

Problems of Translating English Sports Register into Arabic

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The problem:

Most of translation students understand translation as the translation of individual words only, accordingly they commit serious mistakes. The students' problem is that they think that literal translation is applicable to everything and to all contexts and hence do not consider the equivalence between varieties of language. In fact, the selection of an appropriate register in the TL is often important. If TL has no equivalent register, untranslatability may result (Catford, 1969:90). Thus, the students who follow literal translation produce inaccurate translations to those registers which call for technical translation or register for register translation. So, in sports which is an individual field of knowledge with specific terminology or registers, literal translation is unwelcome.

Concept of Register:

Register is the term commonly used for language variation of a non-dialectal type; e.g. differences between polite and familiar language; spoken and written languages, scientific, religious, legal language, etc. (Leech & Short, 1981:80). According to Catford (1965:84) register is a type of language variety which is related to the “transient” characteristics of the performer and addressee i.e. related to the immediate situation of utterance. He adds, in translation, the selection of an appropriate register in TL is often important and if TL has no equivalent register, untranslatability may result (ibid:90). Lyons (1981:292) defines register as a sociolinguistic concept. He points out that stylistic variation in general and register variation in particular, is not simply a matter of vocabulary but it also affects grammar and as far as the spoken language is concerned,

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Problems of Translating English Sports Register into Arabic

Lect.Dr. Sultan J. H. Al-Hayali & Lect. Essam T. Mohammed

pronunciation. Newmark (1982:121) considers register as a self-expressive language marker SL text author uses unconsciously when he expresses his own views and it has become an imprecise blanket term to cover all the socially conditioned features of language. According to Halliday and Hassan(1976:23) register is the set of meanings, the configuration of semantic conditions, along with words and structures that are used in the realization of these meanings. They add, if a passage hangs together as a text, it will display a consistency of register. In other words , the texture involves not only the presence of semantic relations but also some degree of relations (i.e. cohesive ones). Coherence in the actual meanings is expressed in the total selection from the semantic resources of language including various interpersonal (social, expressive, conative) components – the moods, modalities, intensities and other forms of the speaker's intrusion into the speech situation. For Baker (1992:15) register is one of the evoked meaning causes and it arises from variation in the field of discourse, tenor of discourse and mode of discourse. Field of discourse; on the other hand, means ‘what is going on’ that is relevant of discourse means ‘relationships between the people taking part in the discourse’. As for mode of discourse it means the role that language is playing (speech, essay, lecture) and for its medium of transmission (spoken, written), (ibid: 16). The concepts of “tenor, mode and field” are viewed by Hatim and Mason, (1990:39) as three dimensions of register which in its turn forms language use variety ,while “idiolectal, geographical, temporal, social and standard / non-standard variation” represent language user ones. Figure (1) provides a visual model of user and use variation and constitutes the basis of more detailed discussion of each parameter.

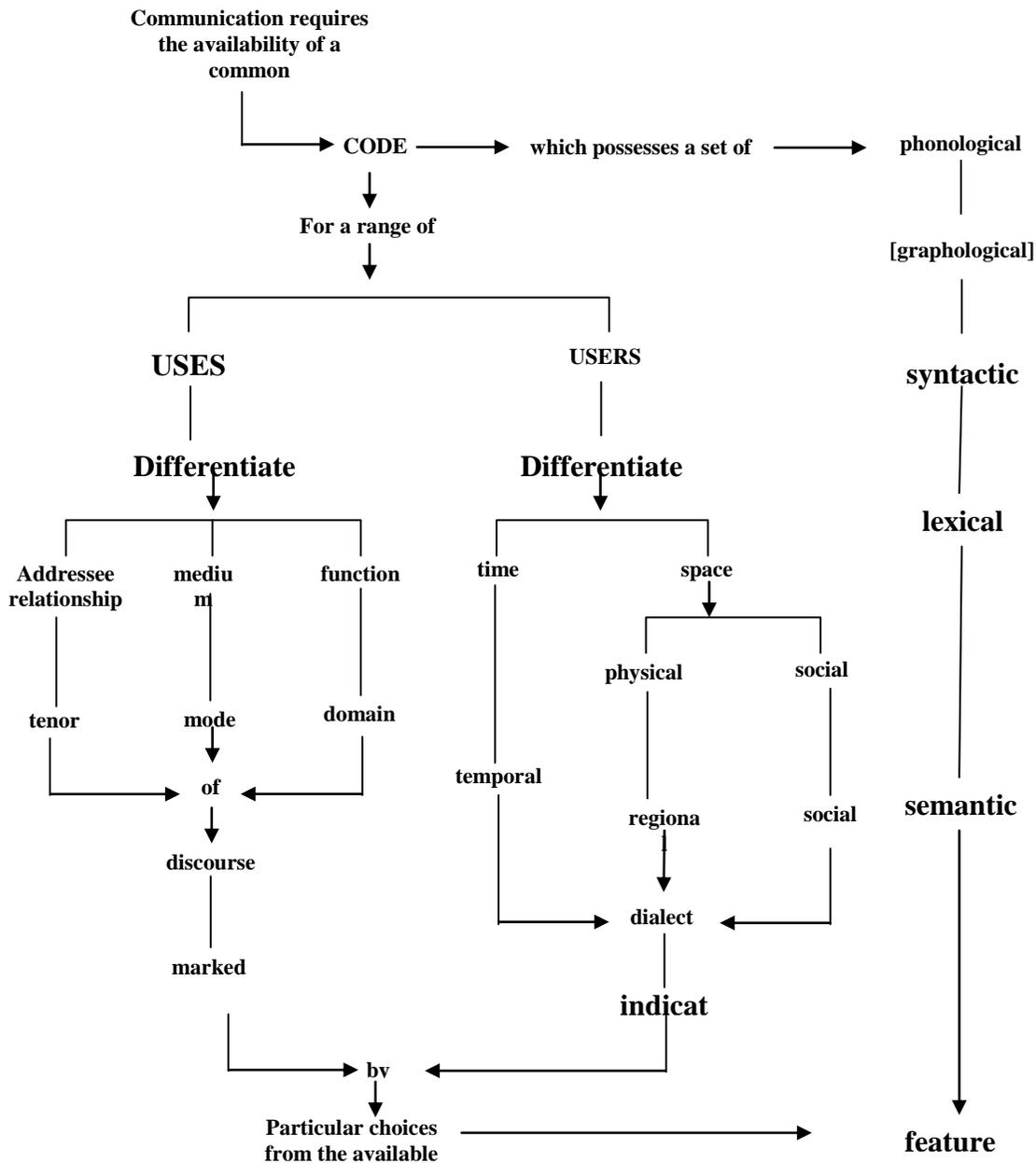


Figure (1): Variation: use and user

Adoted from
(Bell, 1991:185)

Problems of Translating English Sports Register into Arabic

Lect.Dr. Sultan J. H. Al-Hayali & Lect. Essam T. Mohammed

In practice, however, there is a small number of styles, or registers, used by most adults in everyday life. Joos (1962:128) describes them as:

1. Formal. Informative and discursive. Used by lecturers, preachers, judges. Features:

- ❖ Grammar closely organized, complex structures.
- ❖ Ample vocabulary.
- ❖ Meticulous pronunciation, no slurring or contractions, neutral intonation.

2. Consultative. Used by conversing with a stranger, and small group discussion. Features.

- ❖ Complete grammatical forms, major sentences.
- ❖ Core vocabulary items, avoidance of elaborate terms and slang.
- ❖ Clear pronunciation, friendly intonation.

3. Casual. Easy conversation among friends. Features:

- ❖ Sentence fragments, fillers (you know, I mean, actually).
- ❖ Semantically empty words (thingamajig whatsit), slang.
- ❖ Slurred, elided, forms of pronunciation, varied intonation.

4. Intimate. Between people who know each other very well, e.g. lovers, members of an athletic team, and so on. Features:

- ❖ Non-verbal communication (shrugs, groans, raising eyebrows).
- ❖ Private vocabulary, reduced in range, special meanings, nonsense words.
- ❖ Heavy use of stress and intonation, sometimes exaggerated, DIALECT broader.

5. Frozen. Literary, religious, and legal works which are fixed in expression, e.g. scriptures, treaties, and initiations, wedding/funeral services.

- ❖ Ceremonial language, sentence structures often archaic.
- ❖ Vocabulary archaic, frequently latinised.
- ❖ Pronunciation meticulous, intonation neutral, pitch raised.

Literal vs. Free Translation:

Despite the major shifts of view points on translation during different epochs and in different countries, two basic conflicts, expressing themselves in varying degrees of tension, have remained. These fundamental differences in translation theory may be stated in terms of two

sets of conflicting poles “literal vs. free” translating and emphasis on “form vs. concentration on content”, (Mcguire, 1980:22)

Nida (1969:14) refers to free translation as the dynamic equivalence. In order to achieve the “dynamic equivalence” the translation should give priority to meaning rather than form or style. Dynamic equivalence involves the reproduction of the message rather than the construction of the form of the utterance . Newmark (1982:63)states that literal translation is a process in which the primary senses of the original lexical words are translated as thought out of context but the syntactic structures of the target language are respected. He adds, the translator's first loyalty is to the whole, to the norms of the source language. Hatim (1997:219) defines literal translation as a rendering which preserves surface aspects of the message both semantically and syntactically adhering closely to source text mode of expression, while free translation modifies surface expression and keeps intact only deeper in levels of meaning.

According to Larson (1984:15) literal translation is form based “i.e. it tries to follow the form of the source language”, while free translation is meaning based “i.e. it tries to communicate the meaning of the source language in natural forms of the receptor language”. He adds, literal translation is of little help to the speakers of the receptor language who are interested in meaning of the source language text and it sounds like nonsense and has little communicative value (ibid). As for Catford (1965:25) literal translation is a rank bound one, while free translation is always unbounded. According to him, literal translation is “bad” translation in that it involves using TL equivalents which are not appropriate to their locations in the text, and which are not justified by the inter-changeability of SL and TL texts in one and the same situation. Mcguire (1980:81) on the other hand, asserts that literal translation distorts the sense and syntax of the original because of the emphasis on the form. Cooper (1999:383) admits that close literal translations are bad, misleading, worse than paraphrases. He points out that the translator does not transliterate the letters and syllables, transmute sounds, give word for word, transfer foreign words and idioms, but he ascertains sense, the idea, and gives an expression to the idea, the sense in the most appropriate way. Hornby (1988:49) asserts that modern theorists agree that a literal translation is useless, as language

Problems of Translating English Sports Register into Arabic

Lect.Dr. Sultan J. H. Al-Hayali & Lect. Essam T. Mohammed

is not merely a static inventory of items and rules but a multifaceted and structured complex. Bassnett (2002:87) refers to literal translation as a method of translation which concentrates on one aspect of the SL text at the expense of the text as a whole. She adds, Literal translation from one language into another; then, obscures the sense in the same way as the thriving weeds smother the seeds.

Literal translation is a process where literal meaning of words is taken as if straight from dictionary “that is, out of context”, but TL grammar is respected regardless of any connotations or nuances that the word may have in a particular context, (Hervey & Higgins, 2002:13). Consider the following examples taken from (Ghazala, 1995:6):

<u>Text</u>	<u>Literal Translation</u>	<u>Free Translation</u>
This man is a big shot	هذا الرجل رمية كبيرة	هذا الرجل ذو شأن عظيم
Stop beating about the bush	كف عن الضرب حول الشجرة	كف عن اللف والدوران
Pay a visit	يدفع زيارة	يقوم بزيارة

Literal translation of expressions like these would introduce a potentially comic or distracting foreignness which is not present in the S.T. In this case, literal translation retains the form but completely misses the meaning.

However, literal translation may sometimes work in the case of multi-word units like collocations and idioms. Consider the following examples taken from Farghal & Shunnaq (1999:13):

<u>Text</u>	<u>Literal translation</u>
Crocodile tears	دموع التماسيح
The cold war	الحرب الباردة

Although, literal translation can work admirably in a range of contexts, especially where there is correspondence between the two languages in terms of semantics and structures, the bulk as we do as translators requires little more than literal translation. We can see this in the translation of the specific registers such as those related to scientific,

literary and sports language where registeral equivalent is very important. The translator should select the right equivalent that fits the field or domain of the translated text and avoid transliteration or literal translation, specially in the case of the presence of TL equivalent. Consider the following examples taken from The African Football, 2009:4) and World Soccer Magazine, 2007:5:

<u>Text</u>	<u>Literal Translation</u>	<u>Free Translation</u>
In the second half Liverpool visited the box twenty-five times .	في الشوط الثاني من المباراة قام ليفربول بخمس وعشرون زيارة للصندوق.	وفي الشوط الثاني من المباراة وصل ليفربول الى منطقة الجزاء خمساً وعشرين مرة.
The third goal was scored with a banana kick .	سجل الهدف الثالث من ضربة موزة.	جاء الهدف الثالث من تسديدة قوسية.

In fact, literal translation is a of little use between languages which are very distant of each other, as in our case “i.e. English-Arabic”. We shall notice this in the following pages in the discussion of subjects' translations of sports registers.

Data Analysis:

The following data were chosen from a variety of sports newspapers, magazines, besides an English-English dictionary. The selected data include different types of sports games such as: football, tennis, baseball, cricket and boxing. The texts were given to “10” fourth year students at Translation Dept. College of Arts, University of Mosul, academic year 2008-2009. The students were asked to read the texts carefully and then translate the underlined expressions.

1. The Iraqi midfieldline consists of Hawwar on the left, Kareem on the right, Karrar as a runner up and the bigman Nasha'at Akram.
The Baghdad Observer (2001:7)
2. The ball passed the goal after hitting the block.
Goal Magazine (1990:7)
3. The fourth goal for Argentina scored with a dead ball.
World Soccer Magazine (1992:28)
4. Becker leads 15-love.
Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1987:622)
5. The header of Clemerson passed over Dida.

Problems of Translating English Sports Register into Arabic

Lect.Dr. Sultan J. H. Al-Hayali & Lect. Essam T. Mohammed

FIFA Publications (2006:37)

6. He's good at batting than at catching the ball.
Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1987:75)
7. The locals scored three goals in the second half of the match.
African Football (2008:3)
8. The teams changed the ends in the second half.
FIFA Publications (2007:17)
9. England have lost three wickets.
Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1987:1203)
10. The boxer gave his opponent a left hook to the jaw.
Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1987:503)
11. One of the home team players scored an owngoal in the second match.
Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1987:737)
12. They succeeded in applying man to man defence.
Goal Magazine (2009:21)
13. He netted the third goal after successful wallpasses with Messi.
World Soccer Magazine (2009:15)
14. Zidane broke the record of liverpool's midfielder Kevin Keegan.
World Soccer Magazine (2008:6)
15. Three Iraqi players got the yellow card in their match against Qatar.
The Baghdad Observer (1998:7)

The following tables which are followed by discussion show the renderings of the sports expressions as given by the subjects.

1. The Iraqi midfield line consists of Hawwar on the left, Kareem on the right, Karrar as a runner up and the bigman Nasha'at Akram.

Table No. 1:

Item	Renderings	Subject No.	Group
Big man	المحترف	4	A
	اللاعب الكبير	3	B
	الرجل الكبير	3	C

Discussion:

The subjects were unable to provide the suitable equivalent in target language of the sports expression “big man” and they wrongly translated it into “المحترف، اللاعب الكبير، الرجل الكبير”. In fact, none of the subjects knew the exact meaning of “big man” so they stuck to the literal meaning neglecting the context. Here the “big man” refers to the player who

occupies the position of “center half” whose proper equivalent is “شبه الوسط”. Thus, the text can be rendered as:

يتألف وسط الفريق العراقي من كل من هوار على الجهة اليسرى وكريم على الجهة اليمنى وكرار كلاعب وسط مهاجم وشبه الوسط نشأت أكرم.

2. The ball passed the goal after hitting the block.

Table No. 2:

Item	Renderings	Subject No.	Group
The block	حاجز بشري	3	A
	حائط بشري	3	B
	جدار بشري	4	C

Discussion:

It is better to supply “الحاجز البشري” as equivalent of “the block” because the term “حاجز” is used in sports, specially in the track and field games. Only group “A” succeeded in providing the right equivalent “الحاجز البشري”, while group “B” and “C” failed to provide the right equivalent since “حائط بشري” and “جدار بشري” belong to the register of construction not to that of sports. A proper translation might be then, as follows:

اجتازت الكرة المرمى بعد أن لامست الحاجز البشري.

3. The fourth goal for Argentina scored with a dead ball.

Table No. 3:

Item	Renderings	Subject No.	Group
Dead ball	كرة ميتة	5	A
	كرة ضعيفة	3	B
	كرة ثابتة	2	C

Discussion:

The use of metaphor is of a wide spread in many fields of language. One of these fields is sports. Here the animate adjective “dead” whose literal equivalent in Arabic is “ميت، ميتة” is used with an inanimate object to express the state of motionlessness of the ball.

In fact, metaphors are culture bound, and they pose a real problem, especially when the SL and TL belong to two different cultures as the case with “English and Arabic”. Thus, by translating “dead ball” into “كرة ميتة” the subjects of group “A” committed a serious mistake because such collocation does not exist in Arabic sports language. Group “B” also did

Problems of Translating English Sports Register into Arabic

Lect.Dr. Sultan J. H. Al-Hayali & Lect. Essam T. Mohammed

did the same by rendering “dead ball” into “كرة ضعيفة”. Only the subjects of group “C” provided the accurate equivalent “كرة ثابتة” as the equivalent of “dead ball”. A better translation; then is :

جاء الهدف الرابع للفريق الأرجنتيني من كرة ثابتة.

4. Becker leads 15-love.

Table No. 4:

Item	Renderings	Subject No.	Group
Love	حب	3	A
	مباراة ودية	4	B
	حبيبة	3	C

Discussion:

The figure “zero” in English sports language has different names according to the sports event. In cricket, for example; the word “duck” is used to refer to “O” or the failure of batsman to make any runs. In tennis, on the other hand; the word “love” is used to refer to zero. In Arabic; the word “صفر” is applicable to all cases. Thus, the students who come across such uses of sports expressions face a difficulty in their attempt to find the equivalent as the case with our subjects who failed to supply the right equivalent of the word “love” by rendering it into Arabic as “حبيبة، مباراة، حب ودية، حب” which have nothing to do with the intended meaning of the given context. A proper translation may be:

يتقدم بيكر بفارق ١٥-صفر.

5. The header of Clemerson passed over Dida

Table No. 5:

Item	Renderings	Subject No.	Group
Header	ضربة رأس	4	A
	ضربة رأسية	3	B
	رأسية	3	C

Discussion:

‘Header’ is a term used in the register of football to refer to the action in which a player scores a goal with his head and not with any other part of his body .The subjects might get confused by thinking that header is “ضربة رأسية، رأسية، ضربة رأس” and not “الهدف الذي يتم تسجيله باستخدام الرأس”.The appropriate translation of the English text may be as:

إن الهدف الذي أحرزه كليمرسون برأسه مرت الكرة فيه من فوق ديدا.

٦. He's good at batting than at catching the ball.

Table No. 6:

Item	Renderings	Subject No.	Group
batting	صيد الخفاش	4	A
	ملاحقة الطوايط	3	B
	-----	3	C

Discussion:

Batting in sports language means hitting the ball with a bat especially in baseball, cricket. Thus, the sports expression “batting” in this context does not have any connection with the mammal animal “bat”. The subjects wrongly rendered it into “صيد الخفاش” and “ملاحقة الطوايط” without respecting the context in which the expression occurred. The subjects had to give more attention to the context from which one can infer the right meaning of the expression. Thus, the right equivalent of the expression “batting” is “استخدام المضرب” or “ضرب الكرة”. A proper translation may be as the following:

هو جيد في استخدام المضرب وليس في التقاط الكرة.

7. The locals scored three goals in the second half of the match.

Table No. 7:

Item	Renderings	Subject No.	Group
Locals	الفريق المحلي	6	A
	المحليون	2	B
	الفريق المضيف	2	C

Discussion:

Because most of the subjects are familiar with the word “local” as “محلي” in Arabic; most of them translated the nominal group “the locals” into “الفريق المحلي” and “المحليون”. Perhaps, the subjects gave such wrong renderings because they did not consult specialized dictionaries or sports professionals. Group “C” gave the right rendering by translating “the locals” into Arabic as “الفريق المضيف”. The text can be translated into:

أحرز الفريق المضيف ثلاثة أهداف في الشوط الثاني من المباراة.

8. The teams changed the ends in the second half.

Table No. 8:

Item	Renderings	Subject No.	Group
Change the ends	يغير النتيجة النهائية	2	A
	يستبدل نهايات الساحة	6	B
	استبدال أماكن اللعب	2	C

Problems of Translating English Sports Register into Arabic

Lect.Dr. Sultan J. H. Al-Hayali & Lect. Essam T. Mohammed

Discussion:

The subjects of groups “A” and “B” failed to translate the sports expression “change the ends” by rendering it into “يغير النتيجة النهائية” and “يستبدل نهايات الساحة”. Only group “C” gave a near equivalent by giving “استبدال أماكن اللعب” as an equivalent.

In fact; “ends” both halves of the pitch whose Arabic equivalent is “نصف الساحة”. Accordingly the text may be rendered as:

قام الفريقان باستبدال نصفي ساحة اللعب في الشوط الثاني.

9. England have lost three wickets.

Table No. 9:

Item	Renderings	Subject No.	Group
Wickets	شباك تذاكر	3	A
	لاعبين	7	B

Discussion:

In the language of sports, specially in cricket; the word “wicket” means goal. Sometimes the translators who have insufficient background in sports, especially in such games, find it difficult to provide the suitable equivalents. Accordingly; they resort to the literal meaning of the word and chose irrelevant terms as is the case with the subjects of group “A” who gave “شباك تذاكر” instead of “لاعبين”. Group “B” succeeded in providing the correct equivalent by rendering the word “wicket” into “لاعبين”. A proper rendering is:

خسرت أنكلترا ثلاثة من لاعبيها.

10. The boxer gave his opponent a left hook to the jaw.

Table No. 10:

Item	Renderings	Subject No.	Group
Hook	ضربة منجلية	4	A
	ضربة عكسية	3	B
	ضربة قاضية	3	C

Discussion:

In boxing, the word “hook” means a blow given with the elbow bent. Unfortunately, all the subjects could not provide the Arabic equivalent of this term by rendering it as “ضربة قاضية، ضربة عكسية، ضربة منجلية” instead of

” ضربة مقلاعية “ which is the best equivalent in the target language. An appropriate rendering is:

سدد الملامك ضربة مقلاعية بيده اليسرى إلى فك خصمه.

11. One of the home team players scored an owngoal in the second match.

Table No. 11:

Item	Renderings	Subject No.	Group
Own goal	هدفه الخاص	5	A
	هدفه الوحيد	2	B
	هدف على طريقته الخاصة	3	C

Discussion:

In sports language, the expression “own goal” is the goal against one's own team scored by mistake by one of one's own players. So, the best equivalent of this expression is “هدف عن طريق الخطأ” which exists in the Arabic language of sports. Unfortunately, all the subjects failed to find the right equivalent and they wrongly translated the expression into Arabic as “هدفه الخاص”, “هدفه الوحيد” and “هدف على طريقته الخاصة”. A proper translation of the text then may be as follows:

قام أحد لاعبي الفريق الوطني بتسجيل هدف في مرمى فريقه خطأ في الشوط الثاني من المباراة.
١٢. They succeeded in applying man to man defence.

Table No. 12:

Item	Renderings	Subject No.	Group
Man to man	مان تومان	5	A
	رجل لرجل	3	B
	هات وخذ	1	C

Discussion:

The subjects gave “مان تومان”, “رجل لرجل” and “هات وخذ” as equivalents of the “man to man” tactic. The subjects of group “A” preferred transliteration to equivalence. In fact, with the existence of appropriate equivalent in the target language it is advisable to use it instead of transliteration. Group “C” provided “هات وخذ”. Although the register “هات وخذ” exists in Arabic sports language, it has nothing to do here because the right equivalent of it in English is “one-two passes” and not “man to man”. Only group “B” succeeded in providing the right equivalent “رجل لرجل”. Accordingly, a good rendering of the text is:

نجح الفريق في تطبيق طريقة رجل لرجل الدفاعية.

13. He netted the third goal after successful wallpasses with Messi.

Problems of Translating English Sports Register into Arabic

Lect.Dr. Sultan J. H. Al-Hayali & Lect. Essam T. Mohammed

Table No. 13:

Item	Renderings	Subject No.	Group
Wall passes	مناولات جدارية	5	A
	تمريرات اخترقت الجدار البشري	3	B
	مناولات ثابتة	2	C

Discussion:

In their attempt to supply the appropriate equivalent of the English sports expression “wall passes”, the subjects provided “مناولات جدارية”, “تمريرات اخترقت الجدار البشري” and “مناولات ثابتة”. In doing so, they failed to render the sense of this expression which is a tactic performed by two players from the same team by exchanging passing the ball with a first touch in a direction leading to the area of the opponents’ goal. A proper equivalent of “wall passes” here may be “مناولات ارتدادية” and the text can be rendered as:

أحرز الهدف الثالث بعد مناولات ارتدادية ناجحة مع ميسي.

14. Zidane broke the record of liverpool's midfielder Kevin Keegan.

Table No. 14:

Item	Renderings	Subject No.	Group
Broke the record	حطم الرقم القياسي	7	A
	كسر الرقم القياسي	3	B

Discussion:

All the subjects failed to provide the appropriate equivalent of the expression “broke the record” by giving inaccurate Arabic renderings as “كسر الرقم القياسي”, “حطم الرقم القياسي”. Since the equivalent of the process in which a player achieves a new record is available in Arabic which is “يجتاز” or “يحقق إنجازاً، أو رقماً جديداً”, there is no need to follow the English terminology and supply the literal meaning. In fact, the renderings given by the subjects “يحطم”, “يكسر” have different denotations in Arabic such as “break something” or “destroy something”. The appropriate translation of the text is:

تجاوز اللاعب زيدان الرقم القياسي المسجل بأسم لاعب وسط ليفربول كيفن كيغان.

15. Three Iraqi players got the yellow card in their match against Qatar.

Table No. 15:

Item	Renderings	Subject No.	Group
Getting the yellow card	حصل على البطاقة الصفراء	5	A
	حصل على إنذار	2	B
	تلقي بطاقة صفراء	3	C

Discussion:

Group “A” and “B” provided incorrect equivalents of the underlined expression “حصل على البطاقة الصفراء”, “حصل على إنذار”. Only group “C” gave the right equivalent to the expression by rendering it into “تلقى بطاقة صفراء”. In fact, it is not correct to use the Arabic verb “يحصل” as an equivalent of “get” because the verb “يحصل” has the sense in which the “player” for example; intentionally tries to get the yellow card whereas the player try to avoid that card which is usually raised to penalize a player who breaks the rules and regulations of the game. So, the text should be translated as:
تلقى ثلاثة مدافعين عراقيين البطاقة الصفراء في مباراتهم ضد الفريق القطري.

Conclusions:

The study has come up with the following conclusions:

1. Most of the subjects resorted to literal translation and that led them to committing mistakes.
2. It was also found that most of the subjects didnot not consider the sports expressions but they used expressions that do not belong to sports field. This may be due to the insufficient knowledge of subjects about the text they dealt with or it is due to the existence of cultural differences between the languages involved (English & Arabic).
3. Some of the subjects preferred the use of transliteration with the Arabic equivalent used in the register of that sports activity.
4. Perhaps most of subjects' mistakes were due to their unwillingness to consult sports professionals or specialized dictionaries.

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Problems of Translating English Sports Register into Arabic

Lect.Dr. Sultan J. H. Al-Hayali & Lect. Essam T. Mohammed

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مشكلات ترجمة لغة الرياضة إلى العربية

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المستخلص

يقدم البحث دراسة تقييمية لترجمة اللغة الخاصة بالرياضة لطلاب الدراسة المسائية في قسم الترجمة، المرحلة الرابعة، كلية الآداب، جامعة الموصل. وتهدف الدراسة إلى تسليط الضوء على الصعوبات الأساسية التي قد تواجه الطلاب عند ترجمة التعابير الخاصة بلغة الرياضة وإيجاد الحلول لها.

ويستهل البحث بعرض المشكلة، ومن ثم يتطرق إلى مفهوم نوع اللغة، وتعريف الترجمة الحرفية، والترجمة بتصريف مع الأمثلة، ويقدم تحليلاً شاملاً للمعطيات مع مناقشتها ومن ثم يليها بعد ذلك ما آلت إليه الدراسة من استنتاجات.