally used. Mudir designates a manager, a director, a president, a principal etc. Muważżaf refers to a clerk and a civil servant. However, sembler means an officer. Amin means a secretary and mukhtár a foreman. It is difficult to translate and define the formal functions murāqib (a supervisor) and naẓzár (an inspector). This is why, in the target language, we must replace those terms by more popular and useful equivalents like president, manager, officer or principal.

Different, formal functions correspond with administrative zones in Arab countries. We distinguish words like wilāya, muḥāfaża, dāīra, baladīyya, muqāta‘a and iqlīm. They signify European terminology: voivedeship, district, province and region. The application of those notions depends on the location of the Arab countries. Muḥāfaża, for instance, occurs in the Middle East and wilāya in the West. Because of multiple sense of administrative units, French offices use the word ouilaya to describe districts in Tunisia, Algeria or Morocco. There are also the terms iqlīm and muqāta‘a which mean a district and a province. However, muqata‘a is used only as a nominal name for a district and it differs from the words muḥāfaża or wilāya. Besides, iqlīm defines a large surface with undetermined borders like in the case of Kurdistan known in Arabic as: Iqlīmu Kurdistaniyy (The Region of Kurdistan).

Another group of words has a big influence on formal style in Arabic documentation. These words emphasize notions in texts and express the seriousness of content in documents. The following nouns are an example of such: mustanadāt and qayd. Mustanadāt represents certificates and guarantees presented in an office or joined to documentation. Mustanadāt is different from the terms wathīqa (a document) or awraaq (writings, papers), which are well known in everyday Arabic language.

Nevertheless, the word qayd responds to Arabic words: tasjil or sijl. They signify registration and record. Qayd instead refers to the registration number and essential information about a citizen. The fundamental meaning of that
term is related to strong relationships and connections. This means that *qayd* refers to connections between a particular person and his identity. If any certificates concern general registration, it appears in the words *tasjil* or *sijl*. The term *qayd* occurs when documentation refers to specified personal information.

We can also observe additional verbs in some documents. The expression *tamma ta’inahu* is an Arabic version of the phrase *to be nominated*. Using the verb *tamma* (to finish) formalizes the document. This also differs from simple, everyday statements such as ‘*ayyanahu raisan* (he nominated him for a prime minister).

A similar style dominates in the example *jaa an-nasṣu wifqan lil-muhtawa shahādatin* (the text has arrived in accordance with the matter of the certificate). The verb *jaa* (to arrive) is essential to the sentence because it introduces an official style and emphasizes a solemnity of the document.

The analysis of the order of words in Arabic sentences as well as the selection and segmentation of information in the text are equally important in the translation process.

Many Arabic certificates contain the following phrases *yashhadu al-mudiru, binaan ’ala al-marsūmi raqmun*… (the principal declares, according to the ordinance number…). We can observe a long list of ordinances and regulations. There is an essential declaration of the principal. The target language requires that we select certain information and change the order of the text. We must separate all ordinances from the declaration. The decision should appear on the top of the text and other parts should be placed in a particular passage.

There is the same method of translation in some birth certificates. These certificates usually contain the sentence: *fi as-sā’ati as-sābi’ati khamsa ‘ashara daqiqatan, fi al-madinati Abu Sa’id, al-baladiyyati Abu Sa’id, ad-dairati Abu Sa’id, wulida Hasan, ibnu Ahmad wa Layla.* (at seven o’clock, fifteen minutes, in the city of Abu Sa’id, in the district of Abu Sa’id, the region of Abu Sa’id was born Hasan, the son of Ahmad and Layla). A birth certificate is a sort of detailed description of the birth process. It does not contain a list with all essential information about the child and the parents.

Arabic documents have a stylistic order. Some of them contain passages with the phrase *wa bādu* (then, next) such as in the following example *atyabu tahiyatin wa bādu* (best wishes and then [next]). *Wa bādu* does not correspond to the other parts of the sentence. That is why it is often used in translations. However *wa bādu* underlines the formal sense and separates certain passages in the document.
The same description is present in a marriage certificate. It demonstrates the protocol of the ceremony and includes every person taking part in the marriage as well as instructions and formal regulations.

Some documents contain sentences and phrases related to religious and moral aspects. The passage *Bi-smi Allahi wa rahmâni wa rahîmi* (in the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful) occurs in a majority of certificates. That phrase authenticates and executes the document. It also proves the strong relations between the state and Islam. A translation into the target language usually obliges us to avoid religious references in order to conserve administrative style.

Nevertheless, we cannot ignore that question in certificates declaring faith and acceptance of Islamic law (ar. *dîn wa madhhab*). It is important in many judicial and administrative cases such as marriage, divorce, adoption or citizenship.

Influence of religion is obvious in the documentation of the condition before marriage. It contains the following sentence: *là yîjadu mâni’un shir’iyyun aw qanîniyyun bi an yatâzawwâja* (there are not any juridical and Islamic juridical prohibitions for marriage). Religious references can be necessary in family cases which do not occur in civil law. That is why religious aspects should be translated.

We can add the example of a marriage certificate. It contains a long description of a dowry which includes the amount of money for each side of the marriage as well as bars of gold for a bride in the case of divorce. Of course, this unique description is not present in Polish translations because of formal regulations. However, we can present a summary of information about the marriage ceremony.

The relations of bystanders are equally important in many documents. Here is an example from the condition certificate *lahu al-ḥaqqu al-qanîniyyu bi-an yatâzawwâja bi-shahâdati ash-shâhidayni* (He has the right to be married based on the declaration of two bystanders). The phrase *shahâdatu ash-shâhidayni* (the declaration of two bystanders) is the most interesting in this certificate. It not only includes the signatures of bystanders during the marriage ceremony and formal rules, but also ocular relations of the participants. A verbal declaration appears more important than any document or certificate10.

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10 The experience from my childhood passed in Algeria proves that bystanders’ testimony is very important. A friend of our family sold a car. New owners caused a car accident and injured one person on the same day. Unfortunately the name of our friend was appearing in documentation of the car.
The importance of verbal and visual testimony is also evident in birth certificates. The following information is present on the certificate \( al-abu, al-ummu, al-qābilatu aw ghayruhum mimman shahida al-wilādata \) (a father, a mother, a nurse or anyone else who has seen the birth). Polish documentation is concentrated on the child’s parents. Arabic certificates place an emphasis on persons who can testify to the birth.

Social and moral tendencies are illustrated in Arabic documents too. The Arabic Health Book (ar. \( daftār ‘ailīyy \)) from the 1980’s is a good example of this. There are approximately twelve pages referencing children. Details about subsequent children are placed in each page. This is proof of the high birth rate in Arabic countries. It is worth noting that there is only one page for the father. It contains essential information about his name, profession as well as the date and place of birth. The health book shows the important function of the father in a family. Due to the lower birth rate it is difficult to adopt this kind of certificate in Polish (European) conditions. This is why a summery of the first page of the document should be given. In the case of many children, we must translate all pages and refer to every passage of the text.

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Concluding, I would like to remark that my comments present the specificity of the Arabic language on the level with administration, societal, moral, and religious regulations. I also analyzed different methods of translation and questions of formal style in Arabic documentation. Nevertheless, the clearness of the text is most important during the translation process.

This paper points to the fact that efficient and detailed words express multiple meanings in Arabic. I refered to descriptive phrases and stylistic constructions which exemplify the difficult significations as well as the formal style in documents.

While selection of information and the different order of Arabic sentences are very important, this paper proves that segmentation is based on essential details for the target language.

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It could cause some problems with the police and indicate the perpetrator of the accident. Finally, the problem was solved by people who saw the incident and declared immediately that the buyer had given some amount of money so he became a new owner of the car and he was responsible for the accident.
I presented some social, moral, and religious aspects which are not present in many Polish translations. However these aspects show the working of Arabic administration and offices. Many of these questions are useful in making formal decisions and can improve communication between European and Arabic institutions.

Bibliography


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Język arabski w pracy tłumacza przysięgłego

Niniejszy referat dotyczy osobistych refleksji związanych z pracą tłumacza przysięgłego języka arabskiego.

Istotną rolę odgrywa odpowiedni dobór słownictwa, które obejmowałoby swoim zaciskiem znaczeniowym poszczególne pojęcia w danym języku. Należy także wspomnieć o odzwierciedlaniu właściwej terminologii w języku arabskim, która nie zawsze odpowiada językowi polskiemu. Taka sytuacja zmusza niekiedy do stosowania ekwiwalentów znaczeniowych, generalizujących pojęć bądź rozbudowanych, opisowych konstrukcji stylistycznych.

Specyfika języka arabskiego wymaga również uwzględniania różnorodnych czynników w pracy translatorskiej niezależnie od charakteru i tematyki tekstu. Czynniki te dotyczą często religii, tradycji, kultury i obyczajów czy wreszcie kwestii społeczno-politycznych i administracyjnych.

Równie ważną rolę odgrywa szyk zdania w arabskim tekście, w którym określone informacje zostają wyeksponowane na początku i dominują liczne wtrącenia i dopowiedzenia, co zmusza do pomijania i skracania niektórych kwestii.

Zaprezentowane rozważania mogą okazać się użyteczne przy wydawaniu różnych decyzji administracyjnych i sądowych, a także mogą przyczynić się do sprawnej komunikacji między urzędami europejskimi i arabskimi.