Article

English Adverbial and Determiner Negation: A Problematic Area for Arabic Translators

Mohammed Farghal
Department of English, Kuwait University, Jamal Abdul Nasser St, Kuwait City 13060, Kuwait;
m_farghal@hotmail.com

Received: 30 October 2018; Accepted: 1 March 2019; Published: 12 March 2019

Abstract: Negation hardly comes up as an issue in English–Arabic translation studies. The general assumption is that the translation of English negation into Arabic poses no serious problems to the translator. While this is generally true when it comes to rendering negation marked by generic negative particles/affixes (John is not happy and John is unhappy, respectively) and even lexical and rhetorical implicit negation (John denied having cheated on the test and Can a person like John make such a mistake?), the present paper aims to show that the appropriate textualization into Arabic of English adverbial and determiner negation (e.g., by the adverbials too and hardly, and the determiners little and few) can be a problematic area for Arabic translators. The textual data (270 examples) is extracted from several published translations (belonging to literary, popular science/journalistic, and economic discourse), in an attempt to show what strategies translators follow when encountering such negation and how successful they are. While the findings provide solid evidence for the serious mishaps (about 42% of the renderings involve one kind of problem or another) that Arabic translators experience in this area, the critical discussion unravels several textual strategies that can capture the subtleties inherent in adverbial/determiner negation. It is hoped that the investigation of this subtle, neglected area in English–Arabic translation studies offers significant insights for both student and professional translators.

Keywords: adverbial negation; determiner negation; English; Arabic; translation

1. Introduction

There have been several studies which deal, among other things, with the linguistics of negation in Arabic, where negation is divided into explicit and implicit negation (Anees 1975; Al-Makhzumi 2016; Alsalem 2012; Muslah 2015). While explicit Arabic negation employs negative particles such as lam [did not], laa [do not], and lan [will not], implicit Arabic negation uses grammatical devices such as interrogatives and conditionals. However, there are only very few studies that have dealt with Arabic and English negation from a translational perspective (e.g., Dendane and Dendane 2012; Al-Ghazalli 2013). In particular, there are no studies, to my knowledge, that raise the question of English non-generic explicit negation by too and -ly adverbs and little and few determiners, which is supposed to be a problematic area because Arabic lacks this type of explicit negation.

The present study, therefore, aims to fill in this gap in English–Arabic translation studies by addressing itself to the translation of non-generic adverbial and determiner negation, as an area of contrast between English and Arabic that may cause serious problems. While English uses both explicit generic negation (negation by not and similar negative particles) and explicit non-generic adverbial/determiner negation, Arabic lacks the latter type as it exclusively employs explicit generic negation by negative particles, such as laa, laysa, lam, maa, lan, etc., which are all tense sensitive (laa and laysa in present, lam and maa in past (with lam [followed by imperfective verb form being used much more commonly in Modern Standard Arabic than maa (followed by perfective verb form)]), and lan
in future). It seems necessary, in such case, to examine English non-generic adverbial/determiner negation from a translational perspective in order to explore the translation strategies that translators resort to, when modulating this type of negation, in an attempt to capture its meaning and pragmatics. Such investigation is expected to have theoretical as well as practical implications for people working in English–Arabic translation studies, and may also prompt future investigations between English and other languages that lack this type of negation.

The study is structured as follows. Section 2 reviews the related literature from both a linguistic and a translational perspective. Section 3 presents the research questions. Section 4 describes the textual materials used. Section 5 offers a detailed analysis of the data. Section 6 discusses the findings. Finally, Section 7 concludes the study.

2. Review of Literature

Negation, whose universality is unanimously confirmed in the existing literature on human language (Dahl 1979; Payne 1985; Horn and Kato 2000; Horn 2001, among others), is generally considered an operator that reverses the truth value of a proposition. It is a unique property of human language: “Negative utterances are a core feature of every system of human communication and of no system of animal communication” (Horn and Kato 2000, p. 1). Linguists (Klima 1964; Clark 1976; Horn 2001, among others) usually divide negation into two types: explicit negation and implicit negation. On the one hand, explicit negation employs explicit negative particles such as not (as in John did not go to school), negative affixes such as -il in This act is illegal, or other negative adverbs, for example, hardly (as in John hardly knows anything about mathematics) or determiners, for example, few (as in John has only few friends). On the other hand, implicit negation is implied semantically (as in John prevented his daughter from joining the club, which semantically entails John did not allow his daughter to join the club) or implicated pragmatically (as in the rhetorical question Should we keep silent after all these heinous crimes, which conversationally implies We should not keep silent after all these heinous crimes).

Similarly, Arabic negation is divided into explicit and implicit negation. While English verbal negation is uniform in nature, as it only employs the negative particle not in such negation (viz. John does not go to school, John did not go to school, and John will not go to school), its Arabic explicit counterpart is highly diversified (for details about Arabic negation, see Anees 1975; Al-Makhzumi 2016; Alsalem 2012; Muslah 2015), viz. لا يذهب جون إلى المدرسة (lā yādhabu jūn ‘ilā al-madrassati [not (present) go John to the school]), لم يذهب جون إلى المدرسة (lām yādhabu jūn ‘ilā al-madrassati [not (past) go John to the school]), لن يذهب جون إلى المدرسة (lān yādhabu jūn ‘ilā al-madrassati [not (future) go John to the school]). Al-Makhzumi (2016, p. 265), for example, defines negation as “a linguistic category which is opposed to affirmation and intended to disprove or deny the truth value of a proposition”. Explicit Arabic negation employs negative particles such as lam and maa [did not] (e.g., لم يكتب سالم رسالة (lām yaktubu Sālimun rasaa’ila [NEG write Salim the-letter]) “Salim does not write letters” and ليس الكتاب جيداً (laysa-l-kitaab jayyidun [NEG-the-book good] “The book is not good”, and لن يكتب سالم رسالة (lan yaktuba Sālimun risaalatan) “Salim will not write a letter”. By contrast, implicit Arabic negation uses grammatical devices such as interrogatives (e.g., هل تساوى الخبر والشرك (hal yatasaawā li-xayru wa-š-sarru? [Question word (Q) equal-the-good and-the-evil] “Are the good and evil equal?” and conditionals (e.g., لا يوجد أخباره (law kunto mawjuudan la-xbartu-hu [if was(I) present so-told-him(I)]; both examples involve implicit negation, viz. the answer to the question must be in the negative (No, they are not equal), and the latter statement implies that the speaker had not been there. Nevertheless, this fact does not cause any serious problems for the translator into Arabic because the one-to-many correspondence between the negative particles is obvious, being tense oriented in Arabic.
Notably, while Arabic translation correspondents are usually accessible for generic negation, e.g., _John does not adhere to punctuality/_ (14a), _John is unhappy/_, affixal negation, for example, _John is unhappy/_, and implicit negation (Arabic being as highly lexicalized as English), for example, _John declined the offer/_, _Ra‘faḍa joon al-‘arḍa_ [declined John the-offer], which semantically entails _John did not accept the offer_ and _John was too used to this to care_ “… but Harry did not care because he was used to this”. 

Table 4. Frequency and percentage of translation strategies in rendering English complex negation. The following are some illustrative examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Correct explicit negation</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18.75%</td>
<td>The sample of negative adverbs (which is extracted from BF, FS, GC, and ES, to the exclusion of BLD) suggests that English generic negation by not, thus amounting to serious under-translations. Following are some illustrative examples:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mistranslations/omission</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.25%</td>
<td>The sample of negative adverbs (which is extracted from BF, FS, GC, and ES, to the exclusion of BLD) suggests that English generic negation by not, thus amounting to serious under-translations. Following are some illustrative examples:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorrect negation</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>59.38%</td>
<td>The sample of negative adverbs (which is extracted from BF, FS, GC, and ES, to the exclusion of BLD) suggests that English generic negation by not, thus amounting to serious under-translations. Following are some illustrative examples:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>The sample of negative adverbs (which is extracted from BF, FS, GC, and ES, to the exclusion of BLD) suggests that English generic negation by not, thus amounting to serious under-translations. Following are some illustrative examples:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of translation, there are only very few studies on the translation of negation. Apostolatu and Apostolatu (2012) deal with literal translation of English negation into Romanian. They show that some negative markers are sometimes unjustifiably omitted, which is usually caused by the difference between the two languages involving negative polarity, scope of negation, and double negation. Dendane and Dendane (2012) refer to the one-to-many correspondence between the English particle _not_ and the many counterparts in both standard and vernacular Arabic, which causes serious problems to machine rather than human translation. Li (2017) points out the difficulty Chinese English foreign language (EFL) learners face when expressing adverbial negation by _too_ due to its Chinese counterpart, which functions as an intensifier. Hence, Chinese learners often erroneously employ the negative adverb _too_ instead of the intensifier “very” or “so” (e.g., “The party was too good” may be used to mean “The party was very/too good”).

A similar mishap may occur in English-into-Arabic translation. Farghal and Almannah (2015a, p. 27) briefly examine negation while discussing syntactic features in translation. Whereas they state that English generic negation by _not_ is not problematic when rendering it into Arabic, despite the existing one-to-many correspondences, it is argued that the negation embedded in _too_ can pose a challenge because it requires a translation strategy that recovers negation in Arabic, whether explicitly or implicitly. To demonstrate this point, they give the following example from a published translation in which the negation is missed by replacing the negative adverb _too_ with the Arabic intensifiers _jiddan_ [very] (a list of Arabic phonetic symbols (mainly International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)) is provided in Appendix A):

1. I think you’ve been too busy to notice where I have been.

   `a‘ānun ‘anna-k a kunta maš ‘ulūn jiddan li-tulahjiﬁ a ‘ayn ‘ānna
   think (I) that-you be-you busy very-to-notice where I

   “I think you were too busy to notice where I am”.

Al-Ghazalli (2013) discusses the translation of Arabic implicit negation where he unjustifiably argues for unpacking Quranic implicit negation in rhetorical questions. According to his analysis, the
Quranic verse ḥal yastaawal-l-ʾaʾmaa wa-l-basīr [Q equal the-blind and-the-sighted] is erroneously rendered as a generic rather than a rhetorical question by Quran translators as in Yousef Ali’s Can the blind be held equal to the seeing (p. 135) and M. Pickthai’s Are the blind and the seer equal (p. 133). Therefore, he claims, implicit negation should be made explicit as in Are the blind and the one who sees equal? Definitely, this is not true (p. 139). Needless to say here, that mainstream translation theorists (Nida 1964; Catford 1965; Newmark 1988; Baker 1992; Hatim 1997; Dickins et al. 2002; Pym 2010; Munday 2012; Farghal 2012; Farghal and Almanna 2015b; Farghal et al. 2015, among others) emphasize the translator’s ability to call up textual/functional material in the target language (TL) that effectively relays its counterpart in the source language (SL). One should note that, textually as well as functionally, Arabic rhetorical questions readily translate into English rhetorical questions (Ali’s and Pickthai’s above), thus remaining within the scope of implicit rather than explicit negation.

3. Research Questions

Due to the fact that English adverbial and determiner negation has no formal translational equivalent in Arabic and the lack of studies in this area, the purpose of this study is to explore the translation strategies that translators employ when rendering such negation into Modern Standard Arabic and examine how successful these strategies are. In particular, the study aims to check whether Arabic translators retrieve explicit negation (or alternatively use implicit negation) when modulating adverbial and determiner negation in an attempt to capture the pragmatics of this type of negation. Specifically, the following research questions are addressed in this paper:

1. How do Arabic translators tackle too adverbial negation in terms of translation strategies?
2. How do Arabic translators render English -ly adverbial negation in terms of translation strategies?
3. What translation strategies do Arabic translators follow in rendering little determiner negation?
4. Finally, are Arabic translators sensitive to few determiner negation?

4. Textual Materials

This is an empirical study based on the extraction of ample textual data involving English adverbial/determiner negation along with their target Arabic counterparts from existing works and their translations. The textual data (270 examples) features two types of markers of adverbial negation (too and hardly/scarcely/barely) and two markers of determiner negation (little and few). The study provides both a quantitative and a qualitative analysis of the data. It should be noted that the qualitative discussion almost exclusively focuses on the rendering of the items under study which belong to adverbial and determiner negation, apart from the general quality of the translation, which is not within the scope of this study.

The sources of the textual data include five series of Harry Potter (HP, henceforth) by J. K. Rowling, namely Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone (1; Rowling 1997), Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban (2; Rowling 1999), Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets (3; Rowling 1998), Harry Potter and the Order of Phoenix (4; Rowling 2003), and Harry and the Half-blood Prince (5; Rowling 2005). The first and the third series are translated by Ragaa Abudullah. The second series is translated by Hasan Ahmed Mohammed, the fourth by Idaarit Al-Nashr and the fifth by Abd Al-Wahab Aloob (see references for complete information). The textual data sources also include The Blue Flower (BF) by Fitzgerald (1995) (translated by Ali Suleiman), The Fault in our Stars (FS) by Green (2012) (translated by Baseel Intwan), The Help (TH) by Stockett (2009) (translated by Hassan Al-Bustani), The Future: Six Drives of Global Change (GC) by Gore (2013) (translated by Adnan Gergeos), and The Making of Economic Society (ES) by Heilbroner (1962) (translated by Rashid Al-Barrawi).

The choice of the textual data is motivated by the different genres it belongs to, viz. literary, popular science/journalistic, and economic, as well as the different translators involved in translating it. The aim is to investigate a representative sample of textual material in terms of genre and translators.
in order to come up with generalizations about the translation of adverbial and determiner negation across several genres and translators.

5. Analysis

The analysis examined the translation strategies employed by the translators in rendering adverbial and determiner negation in terms of frequency and percentage, which gave a clear picture about their utility when encountering such negation. First, Section 5.1 presented the markers of adverbial and determiner negation and their distribution in the English corpus. Second, Section 5.2 examined the translation strategies employed in rendering too adverbial negation, using both explicit negation (Section 5.2.1) and implicit negation (Section 5.2.2). Third, Section 5.3 looked at how the translators dealt with -ly adverbial negation in terms of translation strategy. Fourth, Section 5.4.1 investigated how the translators had tackled little determiner negation and the translation strategies adopted. Finally, Section 5.4.2 considered few determiner negation and how sensitive the translators had been to this type of negation.

5.1. Adverbial and Determiner Negative Markers

In terms of the type of negative marker, the English corpus is distributed as shown in Table 1 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marker</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Too</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardly</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>12.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scarcely</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barely</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>31.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Few</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 shows that adverbial negation by too is the most frequent in the corpus (37%) followed by determiner negation by little (31.85%). Third comes adverbial -ly negation including hardly, scarcely, and barely which together account for (23%). Within -ly negation, hardly emerges as the most frequent (12.60%), followed by scarcely (7%), then barely (4%). The least frequent in the data is determiner negation by few, which only accounts for (7.40%). These percentages may only give us a preliminary picture about the frequency of adverbial/determiner negation in English discourse. To affirm such frequencies, a large scale quantitative and qualitative corpus linguistics investigation needs to be carried out, which is far beyond the scope of the present study.

5.2. Translating Adverbial Negation by Too

5.2.1. Explicit Negation

Table 2 below presents the frequency and percentage of employing translation strategies in rendering too adverbial negation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Translation Strategy</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Unpacking by coordination</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>36.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Nominalization in simple/complex structures</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>31.91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Indicating degree of attribute</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>23.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Mistranslations/under-translations</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.51%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 above shows that there are three main translation strategies adopted by Arabic translators when opting to render English *too* negation by explicit Arabic negation: (1) Unpacking by coordination, (2) nominalization in simple or complex structures, and (3) indicating degree of attribute.

Firstly, unpacking *too* negation by a coordinate Arabic structure featuring explicit negation is the most frequent translation strategy at 36.17% (17 cases) for rendering *too* negation. It proves to be a workable strategy, as can be observed in the following example:

2. Harry was too deeply asleep to hear her. (HP/4)  

哈利因为太深睡着了，没听见她。

*‘الحَارِيَّ’ كان غارقاً في نومه فلم يسمعها.*

It is possible, also, to relay *too* negation in such cases by maintaining the English complex structure (second strategy below), as is shown in the rephrasing of (2) below, with a shift of focus in the ordering of the two propositions:

3. *I couldn’t save the girl at the right time*. (HP/3)  

*لا أستطيع إنقاذ الفتاة في الوقت المناسب.*

Secondly, nominalization in simple or complex Arabic structures comes second at 31.91% (15 cases). The translators have mostly succeeded in capturing *too* negation using this strategy, as can be noted in the examples below:

4. I was too late to save the girl. (HP/3)  

لا أستطيع إنقاذ الفتاة في الوقت المناسب.

4. *I couldn’t save the girl at the right time*. (HP/3)  

*لا أستطيع إنقاذ الفتاة في الوقت المناسب.*

Thirdly, capturing *too* negation by indicating the degree of the attribute in question accounts for 23.40% (12 cases) of the examples in this category. Semantically, it corresponds to awkwardly rephrasing *too* negation by using the phrase *to the extent that* with negation by *not* in English, viz. *John was too short to touch the ceiling* may awkwardly be rephrased as *John was short to the extent that he couldn’t touch the ceiling*. In Arabic, this strategy proves very useful for rendering *too* negation. The following example is illustrative:

5. *but his Patronus was too feeble to drive the dementor away*. (HP/2)  

*ولكن تعودته لم تكن بالقوة الكافية لإبعاد الخرس.*

6. Professor Trelawney seemed too tipsy to have recognized Harry. (HP/5)  

故地的教授特里劳尼喝得有点醉，未能认出哈利。

*‘الآستاذ تريلويني مخمورَا لقد لم تعرف هاري.*
Finally, let us look at one example where the translator has failed to capture the subtlety of too negation by reducing it to generic Arabic negation, viz. “… but Harry was too used to this to care” is rendered into “وَلَكَنْ هَارِي ﻷٴ ﺗَبَيْنُ بهُمَا [and-but Harry NEG care because-being used to-him on this] “… but Harry did not care because he was used to this”.

5.2.2. Implicit Negation

Table 3 below displays the frequency and percentage of using implicit negation translation strategies when rendering too adverbial negation.

Table 3. Frequency and percentage of implicit negation strategies in rendering too negation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Translation Strategy</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Using comparative form</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>28.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Using negative verbs</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Indicating degree of attribute</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18.87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Mixed bag (mistranslations/under-translations)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>30.19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Apart from the mixed bag of erroneous translations/under-translations (16 instances, 30.19%), Table 3 indicates that there are three main implicit negation strategies for capturing the meaning of too negation: (1) Employing the comparative form, (2) employing negative verbs, and (3) indicating degree of attribute.

The translation strategy using the Arabic comparative form (16 instances, 28–30%) emerges as very useful for handling too negation. The comparative Arabic forms ‘اف’ al min [more of an attribute than] and ‘اكثَر’ masa’dar (verbal noun) min [more of verbal noun than] here capture the nuance that the force of X’s attribute goes beyond the capability of Act Y, for example, ‘اَكَثَرَ’اَن’ an yuxda’ [cleverer than that (he) be deceived] and ‘اَكَثَرَ’اَن’ an yuxda’ [(has) more cleverness than that (he) be deceived] which both idiomatically translate into Ali is too clever to deceive. Following are two illustrative examples from the corpus:

7. … because it was too long to memorize. (FS)
   … لَنَأَيْنَا أَطُولَ مِنْ تُحْفَظُ غَيْبًا ...
   ... because it was longer than it could be memorized.

8. My way of life here is pitched too high for his young head. (BF)
   تَحْيَاٰ إِنَّ ْيِنِزُّ مَا أَكَثَرْ مِنْ أَنْ يَتَحْلِمُ رَأْسَهُ البَالِغٍ
   ‘In my way of life here More noisy from that tolerated-it head-his-the-young
   “Indeed, my life was more noisy than what his young head could tolerate”.

The second translation strategy utilizes negative verbs/verbal (11 instances, 20.75%) to relay the meaning of too negation. This is a familiar strategy in English as well as in Arabic to express negation implicitly rather than explicitly. For example, “the act of denying doing something” implies “the act of not admitting doing it”. Consequently, this strategy constitutes an important option when translating negation in general and too negation in particular. The two examples below are illustrative:
9. Anna dies or becomes too ill to continue writing it. (FS)

‘aana maatat 'aw bala-y at min-al-marda wa-bana-l-istimraari fi-l-kitaabati
Anna died or reached from-the-illness degree prevented between-her
and-between-the-continuing in-the-writing

“Anna died or reached a degree of illness that prevented her from continuing writing”.

10. It just seemed too good to be true that he was going to be rescued from the Dursleys. (HP/5)

fa-qad badaa ‘anna ‘inqaad-a-hu min ‘aali duurislii ‘amrun yafuuqu ‘a‘laama-hu
so-? seemed that rescuing-him from family Dureysles matter exceeds dreams-his

“It seemed that rescuing him from the Dureysleyes was something that exceeds his dreams”.

The implicit negation in (9) and (10) is achieved by the use of the negative verbs haala [prevented] and yafuuqu [exceed], which both imply propositions employing explicit negation in Arabic.

The third translation strategy employs the degree of the relevant attribute (10 instances, 18.87%) as a marker of implicit negation by using the degree formulas min + maṣdār [verbal noun], for example, from-the-smallness [i.e., too small] and verb/adjective + alaa [on], for example, (grow) old on [i.e., too old]. Observe the two examples below:

11. Fines for violations were too small to be effective, … (ES)

fa-l-yaraamaat-u ‘an-il-muxaalataa min-as-siṣari biiyaytu faqadat faa’ iliyyata-ha
so-the-fines from-the-violations were-from-the-smallness so lost(the) effect-their

“The fines for violations were so small that they lost their effect”

12. “No, now I am too old to learn anything.” (BF)

laa wa-‘anaa al’aana kabirtu ‘alaa ta ‘allumii ‘ayyi šay’in
no and-I now grew old on learning any thing

“No, I have grown (too) old to learn anything”.

Finally, we have the mixed bag, which includes mistranslations/under-translations that account for 16/53 instances (a full 30.19%) in the cases of implicit negation. The two examples below are illustrative:

13. but it’ll take too long to explain now. (HP/3)

laakinna-ha ha qisṣatuun taw’ilatuun
but-it story long

“but it was a long story”.

14. It is still far too cold to undress at night. (BF)

laayazaalu-t-taqsu baaridan jiddan li-xal’ i-θiyyabi fi-l-layli
still-the-weather cold very to-take off-the-clothes in-the-night

“The weather is still very [too] cold to take off clothes at night”
5.3. Translating -ly Negation

Table 4 presents the translation strategies which Arabic translators employ when rendering English -ly negation.

Table 4. Frequency and percentage of translation strategies in rendering -ly negation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Correct explicit negation</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under-translated explicit negation</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vernacular (ungrammatical) bilkaad</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>31.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correct implicit negation</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mistranslations/omission</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The sample of negative adverbs (which is extracted from BF, FS, GC, and ES, to the exclusion of HP) includes 34 instances of hardly, 19 of scarcely, and 11 of barely, coming to a total of 64 instances. These adverbs share the fact that they communicate a negative orientation when used in English sentences. That is why they are often interchangeable, albeit they may be sensitive to normality conditions (i.e., one may sound natural in one context, while another may not). For example, John was barely 17 when he joined college is natural, whereas John was scarcely 17 when he joined college is not. In terms of translation, the focus is on relaying the negative orientation which is shared by all of them.

Table 4 above shows only two successful strategies the translators have employed in rendering -ly negation: (1) Correct explicit negation (12 instances, 18.75%), and (2) correct implicit negation (12 instances, 18.75%). The remaining cases go for: (1) Inappropriate vernacular bilkaad (20 instances, 31.25%), (2) under-translated explicit negation (16 instances, 25%), and (3) mistranslations (three instances) and omission (one instance), together 6.25%.

Let us start with cases where -ly negation is accounted for in Arabic (12/28 instances, 42.85%) using correct explicit negation. The following examples are illustrative:

15. ... this little kid who could barely walk ... (FS)
    ... haaᵀa-ti$tu-$ṣa’ti$tiru ʻalla$ii laa yakaadu yam$ii ... 
    ... this-the-kid-the-little who not hardly walk ...
    “… this little kid who can hardly walk…”
    هذا الطفل الصغير الذي لا يكاد عشت ...

16. The economics of society ... was hardly such as to provoke the curiosity of a thoughtful man. (ES)
    kaan$at $i$t$i$ad$i$yaat-ul-mujtama $i$ ... takaadu laa tu$tiru fu$dul$a raju$lin mufak$kin
    were economics-the-society ... hardly not provoke curiosity man thoughtful
    “The economics of society … could hardly provoke the curiosity of a thoughtful man”.
    كانت اقتصاديات المجتمع ... تكاد لا تثير فضول رجل مفكر.

The translators of (15) and (16) have successfully employed a negated yakaadu, viz. laa yakaadu [not hardly] and takaadu laa [hardly not], which exactly capture the meaning of the -ly negation in them. One should note that yakaadu is an Arabic defective verb which translates into the negative adverb hardly when it is negated in Arabic, while it translates into almost/nearly when it is not negated, for example, كاَدَ أن يَسقِطُ في الِبَرَكة kaada 'an yasqaṭa fi-l-birkati [almost (he) that fall in-the-pool] “He almost/nearly fell in the pool”. The negated yakaadu proves so useful when rendering English -ly negation.

However, -ly negation does not seem as straightforward as (15) and (16) may suggest. While capturing the notion of negation in general, almost 58% of the Arabic renderings (16/28 instances) fail to account for the nuance inherent in -ly negation. Instead, this kind of negation is erroneously
relayed as Arabic negation that corresponds to English negation by *not*, thus amounting to serious under-translations. Following are some illustrative examples:

17. The children of large families hardly ever learn to talk to themselves aloud, . . . (BF)
   lam yata' allam 'awlaadu-l- 'aa'ilaaati-l-kabirati 'an yatahadda'uu ila' anfushihim
   not learned children-the-families-the-big that talk to themselves
   bi-sawtin masmuu' in . . .
   with-voice audible . . .
   “The children of large families did not learn to talk to themselves in an audible voice . . .”

18. The Freifrau scarcely heeded her. (BF)
   lam tubeel-l-baarunatu bi-haa
   not heed-the-Baroness with-her
   “The Baroness did not heed her”.

By way of illustration, in (17) the translator obliterates the subtle nuance of the negation in *hardly* by opting for explicit Arabic negation by *lam* [not] followed by the main lexical verb *yata' allam* [learn], which back-translates into English negation by *not*, viz. “The children of large families did not learn to talk to themselves . . . “. To capture the negation inherent in *hardly*, one may need to employ a negated *yakaadu* viz. *laa yakaadu* 'awlaadu-l- 'aa'ilaaati-l-kabirati yata' allamuuna-l-tatahaaddu'ba 'ila'a anfushihim bi-sawtin masmuu' in . . . [not hardly children-the-families-the-large learn-the-talking to themselves with-voice audible] “The children of large families hardly learn to talk to themselves in an audible voice . . . “. Or, alternatively, one may use a paucity adverb like *naadiran maa* and *qalamaa* [rarely], which both inherit the nuance that “the circumstances in which those children live hardly allow them to talk to themselves”, viz. *naadiran maa/qalamaa yata' allamu 'awlaadu-l- 'aa'ilaaati-l-kabirati at-tatahaaddu'ba 'ila'a anfushihim bi-sawtin masmuu' in . . . [rarely/hardly learn children-the-families-the-large the-talking to themselves with-voice audible] “Rarely/hardly (do) the children of the large families learn to talk to themselves in an audible voice”.

The second strategy for rendering *-ly* negation is the employment of the vernacular negative adverb *bikkaad*, which is a malformed version of the standard *la yakaadu*. The question is whether it is appropriate to use a vernacular form when it is possible to utilize the standard negated *yakaadu*. What is surprising here is the absence of this vernacular form in *Harry Potter’s* translation where the informal register may sanction it and the frequency of using it in the other works—it accounts for 31.25% of the *-ly* data (20/64 instances). By way of illustration, the example in (31):

19. I hardly know you, Augustus Waters. (FS)
   'anaa bikkaad a 'rifu-ka yaa 'uvustus wuturarz
   I hardly know(I)-you oh Augustus Waters
   “I hardly know you Augustus Waters”.

   أَنَا بِاللَّهْ أَفْرَكَ أَيْ أَوْفِغْسِتْ وَوَتْرَزَ

   can readily be rephrased naturally in standard Arabic using the negated *yakaadu* as in (20) below.

20. 'anaa laa 'akaadu a 'rifu-ka yaa 'uvustus wuturarz
   I not hardly(I) know(I)-you oh Augustus Waters
   “I hardly know you Augustus Waters”.

   أَنَا لَا أَفْرَكَ أَيْ أَوْفِغْسِتْ وَوَتْرَزَ
Next, we have the strategy of implicit negation which accounts for 18.75% in the -ly negation data (12/64 instances). They mainly employ paucity or difficulty expressions in an attempt to capture the negative nuance inherent in -ly negation. Consider the two examples below:

21. Auguste nowadays scarcely ever went out at all, … (BF)
   fii miðli haadî-hi-l-'ayyaami kaana min-an-naadirî bi-nnisbatî li-'uu'at
   in like these-the-days was from-the-rarity as-regards to-Auguste
   'an ta'baha xaarijî-l-manzili
   that go(she) outside-the-house
   “In these days Auguste rarely leaves home”.
   في مثل هذه الأيام كان من النادر بالنسبة لأوغست أن يذهب خارج المنزل.

22. It is asked incessantly, most of the time however hardly noticeably, … (BF)
   su'aalun yus'al bi-stimraarin ra'ma 'anna-hu yulaaḥaðu bi-su' uubatin …
   question be asked with-continuity despite that-it be noticed with-difficulty …
   “A question asked incessantly despite (the fact that) it is noticed with difficulty …”
   سؤال يسأل باستمرار رغم أنه يلاحظ بصغيرة …

In (21), the translator successfully employs a paucity expression min-al-naadirî [from the rarity] to capture -ly negation. One should note that a negated yakaadu can be readily used for that purpose, viz. fii miðli haadî-hi-l-'ayyaami laa takaadu 'uu'ast taxruju min-al-manzili [in like these days Auguste not hardly goes out from-the-house] “In these days Auguste hardly ever goes out”. In (22), a difficulty expression bi-su' uubatin [with difficulty] is utilized. The difficulty expression approximates rather than replicates -ly negation. A negated yakaadu would capture the meaning more closely, viz. su'aalun yus'al bi-stimraarin ra'ma 'anna-hu laa yakaadu yulaaḥaðu [question be asked with-continuity despite that-it not hardly be noticed] “A question (that is) asked incessantly, despite the fact that it is hardly noticed, …”

To close this section, let us examine two mistranslations (out of three) which are found in the -ly negation data (they all come from ES) below:

23. This hardly seems like a particularly exciting subject for historical scrutiny.
    yakaadu haadåa 'ašbahà bi-mawdâu 'in muðiririn bi-wajhin xašṣin
    hardly this like with-subject exciting with-face particular
    lil-bahîbi-l-taarıixîyyi
    for-research-historical
    “This almost seems like a particularly exciting subject for historical research”.
    يكاد هذا آنثى موضوع مثير بوجه خاص للبحث التاريخي.

24. This is particularly true when we begin at the stage of scarcely-better-than-subsistence …
    wa-haadåa šâhihûn bi-wajhin xašṣin 'indamâ nadâ'â marâhâlata
    and-this true with-face particular when begin(we) stage
    maa yakaadu yazidu 'alâa mujarradi-l- 'ayshi …
    which hardly more than mere-the-livelihood …
    “This is particularly true when we begin the stage which is almost beyond mere livelihood …”
    وهذا صحيح بوجه خاص عندما نبدأ مرحلة ما يكاد يزيد على مجرد العيش …

To explain, the translator in (23) wrongly uses the affirmed rather than the negated yakaadu, which is an approximating rather a negating marker (i.e., here it communicates the message that “X is almost Y”). To capture -ly negation, the translation should read lâ yakaadu haadåa yabdûu šabiihan.
Firstly, unpacking too negation by a coordinate Arabic structure featuring 
wa-haada fiveh-un bi-waajin 
xaasin ‘indamaa nabdaa un marhalata maa l'a yakaadu yazidu ‘alaa mujarradi-l’ aysi . . . , which corresponds
to “This is particularly true when we begin the stage which hardly goes beyond mere livelihood . . . “.

5.4. Translating Determiner Negation

English determiner negation by little and few furnishes an utterance with a negative
orientation just like too and -ly adverbial negation. They may also be used as adjectives to
denote their lexical meaning by indicating smallness in size and number, respectively, which
 corresponds to sa'iiir [small/little] and qaliil [little/few] in Arabic. For example, there is not
much beyond their semantics in there are little children playing in the garden and The next few
years will be prosperous. However, little and few are often employed as negative determiners that
contrast with their positive counterparts a little and a few. Compare “There is little time for
discussion” laa yaaada ila-l-qaliilu min-al-vaqti li-n-niqaa’si [not exist except-the-little from-the-time for-the-discussion] with “There is a little time for discussion”
yaaada ba’ du-l-waqtli li-n-niqaa’si [exist some-the-time for-the-discussion] and
“There are few mistakes in the report” laa yaaada ila-l-qaliilu min-al-‘aaxa’i fi-t-taqriiri [not exist except-the-few from-the-mistakes in-the-report] with There are
a few mistakes in the report yaaada ba’ du-l-‘aaxa’i fi-t-taqriiri [exist some-the-mistakes in-the-report]. While little and few color the utterances with a negative orientation, a
little and a few color it with a positive orientation, hence the different Arabic renderings. The discussion
in this section aims to show to what extent Arabic translators are aware of this subtle type of negation.

5.4.1. Determiner Negation by Little

Table 5 below displays the translation strategies that the translators have followed in dealing with
little determiner negation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Translation Strategy</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Correct explicit negation</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>38.38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorrect implicit negation</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>32.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under-translated explicit negation</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20.95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correct implicit negation</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Out of the 99 extracted examples featuring little, 86 (86.87%) are found to involve a negative
orientation that goes beyond its denotative (dictionary) meaning. The examination of little negation
data shows that the translators’ attempt to handle this kind of negation involves four strategies: proper
explicit negation (33 instances, 38.37%), under-translated explicit negation (18 instances, 20.93%),
proper implicit negation (seven instances, 8.14%), erroneous implicit negation (25 instances, 29%), and
mistranslation (one instance (1.16%).

To start with the first category, where determiner negation is rendered by explicit negation, which
is the most frequent (33 instances, 38.37%), one can notice two main translation strategies. The first (23
instances/69.70%) usually employs explicit negation, with the exception particle ‘ilaa or siwa [except]
followed by a paucity-derived word, for example, ‘illaa qaliilan [except little/few] or siwaa-l-qaliila [except-the-little/few]. Consider the following example:

25. We all know that there’s very little time. (TH)
kuullu-nnaa ra’ rif ‘anna-hu layyaadayaan siwaa qaliilan min-al-waqt
all we know that-it not-we have except little from-the-time
“We all know that we don’t have except little time” (i.e., “we all know that we only have little time”).

The second translation strategy, which claims (10 instances, 30.30%), employs a negated antonym, for example, lan . . . al-ka’biira [not . . . a lot/much], as is shown in the following example:

26. And all with very little effort on your part, I assure you. (HP/5)
waa-lan yakuuna ‘alay-ka ‘an tabdula-l-ka’biira min-al-waqt ‘u’tam’iinu-ka
and-not be on-you that spend-the-much from-the-time assure(l)-you
“And you won’t have to spend much time, I assure you”.

One should note that Arabic can also employ belittling expressions such as laa yu’udkar [not to be mentioned] or laa yastahqiq-ud-’dikr [not worth mentioning] to capture the meaning of little-negation in examples like (26), which can be rephrased in (27):

27. wa-lan yakuuna ‘alay-ka ba’dlu jihdini yastahqiqu-ud-’dikra ‘u’tam’iinu-ka
and-not be on-you making effort worth-the-mentioning assure(l)-you
“And you won’t have to make (any) effort worth of mentioning, I assure you”.

The second translation strategy (18 instances, 20.93%) includes cases where the translator succeeds in recovering Arabic explicit negation but, unfortunately, misses the focus of determiner negation (i.e., he/she under-translates this subtype of negation). By way of illustration, witness the following example:

28. The truth was, I had very little idea how dangerous things were. (TH)
fi-l-‘haqiqati lam ‘akun ‘a’ rifu madaa xu’tuurati-l-‘amri
in-the-fact not be know(l) extent dangerousness-the-situation
“In fact, I didn’t know how dangerous the situation was”.

As can be seen, little-negation in (28) is rendered in Arabic to what corresponds to not negation in English, thus missing the nuance of this type of negation. To capture this nuance, the Arabic rendering should employ an exception expression along with explicit negation as in (29):

29. fi-l-‘haqiqati lam ‘akun ‘a’ rifu ‘illa ‘aqali-l-qaliili ‘an
in-the-fact not be know(l) except smallest-the-small about
madaa xu’tuurati-l-‘amri
extent dangerousness-the-situation
“In fact, I knew only little about how dangerous the situation was”.

The next two strategies involve the translator’s attempt to render little negation by implicit negation. The outcome is far from being impressive: Only seven cases (8.14%) may be considered
successful in implementing this strategy, while 28 cases (32.50%) falter in this respect. Following are two examples where the first succeeds in relaying little negation (30), while the second falters (31):

30. “You know that Father punishes you very little”, said Sidonie coaxingly. (BF) 
   ḍant a ṭa’ rif yaa biyaa ṣuusaa ṣuusaa ‘abii naaṣiru maa yu’ saqibyaa . . .
   you know oh Bernard that father(my) rarely punish(you)
   “You know Bernard that my father rarely punishes you . . .”
   أنت تعرف يا بيرنارد أن أبي نادراً ما يعاقبك ... 

31. Very little has changed with her health. (TH) 
   laqad ṭa’ara’ taḥassunun ‘alaa ṣuṣbi-ha ha
   happened improvement on health(her)
   “Her health has improved”.
   لكد طرأ خمس على صحتها.

In (30), the translator employs the paucity expression naaṣiru maa [rarely] to capture the meaning of little negation. By contrast, the Arabic rendering in (31) embraces a positive orientation towards the referent’s health conditions, which runs counter to the negative orientation in the English utterance. To capture this orientation, the Arabic rendering may be rephrased using explicit negation along with a belittling expression as in (32) below:

32. lam yatra’ taḥassunun yastaḥiṣaṣu-ḍ-ṣiṣkra ‘alaa ṣiṣbi-ha ha
   not happened improvement worth-mentioning on health-her
   “There wasn’t any improvement worth mentioning about her health”.
   لم يطرأ خمس يستحق الذكر على صحتها.

5.4.2. Determiner Negation by Few

Table 6 below presents the frequency and percentage of translation strategies which the translators have employed in rendering few determiner negation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Translation Strategy</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Incorrect implicit negation</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correct explicit negation</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correct implicit negation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Negation by few is the least frequent in the corpus. Out of 93 extracted examples involving the employment of few, only 20 are found to furnish the English utterance with a negative orientation. In the rest of the examples, the determiner few reflects its dictionary meaning, which corresponds to qaliil [few] in Arabic, without any coloration of negation. In such cases, the rendering of few into Arabic is straightforward, as no negation is to be accounted for. The following example is illustrative:

33. The next few weeks is real important for Mae Mobley. (TH)
   kaant-ul’-asabbi ul-l-qaliilu-t-taaliyatu haamatu jiddan binisbi ‘ilaa maw muublii
   were-the-weeks-the-few-the-next important very as regards to Mae Mobley
   “The next few weeks were very important for Mae Mobley”.
   كانت الأسابيع القليلة التالية هامة جدا بالنسبة إلى ماري موبلي
However, when few is employed as a negative determiner, which is meant to express the producer’s unfavorable attitude towards the state of affairs in question, explicit Arabic negation may be needed. The data shows that explicit negation has been correctly employed in seven instances (35%), while implicit negation is erroneously employed in 12 instances (60%), and only once correctly (5%). The two examples below are representative of the success and failure in rendering few negation:

34. They stopped at no inns, and exchanged very few words. (BF)

lam yatawaqqafa' 'inda 'ayyi ḥaṣanatin wa-lam yatabadala 'illa-l-qaliilu
not stopped(dual) at any inn and-not exchanged except-the-few
min-al-kalimaati

from-the-words

“They didn’t stop at any inns and didn’t exchange but few words”.

35. And there are as yet few business models for journalism originating on the Internet. (GC)

wa-hunaaka hatta-l-aan 'adadun qaliilun min namaaḍījīl-ʾaʿ maali-ṣ-sahafiyati
and-there till-now number small from models-the-businesses-the-journalism

an-naaṣāʾati 'ala-l-intarnit

the-new on-the-Internet

“There are as yet a small number of new business models on the Internet”.

As is clear in (34) above, the translator has duly accessed explicit negation along with an exception expression in Arabic to account for few negation. By contrast, the translator has failed to invest explicit negation and, consequently, opts erroneously for an affirmative utterance in (35). The competent reader can readily feel the missing negative orientation in the rendering due to the translator’s failure to capture the pragmatics of few negation. To remedy this situation, explicit Arabic negation along with an exception expression may be accessed to furnish a negative orientation (36 below):

36. wa-la'a yuujadu hatta-l-aan 'illaa 'adadun qaliilun min namaaḍījīl-ʾaʿ maali-ṣ-sahafiyati

an-la'a exist till-now except number small from models-the-businesses

ṣ-sa hafiyati an-naaṣāʾati 'ala-l-intarnit

the-journalism the new the-journalism

“There aren’t as yet but few new business models on the Internet”.

6. Discussion

In response to the first research question concerning how Arabic translators tackle too adverbal negation (which is formally missing in Arabic) and what translation strategies they employ, the study shows that they resort to explicit negation and implicit negation as two general strategies. This clearly proves that the recovery of Arabic explicit negation is an effective translation strategy in dealing with too negation. Within explicit negation, three strategies are employed: unpacking by coordination, nominalization, and indicating degree of attribute.

Unpacking by coordination turns out to be a very effective translation strategy for rendering too negation. The translators have successfully managed to explicate the English negation encapsulated in the negative marker too by using a consequential coordinate clause involving explicit negation. In this way, for example, the too negation in Harry was too deeply asleep to hear her is successfully relayed into an Arabic rendering that back-translates into Harry was deeply asleep, so he didn’t hear her, which is an alternative English textualization that employs generic explicit negation. Arabic translators; therefore, need to be fully aware of this workable strategy when dealing with too negation.
Resorting to explicit negation by nominalizing the English verb in a simple or complex Arabic structure also proves to be a workable translation strategy for rendering too negation. For example, the translator has managed to recover Arabic generic negation by nominalizing the English verb save into the Arabic verbal noun ‘inqaḍi “saving”, in I was too late to save the girl, into a simple Arabic structure which literally back-translates into *I couldn’t saving the girl. Similarly, the translator has successfully nominalized the verb drive away, in but his Patronus was too feeble to drive the dementor away, in the English infinitive clause, into ‘ib ‘aadi (driving away) in an Arabic complex structure (which back-translates into a workable English textualization, viz. but his Patronus wasn’t strong enough to drive the dementor away).

Indicating the degree of the attribute in question, for its part, presents itself as a very useful translation strategy when rendering too negation by explicit Arabic negation. It corresponds to an awkward English textualization that may paraphrase too negation. For example, the Arabic idiomatic rendering of Professor Trelawney seemed too tipsy to have recognized Harry back-translates into the awkward English paraphrase Professor Trelawney was drunk to the extent that she didn’t recognize Harry.

There are few cases when the translator’s recovery of Arabic generic negation does not convey the nuance of too negation properly. For example, the too negation in but Harry was too used to this to care is rendered into Arabic explicit negation that back-translates into but Harry didn’t care about this, thus doing away with the shade of meaning inherent in too negation. To capture this shade of meaning, the translator could have indicated the degree of the attribute in question by offering an Arabic rendering that back-translates into the English paraphrase but Harry was used to this to the extent that he didn’t care or, alternatively, the translator could have unpacked too negation by coordination by offering what back-translates into Harry was used to this, so he didn’t care.

As for implicit negation, it is not as successfully employed as explicit negation. However, this does not mean that implicit negation is not a viable option; it just suggests that it needs to be utilized more carefully by calling up three strategies: use of comparative form, use of negative, and indication of degree of attribute, which prove to be effective in rendering too negation.

The employment of the comparative form idiomatically renders many cases of too negation. For instance, the English too negation in because it was too long to memorize is correctly relayed into Arabic to what back-translates into an English workable textualization, viz. because it was longer than it could be memorized. Similarly, the use of negative verbs/verbal may appropriately capture too negation. The English too negation in Anna dies or becomes too ill to continue writing it, for example, lends itself to translating by employing a negative verb whose semantics takes care of negation, viz. the Arabic rendering back-translates into Anna died or reached a degree of illness that prevented her from continuing writing. Likewise, employing set formulas to indicate the degree of the relevant attribute succeeds in capturing too negation implicitly. Notice how the Arabic rendering, whose back-translation is the fines for violations were so small that they lost their effect, proves to be an idiomatic translation of the too negation in Fines for violations were too small to be effective.

Despite the successful employment of these strategies, the translators have failed to use implicit negation correctly in about one third of the cases. This makes the strategy of implicit negation more challenging than that of explicit negation. Therefore, the translator’s first strategy should be to consider explicit negation, and he/she needs to exercise utmost care when opting for implicit negation. For example, the too negation should not be confused with the negation-free intensifier jiddan “very”. In this way, the too negation in It is still far too cold to undress at night should not be rendered in Arabic as لايزال الطلقز باردا جداا جيدا ولكن الثواب فى الليل laayazazalu-t-laqsu baarrada jiddan ti-xal’ i-tha-yabi fi-l-layli “The weather is still very cold to take off clothes at night.” To use Arabic implicit negation properly, the translator could have employed an Arabic negative verb whose semantics takes care of too negation, viz. كان أهو البارد جداا من خلع ملابسنا في الليل kaan-al-jawwu-l-baardu yamna° u-naa min xal’ i malaabisy-nya fi-l-layli “The cold weather prevented us from taking off our clothes at night.”

To address the second research question concerning the translation strategies in rendering -ly negation, the data shows that the successful use of explicit negation and implicit negation accounts
for only (37.50%) in the corpus. The rest of the cases goes for the vernacular bilkaad (31.70%), which is ungrammatical, and mistranslations/under-translations/omission (31.75%). This clearly shows how problematic rendering -ly negation into Arabic is. To render this type of negation properly, translators into Arabic need to be made aware of the negated Arabic verb yakaadu when employing explicit negation, as well as paucity/difficulty expressions when opting for implicit negation. Only then can the pragmatics of -ly negation be captured in Arabic.

Arabic negation by explicit negative particles emerges as the most common translation strategy for rendering the -ly negative adverbs, which clearly indicates the translators’ awareness of their negative orientation. However, the coding of this orientation in Arabic seems to be a challenging task. In fact, more than half involves under-translating this adverbial negation by rendering it into what corresponds to negation by not in English. In this way, the subtle nuance of this type of negation is lost in translation.

To employ explicit negation properly when dealing with -ly negation, the translator needs to access the Arabic negated verb yakaadu, which does not seem to be an easy task. Apparently, Arabic translators more often than not fall in the trap of under-translation by offering English generic negation by not, viz. *The Barn didn’t heed her* (back-translation of Arabic translation) for *Fredruu scarcely heeded her*. In this way, they fail to call up the appropriate negated yakaadu, viz. ُلم تكذب الجزيرة نابل بيا ُlam takad al-haaraunutatu tubaali bi-haa “The Baroness scarcely/hardly heeded her”. Alternatively, they are erroneously attracted by the vernacular bilkaad, which is a negative adverb commonly used in most Arabic vernaculars for this type of negation. This option reflects the translator’s deficient knowledge of Standard Arabic, which has its standard version (the negated yakaadu verb) for the vernacular bilkaad. Arabic translators; therefore, need to be cautioned against rendering ly-negation into the generic not negation as well as the use of vernacular bilkaad.

Arabic implicit negation may also be considered when translating -ly negation. When implementing this translation strategy, the translator needs to call up Arabic paucity expressions such as naadiram maa/qallamaa “rarely” or the difficulty expression bi-su’u’uubatin which approximates than replicates -ly negation implicitly. Though implicit negation is used much less frequently than explicit negation where several errors are made, it proves to be very appropriate in some cases, especially when the translator utilizes paucity expressions.

To respond to the third research question regarding the rendering of little determiner negation, results show that the success rate is less than 50%, which clearly indicates how problematic little negation is when relaying it into Arabic.

The most effective translation strategy when employing explicit negation is to use exception expressions combined with paucity words, which can properly capture this kind of subtle negation. Arabic translators; however, need to be cautioned against falling in the trap of under-translating little negation into what corresponds to English not negation, viz. *The truth was, I had very little idea how dangerous things were* may wrongly be translated into an Arabic rendering that back-translates into *In fact I didn’t know how dangerous the situation was*, a mishap which relies several cases of little negation. To capture little negation here, the translator needs to use explicit negation along with an exception expression, viz. ُلم أكن أعرف إلا أقل التليل عن مدى خطورة الأمر fi-l-haaqiqati lam ’akun ’a’ rifu ’illa ’agali-l-qalili ’an madaa xu’tuurati-l’amri, which back-translates into *In fact I knew only very little about how dangerous the situation was*.

Negated antonyms may also be used to relay little negation explicitly, though at a lesser degree of success, viz. *And all with very little effort on your part, I assure you relatively corresponds to the Arabic rendering that back-translates into And you won’t have to spend much effort, I assure you*. However, the employment of explicit negation with a belittling expression such lau yastaahiqi-id-dikr “not worth mentioning” can be a more effective strategy for capturing the shade of meaning in little negation than using explicit negation with a negated antonym, viz. ُولن يكون عليك أن تبذل الكثير من الوقت أطمئن wa-lan yakuuma ‘alay-ka ’an tabdula-l-kathira min-al-waqti ’utam’iu-ka, which back-translates into *And
you won’t have to make a lot of effort, I assure you. Consequently, the Arabic translator needs to be alerted to the importance of using exception expressions as well as belittling expressions when using explicit negation in rendering little negation.

As for implicit negation, which is employed in only few cases, it resorts to expressions inherently marked for paucity such as naadirun maal/qallamaa “rarely” independently of negative particles. The bulk of cases; however, indicates that the translators are only little aware of the negative orientation furnished by little negation. In fact, the erroneous translations furnish a positive rather negative orientation of little negation. For example, the rendering of Very little has changed with her health in English laqad ṭarā’a taḥassunun ‘alaa sīḥat-ha into Her health has improved has completely deprived the Arabic translation of the negative orientation. It is of utmost importance; therefore, to alert Arabic translators to the need to recover explicit negation along with paucity or belittling expressions to capture little negation. In this way, the above example should be rendered as َلَمْ يُقَدْ طَّرَأَ ﺧَﺼَﻤْ ﻋَﻠَى ﺧَﺼَﺘَﻬَﺎ lam yaṭrā’ taḥassunun yuḏkara’ alaa sīḥat-ha, which back-translates into There wasn’t any improvement worth mentioning with her health.

Finally, in response to the fourth research question, the results show that few determiner negation proves to be so problematic in Arabic translation. This finding clearly points to the challenging subtlety of few negation which needs to be brought to the consciousness of Arabic translators who are supposed to be aware of the difference between few as a negative operator and few as a mere determiner. Apparently, the translators are not aware of the need to recover explicit Arabic negation along with an exception expression to relay the negative attitude encapsulated in this type of subtle negation. The attempt to employ implicit negation has failed except in one instance, which clearly indicates that explicit rather than implicit negation is the appropriate translation strategy to use when rendering few negation. Translators into Arabic; therefore, need to be sensitized to the nature of few negation and the appropriate strategies that may be used to render its pragmatics.

7. Conclusions

Tables 2–6 report my judgments about the success and competence of translators whose work I examined for this study. The findings show evidence that the pragmatics of this type of English negation is a challenging task in translation activity. Arabic translators, both professionals and more so student translators, need to be alerted to the fact that this type of negation, which formally does not exist in Arabic (and probably in several other languages), calls, in the first place, for recovering generic negation and, in the second place, for appropriately investing implicit negation in Arabic. Only then can the negative orientation, with which adverbial and determiner negation furnishes English utterances, be captured in Arabic translation.

In response to the research questions, the study has uncovered a rich spectrum of translation strategies that Arabic translators may employ to deal with non-generic English adverbial and determiner negation, which is found to be a problematic area representing a textual mismatch between English and Arabic. The translation strategy of recovering generic explicit negation in Arabic presents itself as a first priority that cuts across all types of non-generic adverbial and determiner negation. For its part, implicit negation may also cut across all types of non-generic adverbial and determiner negation, but to a lesser extent, when rendering it into Arabic. Since it is semantically based, it seems to be more challenging to Arabic translators.

Funding: This research was supported by Kuwait University, Research Grant No. [AE03/16].

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Appendix A. List of Arabic Phonetic Symbols

/b/ voiced bilabial stop
/m/ bilabial nasal
Harry was too deeply asleep to hear her.

Languages 2019, 4, x

Firstly, unpacking too negation by a coordinate Arabic structure featuring explicit Arabic negation but failed to capture the meaning of too negation. To do this, one may suggest a workable strategy, as can be observed in the following example:

John was too short to the extent that he seemed the professor Trelawney drunk to the extent that she not know Harry

In Arabic, this strategy proves very useful for rendering negative sentences. The translator has managed to recover negative sentences in such cases by maintaining the English complex structure (second strategy below), as is shown in the rephrasing of (2) below, with a shift of focus in the ordering of the two propositions:

wa-laakinna haari lam yahtam bi-haaðaa

5. ... but his Patronus was too feeble to drive the dementor away. (HP/2)

Languages 2019, 4, x

Finally, let us look at one example where the translator has failed to capture the subtlety of negation by indicating the degree of the attribute in question accounts for awkwardly being used to-him on this

wa-laakinna haari lam yahtam bi-haaðaa

I couldn’t save the girl at the right time. (HP/3)

Languages 2019, 4, x

References


© 2019 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).