

## Analysis of Students' Errors in Translating English Pronouns into Arabic

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## Analysis of Students' Errors in Translating English Pronouns into Arabic

### مستخلص الدراسة

يكشف هذا البحث تحليل أخطاء الطلاب في ترجمة الضمائر الانجليزية إلى اللغة العربية . من اجل فحص ترجمات الطلبة ، قمنا باختبار الترجمة التي تتكون من جمل مختلفة التي تحتوي على أنواع مختلفة من الضمائر كبيانات لهذه الدراسة ، وتستخدم الدراسة الكمية والنوعية في هذا البحث . ويقوم عدد ( 15 ) خمسة عشر طالب وطالبة من الفصل الثامن من كلية التربية المرج بجامعة بنغازي للعام الدراسي 2020 ، بإجراء اختبار لترجمة الضمائر من اللغة الانجليزية إلى اللغة العربية، و أظهرت النتائج أن الطلاب يواجهون صعوبة في ترجمة الضمائر إلى لغتهم الأم ( اللغة العربية ) وكشفت النتائج أيضا أن لديهم صعوبة في ترجمة الضمائر الموصولة بنسبة 50% و تليها ضمائر الإشارة بنسبة 34% ، وكانت اقل نسبة هي نسبة ضمائر الاستفهام و ضمائر الملكية . وتبين بأنه بالرغم من الطلاب قد درسوا هذه الضمائر في مادة القواعد في كليتهم إلا أن اغلبيهم لم ينجحوا في نقلها بشكل صحيح .

### Abstract

This research explores the analysis of students' errors in translating English pronouns into Arabic. In order to examine students' translations, translation test, which consists of different sentences that have different pronouns types, as data for this study. Quantative and qualitative study is used in this study. Fifteen students from Semester VIII from the Faculty of Education, Benghazi University in the academic year 2020 undertake the test to render some pronouns into Arabic. The results showed that students face difficulty in the translation of pronouns into their mother tongue, Arabic. The findings also revealed that they had difficulty in translating relative pronouns with the percentage of 50%; followed by demonstrative 34%. The lowest percentage was interrogative and possessive pronouns. It is revealed that in spite of that students have studies pronouns in their grammar courses at the faculty, yet most of them were not successful to render them properly.

**Key Words:** Pronouns, Faculty of education, types of pronouns, translation, and grammar.

## 1. Introduction

Pronouns are considered important in English language. They can be used when we would like to substitute a noun with pronoun in order to avoid redundant. Little attention has been given to the translation of pronouns. What researchers focus, is only on the usage of pronouns, students' inability of using pronouns, and common pronouns errors, which are committed by students. Translating pronouns is a very important issue to discuss and investigate. Having presented common idea about pronouns, let us now highlight the notion of translation. Translation is basically defined as process of changing source language text into target language. This translation process varies according to the viewpoints of translation scholars. According to Catford [4]“translation is replacement of textual material in one language (5L) by equivalent textual material in another language(TL)”. As university teachers, we found that most students, who are in semester VIII, Faculty of Education at the university of Benghazi, still fail to distinguish and translate many types of English pronouns although, they have been taught pronouns in the beginning of their study in the faculty . In addition, they were taught translation theories and practices. Therefore, we find it is significant to investigate the problems that they face when they translate from English, into their mother tongue, Arabic as we are going to see in our data analysis section.

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

A demanding problem for researchers , is that most of the students at eight semester are still not successful in identifying the different types of pronouns. Furthermore, they fail to render them from English into Arabic. when they are asked to render different sentences that include pronouns into their language, Arabic. For that reason; we saw it is necessary to explore why they cannot successfully render pronouns into the target, Arabic.

### 1.2 Research Questions

The study is attempting to answer the following questions:

1. What problems do semester eight students at Benghazi University encounter when translating pronouns?
2. What strategies do students use to translate pronouns?
3. What are the causes behind the problems of students' inability of translating pronouns?

### 1.3 Objectives of the Study

The main aim of this research is to evaluate the students' attempts when translating the different types of pronouns into English. The research will also tackle the following objectives:

- To explore the different types of pronouns and to discover the types where most students commit errors .
- To examine the ways used by students to deal with the translation of pronouns according to their contexts.
- To guide translators and students when they render pronouns from English into Arabic.

### 2. Types of Pronouns Used in this Study:

Pronouns are kind of words they are considered as essential components of parts of speech, therefore, they are significant tools of language .e.g *Ahmed is a clever student . He passes all his exams.* In this example, we used pronoun instead of a noun .There are many types of pronouns in English language we selected six of them to discuss in this section. This is because, we made samples contain all types of pronouns to be rendered by students. However, they found difficulties in translating these six pronouns into their mother tongue, Arabic. Consequently, we find it is very significant to discuss them in this section. According to Betty [3],“Pronouns are words that refer to nouns or to noun phrase, they sometimes replace or modify them Also refer to a single nouns or noun phrase”. George [5] , illustrates that pronouns are forms such as it, these, they, them, theirs, themselves and each other that used instead of nouns. The first type of pronoun that most students commit mistakes is possessive pronoun. The possessive Pronoun include (*my, our, your, their, her, his and mine, ours, yours, theirs, hers, his*). Those used before nouns as determiners and those used in place of nouns also the possessive pronouns used to avoid repetition of the same words in a sentences such as *This car is my car – This car is mine.* Moreover, if these pronouns occur before nouns in a sentences they are adjectives but they are replace nouns in sentences *Her house is big ( determiner) - Mine is small ( pronoun).* The second type of pronoun is relative. Relative Pronoun is used to relate to previous nouns or describing clause to the noun or pronoun it describes. It shows association between two or more sentence elements. It includes : (who, whom, whose, which, that, what, when, why, so and how).

The relative Pronouns ‘who’ and ‘whom’ relate or refer to person e.g *The man who carried the suit case is my uncle. whom she was arguing with.* However, ‘when’, when the antecedent is animate. ‘Which’ is used when the antecedent is inanimate, such as *The city which I visited is very peaceful.* The third type is called reflexive. Reflexive Pronoun, is used

## العدد السابع والأربعون / أبريل / 2020

when the subject or the object in the sentences are the same. Reflexive Pronouns are those which refer directly to the nouns or the noun phrase Such Pronouns include: (myself, themselves, itself, yourself, himself, herself, ourselves, yourselves). Examples of reflexive pronouns include: *the girl hurt herself, we gave ourselves plenty of time . They enjoy themselves . I can drive the car myself.* Betty [3], explains that reflexive pronoun end in self – selves . It is used when the subject ( e.g .,I ) and the object ( e.g, myself ) are the same person . The action of the verb is pointed back to the subject of the sentences. This kind of pronoun is used to stress that the action of the verbs are performed by subject rather than by someone else e.g *she prepared breakfast herself* . A reflexive pronoun is one which shows that the action in the sentence has its effect on the person or thing that does the action. However, some personal pronouns are joined with the word ‘ self’ (singular) or ‘ selves’ (plural) to form what is known as reflexive Pronouns. Reflexive pronoun is usually preceded by (by) means alone such as my nice sometimes studied by herself. Others may be preceded by other prepositions e.g The old man was talking to himself. The fourth type of pronoun that students commit mistakes as we are going to see in our data of analysis section is demonstrative. The fourth type would be demonstrative. Demonstrative Pronouns: These pronouns such as *this* and *these* are used to refer to people or things close to the speaker . *That* and *those* refer to things , people which are far from the speaker. In addition, demonstratives can be used alone in noun position that’s named as demonstrative pronouns e.g *This is my laptop* or can be used before nouns in adjectives position and named as demonstrative determiners e.g *this laptop is mine* . The fifth type of pronoun is called reciprocal. Reciprocal pronouns, often function as adjectives. They include: each other when only two are involved , one another when more than two are involved. e.g. *Ahmed and Hala love each other, people of the city should help one another.* The sixth and last pronoun that we found students in this study commit mistakes is indefinite. Indefinite pronoun, this type of pronoun indicates to indefinite may be unknown person, thing or refer to indefinite quantities such as some, any, either, both, nothing no one these are pronouns when it occurs in sentences , but when they are located before nouns in sentences they are adjectives determiner. For instance, *someone has stolen the bank , there isn’t any money in the wallet.* George [5], states that someone and something are indefinite pronouns . others are anything , every one everything and none we use them to talk about people.

### 3. Students' Problems of Using English Pronouns:

Many researchers such as Subandowo[10], Riadussulhi [8], Ru Gu [6], and Anggraeni [2] , highlighted the problems that most of students face when it comes to using pronouns. The study of Subandowo [10], expressed some types of pronouns that students failed to use them in a proper way. In his study, 'The Students' wrong pronoun usages in simple sentence. In his paper, he used students at the eleventh grade of SMA Kartikatama. in order to check validity

## العدد السابع والأربعون / أبريل / 2020

of the results, he used primary data and triangulation. he found that the most pronoun that students fail to recognize is possessive pronoun and pronoun usage in simple sentence.

The work of Riadussulhi [8] explores common pronoun errors made by students in English composition. He randomly collected about forty students and used writing test and questionnaire as instruments used in this study. his result was the same as Subandowo, where the most common errors, which are committed by eighth grade students was possessive pronoun with the percentage of 21.85%.

Ru Gu [6] explores the use of third-person singular pronouns in Chinese English as a second language (ESL) students' spoken and written English. His research also investigated the indistinguishability between masculine and feminine pronouns in spoken Mandarin Chinese and the effect of transference between Chinese, L1, and English, L2. The finding of this research reached that Chinese students had more third person pronoun usage errors in spoken English than in written English.

Anggraeni [2], discovered a different result from above researchers. . In his research entitled, "An Analysis of students' errors in using personal pronouns on writing descriptive text of the tenth grade students of SMK AL-Mina bandungan". This research was a study of errors made by students in using personal pronouns on writing descriptive text . The subjects were fifteen students; and the main aim is to find the types of errors that students commit when using personal pronoun. Results showed that half of the students resorted to misformation of the personal pronoun. Research proved that this misformation was because that students confused about materials given by teachers and also because of that teachers were very boring.

From above investigations, it is obvious that students from different languages face difficulty in distinguishing between the different types of English pronouns. In our research, we will investigate the students' ability in distinguishing and transferring the English pronouns into Arabic, as we are going to see in our data analysis section.

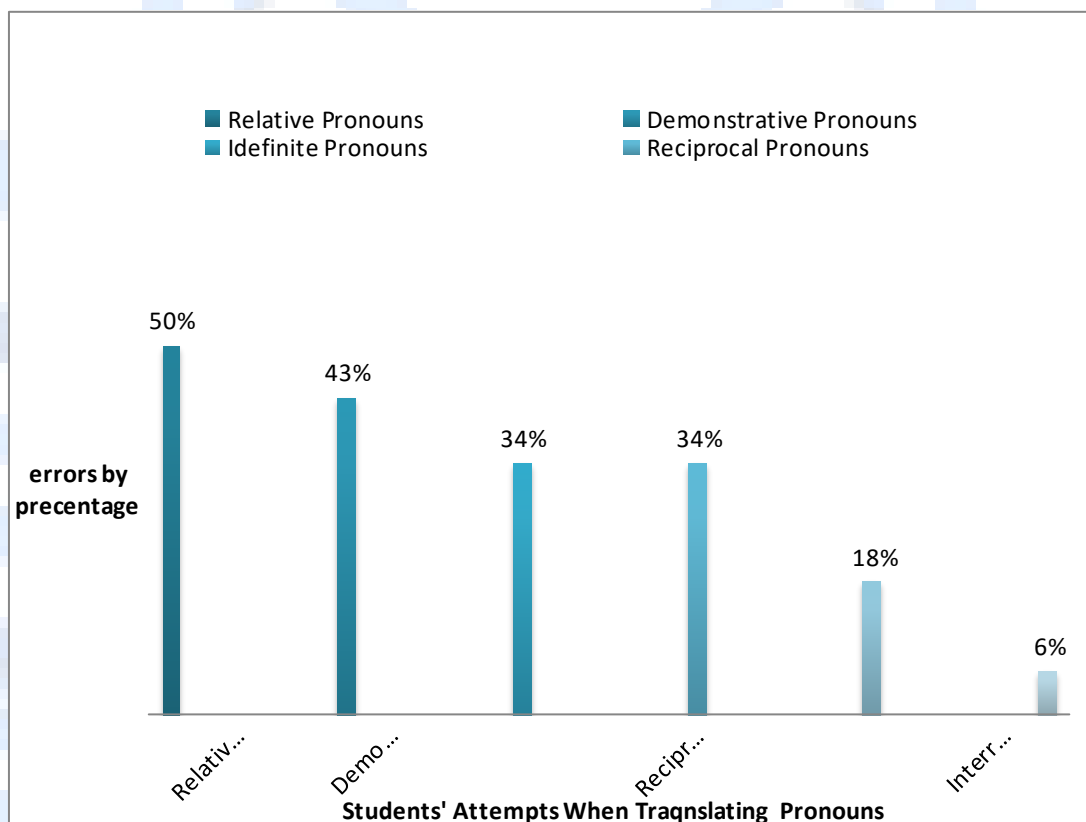
### 4. Methodology

The data of this research is a group of sentences. every sentence expresses a type of pronoun. This is because we would like to examine the performance of the students when they translate English pronouns sentences into their mother tongue, Arabic. These sentences will be translated into Arabic by the eighth semester students of English, Faculty of Education at the university of Benghazi. Quantative and qualitative analysis will be conducted in this study. The study is conducted following Catford's approach of translation [4]. The reason for choosing this approach is that it focuses on translating texts according to "textual materials" only. The students' attempts of translating these sentences, which include different types of pronouns, will be analyzed in order to see which type of pronoun that they fail to translate into their language. In addition, semi-structured interview questions were provided with the

test. The translated pronouns will be discussed and investigated in order to see whether they entirely presented their corresponding equivalents in Arabic or not.

#### 4.1 . Results:

Figure (1) below shows the students' failure of providing correct translations for the six types of pronouns: relative, demonstrative, indefinite, reciprocal, possessive, and interrogative pronouns.



Generally, figure one illustrates that the highest percentage of students' errors was at the relative pronoun (50%). The interrogative pronoun translation had the lowest percentage about (6%). The variety of percentages for participants who commit wrong rendering of indefinite pronouns and reciprocal pronouns was completely similar (34%). It has also a much higher wrong translation of demonstrative pronouns about (43%).

Having discussed figure by percentage, and see the highest and lowest error percentages, let us now see how participants deal with the translation of pronouns. During the investigation of participants' challenges of rendering English demonstrative pronouns into Arabic, it is discovered that forty three percentage of participants translated the demonstrative (those) into (بأخذها), i.e (take it), which is wrong. Only participants D, C, D, E, and G D, H, I, and K gave correct translations for the demonstrative (those), which is (هؤلاء). In spite of that participants

## العدد السابع والأربعون / أبريل / 2020

are at advanced semesters of English, yet it is revealed that they still commit errors when it come to translate a simple demonstrative pronoun like (those). The same can be said of participants A,B, and T who tried to translate the interrogative (who), into Arabic. it is obvious that they cannot distinguish between (who) and (why). Consider their translations:

لماذا تتحدث هكذا؟

In the above attempt, participants rendered the English (who), the interrogative pronoun which is used when asking about people, into (لماذا) , which means (why). An appropriate translation for the interrogative pronoun in the sentence:

who told you that.

من أخبرك هذا؟

The disappointment of giving proper translation for pronouns appear in the translation of indefinite pronoun. less than the half, around forty three percent of the participants commit errors at this type of pronouns. They incorrectly render (someone) into (هناك) i.e (there). In the sentence that says:

someone see the driver.

Participants do not know how to distinguish between them in terms of meaning. (someone) should be translated into Arabic as (أحدهم); and the correct translation would be:

أحدهم رأى السائق

It can be deduced then, that most of the participants have difficulties in distinguishing between types of pronouns and their usages.

It is also noticed that they i.e participants have problems of translating reciprocal pronouns. Reciprocal pronouns refers to that some people carrying out the same action simultaneously. Consider the following example:

Students at university must help one another.

Participants' translation of the reciprocal (one another) involved a very big mistake. for instance,

طلاب الجامعة يجب ان يساعدوا واحد اخر

Here, they think that word for word translation process works and rendered every single word separately, for example, they translated (one) into Arabic as (واحد) i.e (one); and translated (another) into (اخر). it seems that they separated the reciprocal pronoun (one another); and translated each word separately. An appropriate translation for the above reciprocal pronoun would be (أحدهما الآخر) consequently, the translation of the above sentence is:

يجب أن يساعد طلاب الجامعة أحدهما الآخر

It is also revealed that half of the participants fail to translate the relative (who), in the sentence that states, (that man who called yesterday wants to buy the house). for instance, students D,E,F,H , A, C, B, and G applied the question form which is wrong. Consider their attempt:

هذا الرجل من اتصل امس يريد يشتري منزل



## العدد السابع والأربعون / أبريل / 2020

They think that (who) only refers to wh-question, which is used for asking information about someone or some people. Only fifty percent of participants gave correct translation for the relative pronoun (who), which is (الذي). Consider their translation:

هذا الرجل الذي اتصل امس يريد شراء منزل.

### 4.2 . Discussion and Findings:

In spite of that half of the participants did offer accurate translation of relative pronoun (who), the other half fail were unsuccessful to make correct translation of relative pronoun. This means that participants face difficult to distinguish between relative pronouns intended meaning This basic finding is consistent with the research of Al-Goot Abdalla Al Awad Salim [1], when he investigated the Problems of Translating English Relative Clauses into Arabic Among EFL Sudanese Universities. He concluded that the the majority complicated domain of relative clauses types was non- defining relative clauses.

It also has been scrutinized that about forty three percent of the participants could not supply accurate translation of the demonstrative pronouns. This corresponds with different preceding research of Paturusi [7], who writes about the Students' difficulties in using demonstrative pronoun at the second year of SMP Aisyiyah Sungguminasa . In this study, twenty items multiple choice and questionnaires is used to identify the difficulties in using demonstrative pronouns. The finding showed that 47.25% of the students faced difficulties in using demonstrative pronouns.

A further finding that has been observed is the participants' failure of translating possessive and interrogative pronouns. It is supposed that they had learned the types of pronouns as well as translation theories and practices courses. However, they still find it difficult to translate or distinguish between types of pronouns. This finding is in accordance with the findings of Aisha A. Abdullah [1], who investigated the difficulties encounter students in Sudanese secondary schools when using pronouns in English language. She used both, descriptive and analytical method to test and used SPSS program for analyzing dat. She found that most of the students sill confuse between the function of possessive pronoun and the function of other pronouns . In addition, concluded that using pronouns is still difficult for the students.

### 5. Conclusion and recommendations

The main reason of this study was to examine the translation mistakes of English pronouns, which are committed by the department of English students, university of Benghazi. Generally, it is clear that the task very difficult to the students. The most important finding that some students fail to translate six types of pronouns including relative, demonstrative, indefinite, reciprocal, possessive, and interrogative pronouns. This proposes that the translation teachers in the faculty did not provide them grammar translation. What they give is only cultural, political, or literature texts. Translation teachers have to test the students' ability of translating grammatical units from English into Arabic and vice versa. We found

العدد السابع والأربعون / أبريل / 2020

that most translation problems can be found at grammatical units. This is because, translation teachers pay little attention to such units. As it can be deduced from this study, translating pronouns, which are considered as one of the grammatical units expresses challenges to the students. This is also might because translating grammatical units from English into Arabic is not as simple as we think to the students. This research recommends that translating grammatical units should be thought and practiced with students during the translation courses.



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