

Translation and The Syntax of the Complex Sentence

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Abstract:

This study tackles translation and the syntax of the complex sentence. As every linguist and translator knows, no translation can be made without a syntactic analysis of the source – language text and a corresponding syntactic restructuring of the receptor - language text. In terms of the word order, the English subordinators are followed by a noun phrase. As for the sentence order, the superordinate sentence always precedes the subordinate sentence. But the subordinate sentence can often be placed before the superordinate sentence by transformation. Moreover, in some English non – finite sentences, the subordinator may be deleted. Some English adverbial finite sentences may be changed into non – finite or verbless sentences. This change may occur by deleting some parts of the subordinate sentence or by converting the finite verb into a non – finite verb. Finally, some English subordinators are polysemous; they can introduce different kinds of sentences. Such an aspect can also be problematic to translators.

The Problem

The present study deals with the problems of translating the English adverbial sentences into Arabic as they appear within the context of the complex sentence. These sentences have different sorts of syntactic structures which could pose problems for translators.

The Hypothesis

The problems of translating English adverbial subordinate sentences are assumed to arise from (1) transforming subordinate finite sentences into non – finite or verbless sentences, (2) deletion of the subordinator and (3) polysemous subordinator.

Limitations of the Study

This study limits itself to the subordinate adverbial sentences as they appear within the context of the complex sentence. Other types of subordinate sentences, nominal or adjectival, are beyond the scope of this study.

Value of the Study

It is hoped that this study is of some theoretical and practical value to those concerned with translation and syntactic structures.

Key words : Syntax , translation , subordinate sentence , subordinators , finite sentence , non – finite sentence , polysemous subordinators.

Introduction

This study deals with translation and the syntax of the complex sentence. It sheds light on the following topics: (1) Clause and Sentence, (2) Syntax and Translation, (3) The notion of “Clause”, (4) The notion of “ Phrase”, (5) T.G.G and the complex sentence and (6) The adverbial subordinators. Finally, the study ends with conclusions.

Research Methodology

The methodology adopted in dealing with the subject under investigation is Transformational – Generative Grammar.

TRANSLATION AND THE SYNTAX OF THE COMPLEX SENTENCES
Analysis and Discussion

1. Clause and Sentence

The term “ subordinate sentence “ will be used throughout this study to replace the traditional term “ subordinate clause “ . Transformational – Generative Grammar (henceforth T.G.G.) , the model which will be adopted in analyzing subordinate adverbial sentences , rightly considers the clause to be a sentence embedded in the superordinate sentence to form a complex sentence .

When one deals with the translation of adverbial sentences, one has to analyze their syntactic behavior and their semantic role within one language and compare and contrast these semantic and syntactic features with the features of adverbial clauses in the language involved in translation. This study will survey the role of syntax in translation, the notions of clause, phrase, the complex sentence, the adverbial subordinators and the semantic functions of the adverbial sentences in both English and Arabic.

1.1. Syntax and Translation

Translation is defined by Catford (1965 : 20) as “ the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another

language, “ . According to Nida and Taber (1969 : 12), translation is “ reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source – language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style”. Newmark (1988:5) looks on translation as “rendering the meaning of a text into another language in the way that the author intended the text.

Translation, as a process of rendering meaning from one language into another, is not possible without making a contrastive analysis of the syntactic systems of the two languages under translation. Catford (1965: 20) says:

The theory of translating is concerned with a certain type of relation between languages and is Consequently a branch of comparative linguistics

(See also Newmark, 1982: 5)

The process of translation involves, among other things, three interrelated syntactic processes. Nida (1969: 484) discusses these processes and maps them in a Figure given here as Figure 1 below. They are:

- 1- Analyzing the source – language text according to the syntactic system of the source language.
- 2- Transfer which involves matching syntactic structures of the receptor language that map a meaning which is equivalent to the meaning mapped by the syntactic structures of the source – language text.
- 3- Restructuring a semantically equivalent receptor – language text according to the syntactic system of the receptor language.

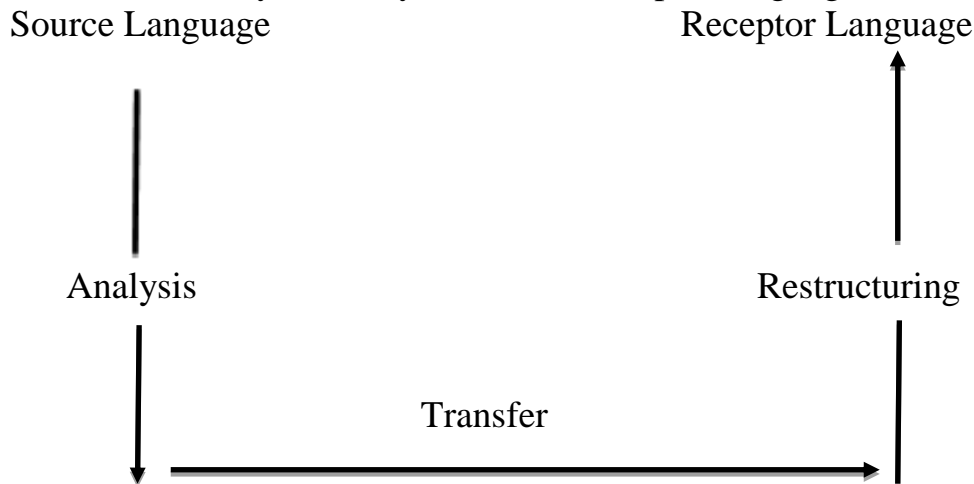


Figure1: The three processes of syntactic correspondence.

(Adopted from Nida, 1969: 484)

Such a syntactic analysis deals with the question of “ how two discrepant cross linguistic syntactic structures map two cross linguistic synonymous meanings. This is the domain of comparative syntax.”

(Al – Najjar, 1990: 42).

The English and Arabic adverbial sentences, which are the focus of this study, are syntactic structures that have certain functions and map well – defined meanings.

Since no two languages are identical in their syntactic systems, it is difficult to maintain the syntactic form of the source language text in the receptor language text. Rather, the attempt to preserve the syntactic form of the SL text usually results in either complete unintelligibility and awkwardness distortion of the meaning.

The syntactic differences involved in translation are pointed out as follows :

Syntactic differences among natural languages can be classified under the two subcomponents of syntax, the phrase structure rules and the transformational rules and under the lexical component, which among other things, includes morphological rules, strict subcategorization rules, and selectional rules

(Ibid: 41- 42)

To tackle these syntactic differences, certain processes are to be used to “ (1) permit adjustment of the form of the message to the requirements of the structure of the receptor language ; (2) produce semantically equivalent structures ; (3) provide equivalent stylistic appropriateness ; and (4) carry an equivalent communication load,” (Nida, 1964: 226). The syntactic adjustment, according to Nida (1969: 112), “affects the entire range of linguistic structure, from the discourse to the sounds, and they may most conveniently be classified in terms of various levels: (1) Discourse, (2) Sentence, (3) Word and (4) Sound,”

The syntactic processes, which are indispensable in translation, are (1) Deletion, (2) Insertion, (3) Re – ordering and (4) Substitution. “Such terms to some degree distort the picture of the translation process, making it appear that the translator himself performs these operations on the material in question. In point of fact, what he really does, or should do, is to select in

each instance the closest natural equivalent. But if the corresponding forms in the source and receptor languages are compared after such equivalents have been selected, it will be found that they conveniently fall into such classes of modification”

(Nida: 226)

1.2. The Notion of “Clause”

There are two terms which are relevant to the notion of complex sentence. These are the clause and the phrase. The clause is surveyed in this section, and the phrase in the following section.

A clause is traditionally defined as “ a group of words which include a finite verb, is grammatically complete and self- contained, forms a part of a sentence, but does not by itself make complete sense,” (Eckersley and Eckersley, 2012: 320 – See also Lapalombara, 2007:72, Tripling, 2000: 14,284 and Jaggar, 2010:4). According to Quirk et al, (1972:342), a clause is seen as “ a unit that can be analyzed into the elements S(ubject), V(erb), O(bject), C(omplement) and A(dverbial)”. A clause is structurally a sentence. The simple sentence, which is made up of just one clause, can be analyzed in terms of those elements.

For the purpose of this study, it is assumed that adverbial sentences should have finite verbs in the underlying structure and this verb can be converted to a non – finite verb or deleted in the surface structure as the following examples illustrate:

1.1 Deep Structure:

When he left the house, he forgot to lock the door



Surface Structure

Leaving the house, he forgot to lock the door.

Here, the adverbial subordinator “when“ is deleted and the finite verb “left “ is transformed into the non – finite verb “ leaving “.

1.2 Deep Structure:

The oranges, when they are ripe, are picked and sorted



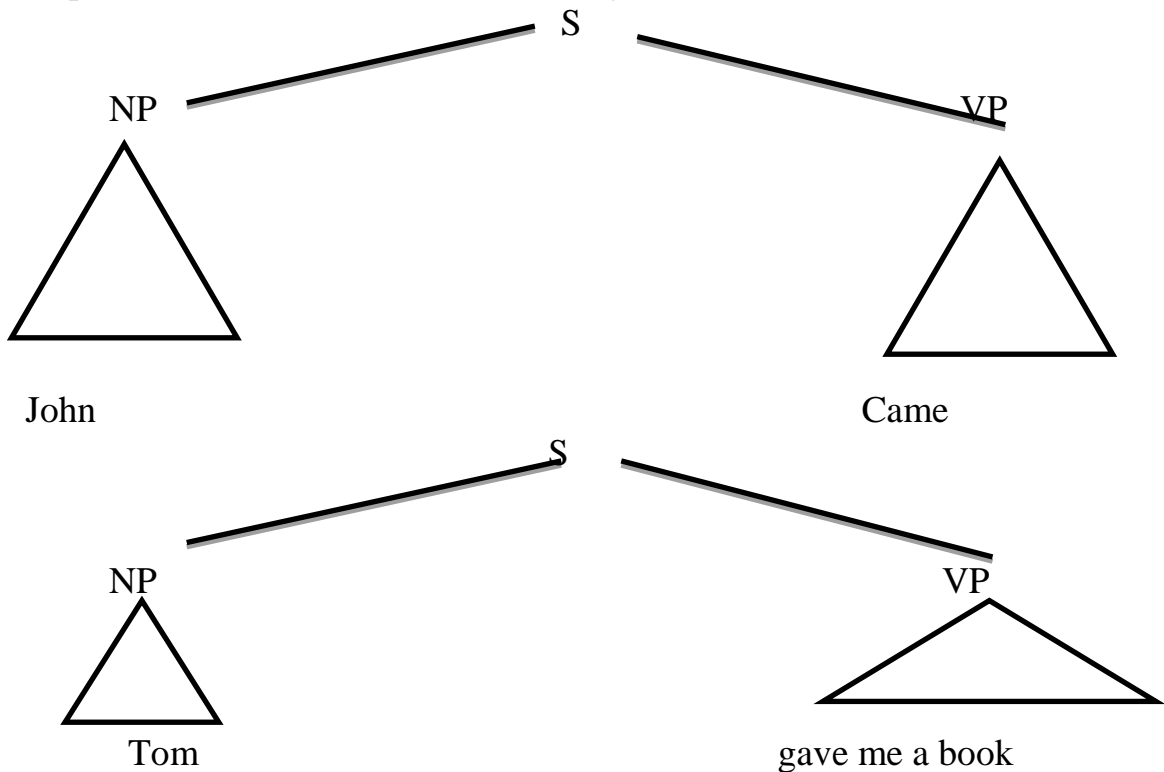
Surface Structure

The oranges, when ripe, are picked and sorted

Here, the subject “they” and the verb “are” are deleted in the surface structure. Such English transformations should be accounted for when one translates adverbial sentences from English into Arabic. We assume that there is no one- to- one transformational rules between English and Arabic.

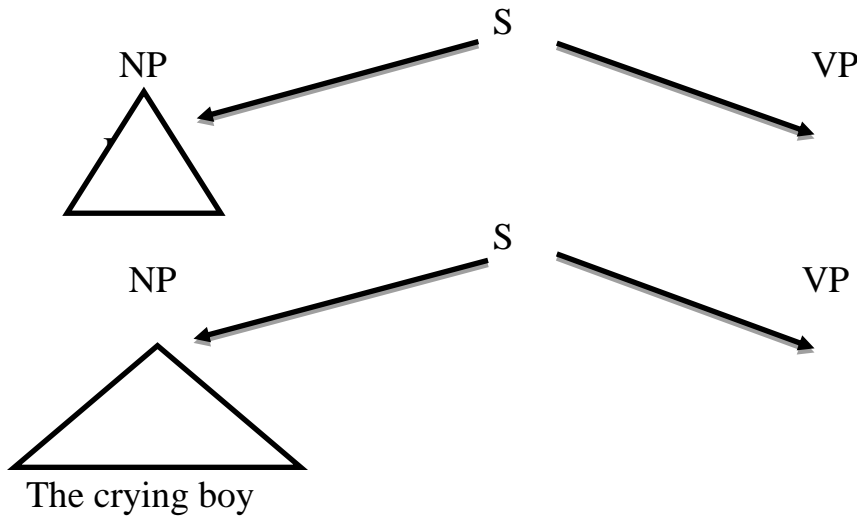
In T.G.G., each English clause is seen as a sentence that can be broken down by the phrase structure rules into a noun phrase (NP) and a verb phrase (VP)

On a phrase- marker, a clause can be analyzed as a sentence.



1.3. The Notion of “Phrase”

In traditional grammar, a phrase is defined as “ a group of words not containing a finite words,” (Bebbington, 1970: 21) or it is “ a group of words equivalent to a single part of speech, but having no subject or predicate of its own” (Tippling, 2000: 14, see also Lapalombara, 2007: 64; Onions, 2012:8; Eckersley, 2012:1; Jaggar, 2010: 4) . From a modern point of view, a phrase “ is any sequence of words in the language that itself is a member of some category” (Culicover, 1976: 11). A phrase, besides being a sequence of words, can also be a word. (John) , as a single word, is a NP and so is the group of words (The crying boy) in the following phrase- marker.



The crying boy

Furthermore, a phrase, in T.T.G., can be equivalent to “ sentence” . In this respect, Culicover (Ibid: 11) points out that “ a sentence, besides being a sentence, may also be thought of as being a phrase of the category S,” . For example, the following sentences enclosed between square brackets are subject and object noun phrases respectively.

(1.3) [What he said] was true
Subj NP

(1.4) I know [that he was busy]
Obj NP

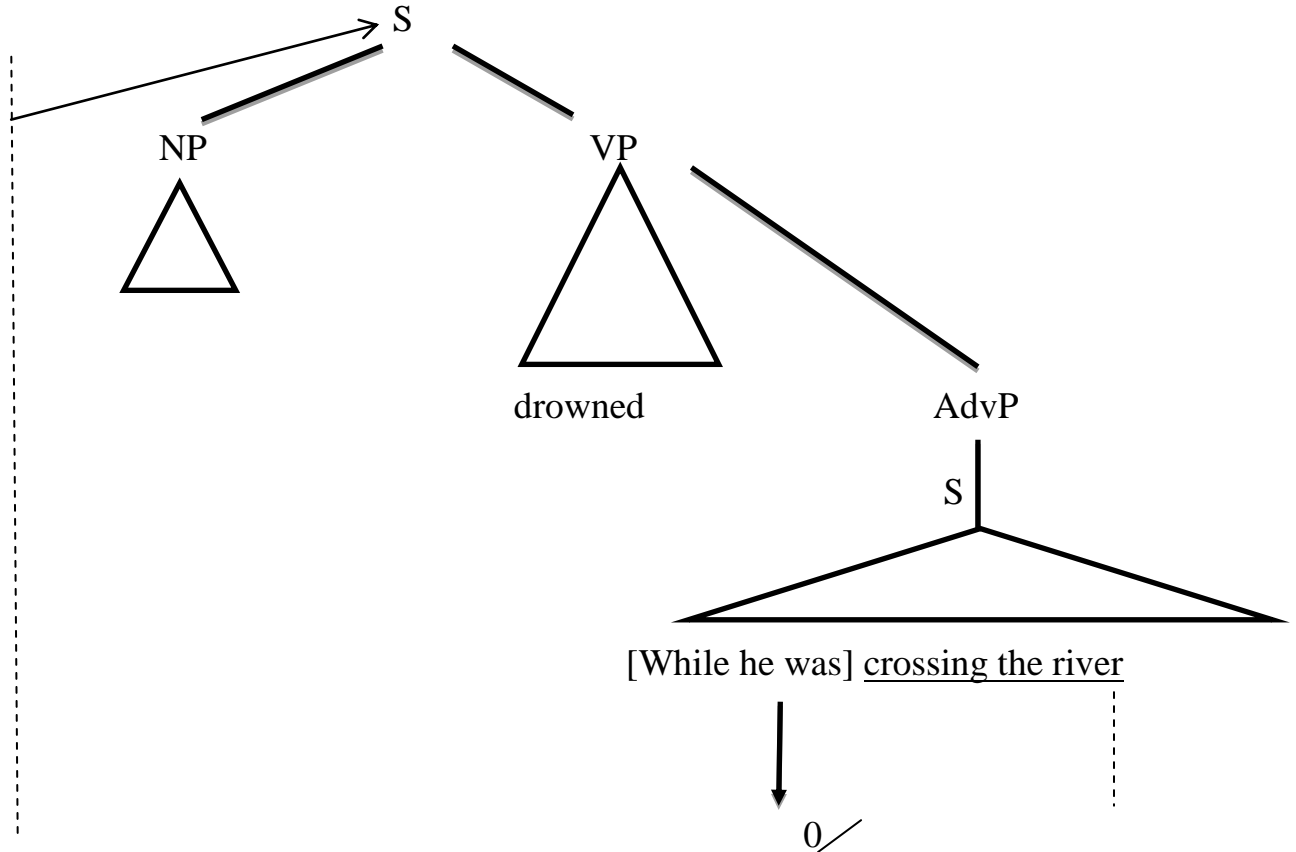
The traditional notion of adverbial phrases is related to transformed surface structures where the underlying adverbial sentences which contain finite verbs, and which are analyzed in T.T.G. as being phrases, undergo certain transformations where the finite verb is either converted into a non – finite verb or it is deleted:

(1.5) Crossing the river, he drowned.

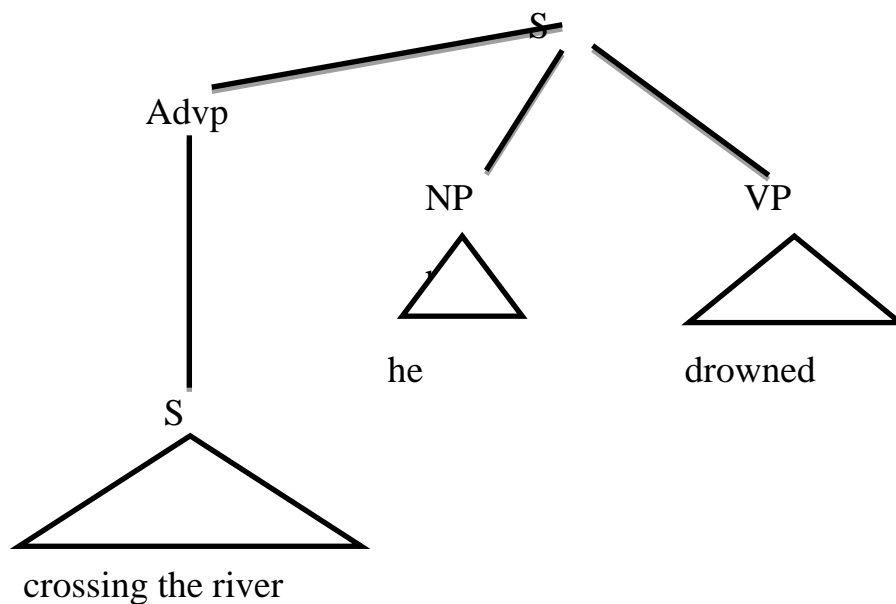
(1.6) When available, the books will be sent to you.

These surface structures will be analyzed as remnants of underlying adverbial sentences, which are in themselves phrases. For example, when sentence (1.5) is analyzed into its deep and surface structures, it will appear on a phrase – marker as follows. The adverbial sentences will be labeled as adverbial phrase in both the deep and surface structure:

Deep Structure:



Surface Structure:



1.4 T.T.G. and the Complex Sentence:

In T.T.G., complex sentences consist of more than one sentence. They are, as Fowler (2011: 117) states, “ sentences which are based on more than one underlying p- marker, sentences whose derivations begin with two or more separate Ss,”. However, sentences are combined or embedded in other sentences in terms of “Subordination”. According to Quirk, et al, (1970: 720), “ Subordination is a non- symmetrical relation, holding between two clauses X and Y in such a way that Y is a constituent or part of X,”. Sentences are combined in terms of two types of rules : joining rules (Coordination) and embedding rules (Subordination) . The difference between these two types of rules lies in the relationship between the two underlying sentences that are combined.

Lester (1997 : 185) points out that “ if the two underlying sentences retain a separate and equal identity even after they have been combined to produce a more complex new sentence, then the new combination is governed by the joining rules. However, if there is a clear distinction between a “main” sentence and a “subordinate” sentence, the combination is governed by embedding rules,” (See also Koutsoudas, 2011: 232; Roberts, 1986: 165; Langacker, 2008: 106; Liles, 2012: 102; Akmajian and Heny, 1975: 260, 262, 266-270).

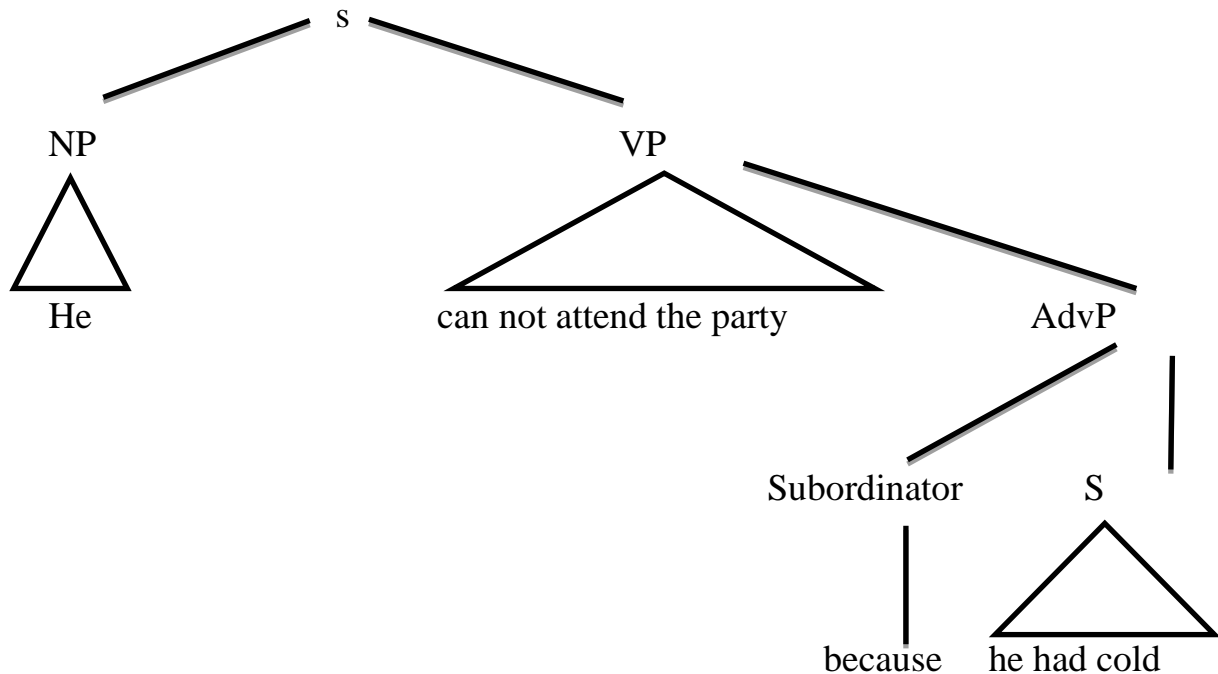
By subordination, the subordinate adverbial sentences, the subject matter of this study, are embedded in other sentences.

In adverbial subordination, there are two types of sentences: The “superordinate “sentence and the “subordinate “sentence. The latter is embedded in the former. (See Leech and Svartvic, 2001:294; Roberts, 1986:216).

Subordinate adverbial sentences are said to be modifiers of the verb phrase, or the predicate, of the superordinate sentence.

1.7 He cannot attend the party {because he has cold}
adv. Sentence

The adverbial sentence in (1.7) tells us why attending the party is not possible. On a phrase – marker the relation of the adverbial sentence to the superordinate sentence can appear as follows:



The subordinate sentence can, with some exceptions, be placed before the superordinate sentence by a process of transformation:

(1.8) a. {He will come} {if you invite him}

1

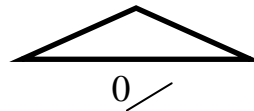
2



b. {If you invite him}, {he will come}

2

1



1.5. The Adverbial Subordinators

Subordinators normally introduce subordinate sentences. They are , as Quirk, et al (1972: 727) point out, “ the most important formal indicators of subordination,”. They shed light on the types of subordinators by saying:

Like prepositions , which they resemble in having a relating or connecting function, subordinators forming the ‘ core’ of the class consist of a single word; and again, as with prepositions, there is a larger number of compound items which act, to various degrees, like asingle conjunction. In addition, there is a small class of correlative subordinators, i.e. combinations of two markers, one (a conjunction occurring in the subordinate clause, and the other (normally an adverb) occurring in the superordinate clause).

(Ibid: 727)

According to the above – mentioned classification of subordinators, the following examples illustrate the types of adverbial subordinators:

(1.9) John had visited me before he went home. (A single word - Subordinator)

(1.10) She studies hard so that she may pass the examination. (A compound subordinator)

(1.11) No sooner had the war ended than he left Paris. (A correlative Subordinator)

The English adverbial subordinators could pose problems when translating them into Arabic. The following are the features of English subordinators :

(1) In terms of their structure, the English subordinators are of three types: single, compound and correlative.

They, furthermore, determine the semantic role of the subordinate sentences which they introduce. The subordinator “when” introduces the time sentence whereas “although” introduces the concessive sentence:

(1.12) He will leave { when he finishes his work }

Subordinate sentence of time

(1.13) { Although he was sick }, he attended the meeting.

Subordinate sentence of concession

(2) It is assumed that there is no one – to – one correspondence between all English and Arabic adverbial single, compound and correlative subordinators.

(3) Some subordinators are polysemous, i.e. they may introduce different kinds of adverbial sentences. The subordinator “as”, for example, may introduce a sentence of reason or cause, a sentence of time or a sentence of manner:

(1.14) { As it was foggy }, we could not play tennis.

Sentence of reason or cause

(1.15) { As I was reading your article }, Tom arrive.

Sentence of time

(1.16) Do { as Mary does }

Sentence of manner

(4) Some English subordinators may introduce non – finite and verbless sentences.

- (1.17) { Because of punishment } , he will not do that again.
(1.18) { Owing to John's absence } , consult Mary.
(5) Some English subordinators may be omitted:
(1.19) Being a clever man , he will win the prize. (Because he is a clever Man...)
(1.20) Having spent a week in Rome, they left for Paris. (After they had spent a week ...)
(6) Some English adverbial subordinators have no one - to – one existing corresponding Arabic subordinators. There should be matched by Arabic near – synonymous subordinators , such as the subordinator “now that” in the sentence (1.21) below.
(1.21) Now that the work is completed, I will give you your wages.
The subordinator “ now that “ is translated into “ طالما أن ” . Sometimes, it is translated literally as " والان وقد " .

Conclusions

Having investigated this topic, this study arrived at the following conclusions :

- 1- In terms of their structure, the English subordinators are of three types: Simple, compound and correlative. They, furthermore, determine the semantic role of the subordinate sentences which they introduce.
- 2- There is no one – to – one correspondence between all English and Arabic adverbial single, compound and correlative subordinators.
- 3- Some subordinators are polysemous.
- 4- Some English subordinators may introduce non- finite and verbless sentences .
- 5- Some subordinators may be omitted.

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□ الترجمة وتركيب الجملة المعقدة

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مستخلص البحث:

تتناول هذه الدراسة الترجمة وتركيب الجملة المعقدة . وهي تسلط الضوء على الموضوعات الآتية : (1) الجملة و العبارة (2) علم النحو واللغة (3) المفهوم التقليدي و الحديث " للجملة" (4) المفهوم التقليدي والحديث " للعبارة" (5) النحو التحويلي التوليدي و الجملة المعقدة (6) أدوات التعليق الظرفية . و تنتهي الدراسة بخاتمة تشمل أهم الاستنتاجات التي توصل اليها الباحث من دراسته لهذا الموضوع .