

COMPARISON OF THE USE OF PREPOSITIONS WITH VERBS AND NOUNS IN VIETNAMESE AND ARABIC

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Abstract: The research conducts a contrastive comparison of the use of prepositions accompanying verbs and nouns between Arabic and Vietnamese. Based on a research sample consisting of an article about Arabic journalism in Arabic life, located in Part 2 of the book *Al-kitābu al-asāsī fī ta'limu al-lughati al-'arabiyyati li-ghayri an-nāṭiqīna bihā*. The research focuses on four cases: (1) Direct equivalence, (2) Omission of prepositions, (3) Semantic incompatibility, and (4) Optional prepositions. Results show that differences in linguistic typology led to the use of prepositions not merely as a grammatical function but also depending on visual imagery and semantic inclusion within the verb. The research makes a small contribution to Arabic language teaching in Vietnam and translation/interpretation work.

Keywords: Contrastive linguistics, Arabic prepositions, Vietnamese prepositions, translation, verb-preposition structures.

1 Introduction

Prepositions in Arabic have many roles, one of which is connecting sentence components, creating coherence in semantics and syntax. However, for Arabic learners in Vietnam, mastering the combination of verbs or nouns with prepositions is one of the challenges.

This difficulty stems from the fact that Arabic requires specific prepositions after certain verbs to complete the sentence structure, while Vietnamese tends to include the direction of action within the inherent meaning of the verb itself. This research aims to clarify the similarities and differences in the use of prepositions following verbs or nouns in the two languages, thereby providing suggestions for learning and research.

2 Research Methodology

The research uses the contrastive analysis method to examine sentence structures in a specific sample text about the daily life of an intellectual (Dr. Sharaf). This specific sample text is located in Part 2 of

the book *Al-kitābu al-asāsī fī ta'limu al-lughati al-'arabiyyati li-ghayri an-nāṭiqīna bihā*.

The implementation process includes:

Step 1: Extract phrases with the structure: [Verb + Preposition] or [Noun + Preposition] in the Arabic text.

Step 2: Analyze the semantics and functions of that preposition in the specific context.

Step 3: Compare with the corresponding translation in Vietnamese to determine the degree of correlation.

3 Implementation Results

In many cases, prepositions between the two languages have absolute similarity in both spatial and logical functions when following nouns or verbs. Specifically, as follows:

3.1 Similarities

In the sample text, there are prepositions accompanying verbs in Arabic that are translated the same as in Vietnamese, such as:

The preposition ”من” appearing in the sentence appearing in the sentence ”عِنْدَمَا يَرْجِعُ مِنَ السَّفَرِ”. The preposition ”من” (from) in Arabic completely corresponds to the preposition ”từ” in Vietnamese when indicating the starting place of an action. In the above sentence, the preposition ”من” (from) accompanies the verb ”يَرْجِعُ” (return). Therefore, the above sentence will be translated as “*Khi anh ấy trở về từ chuyến đi*” (When he returns from the trip).

A further example where prepositions in Arabic and Vietnamese are used similarly is in the sentence ”الْأُسْرَةُ ”بِئْسَ أَوَّلًا بِالسُّؤَالِ عَنْ أَخْبَارِ”. In this sentence, the word ”من” appears; this preposition means ”về” (about), directly equivalent to the preposition ”về” in Vietnamese. The whole sentence above is translated as “*Đầu tiên, anh ấy bắt đầu bằng câu hỏi về tin tức gia đình*”.

The preposition ”من” and the preposition ”إِلَى” in the sentence ”لَا يَقْرَأُ الْجَزِيدَةَ مِنَ الْإِلْفِ إِلَى الْيَا” means ”từ” (from) in Vietnamese and the preposition ”إِلَى” in Vietnamese means ”đến” (to). In the above sentence, these two prepositions carry completely identical meanings in Vietnamese and Arabic. The sentence above is translated as “*Anh ấy không đọc báo từ Alif đến Ya*” (meaning he does not read the newspaper from beginning to end).

In the sentence near the bottom of page 3 in the research sample, there appears the sentence ”هَذَا الْمُجْتَمَعُ ”لِللُّغَةِ الْعَرَبِيَّةِ الَّتِي تُعَبِّرُ عَنْ” (express) appears accompanying the preposition ”عَنْ” (about). The whole sentence above will be translated as “*Ngôn ngữ Ả Rập là ngôn ngữ diễn đạt về xã hội này*”. The accompaniment of the preposition ”من” (about) after the verb ”تُعَبِّرُ” (express) is completely the same in Vietnamese. In Vietnamese, this pair of verb and accompanying preposition is also frequently used.

Additionally, there are also cases of incompatibility between Arabic and Vietnamese in the use of prepositions following nouns or verbs; through the research sample, the following cases can be mentioned:

3.2 Differences

3.2.1 Untranslated Prepositions

This is the case where the preposition in Arabic is mandatory in terms of grammar when going with a specific verb or noun, but when translated into Vietnamese, this preposition is omitted because the verb or sentence structure in Vietnamese already includes that meaning.

In the sample text, there is the sentence ”بَعِيدًا عَنِ الْوَطَنِ ”عِنْدَمَا يُسَافِرُ”. In this sentence, the preposition ”عَنْ” ap-

pears accompanying the noun ”بَعِيدًا”. The noun ”بَعِيدًا” means “xa” (far) in Vietnamese and the preposition ”عَنْ” means “về/từ” in Vietnamese. However, when translating this whole sentence into Vietnamese, the meaning of the preposition ”عَنْ” is not translated. The whole sentence above will be translated into Vietnamese as “*Khi anh ấy đi du lịch xa quê hương*” (when he travels far [from] the homeland).

The next sentence in the sample text is ”بِالْجَزَائِدِ الْيَوْمِيَّةِ ”تَحْتَظُّ لَهُ الْأُسْرَةُ”. In this sentence, there is a verb ”تَحْتَظُّ” and following this verb is the preposition ”بِ”. The verb ”تَحْتَظُّ” in Vietnamese means “giữ lại” (keep/retain) and the preposition ”بِ” means “bằng” (with/by). However, when translating the meaning of the whole sentence into Vietnamese, the preposition ”بِ” is not translated. The whole sentence above will be translated into Vietnamese as “*Gia đình giữ lại cho anh ấy những tờ nhật báo*”.

Another preposition that is not translated when accompanying a verb can be mentioned in the case of the following sentence: ”شَرَفٌ يَنْتَهِي مِنْ مُرَاجَعَةِ كُومَةِ الْجَزَائِدِ بِسُرْعَةٍ ”الدُّكْتُورُ”, which is the preposition ”مِنْ” (from) accompanying the verb ”يَنْتَهِي” (finish). In the sentence, the preposition ”مِنْ” is not translated. This whole sentence will be translated as “*Tiến sĩ Sharaf kết thúc việc xem lại chồng báo một cách nhanh chóng*”.

Similarly, in the sentence ”يَمُرُّ سَرِيعًا عَلَى صَفْحَةِ الْوَقَائِتِ”, the preposition ”عَلَى” appears following the verb ”يَمُرُّ”. The verb ”يَمُرُّ” means “bằng qua, lướt qua” (pass, skim), the accompanying preposition ”عَلَى” carries the meaning of “trên” (on). Thus, this verb and preposition combined mean “lướt qua trên” (skim over on), so the whole sentence above would be translated as “*Anh ấy lướt qua trên trang cáo phó*”. But Vietnamese people usually do not say that; Vietnamese people only say “*Anh ấy lướt qua trang cáo phó*”, meaning the preposition “trên” is omitted.

On page 3 of the research sample, there is the sentence ”الْمُضْحَكَةُ لَا تَخْلُو جَرِيدَةً مِنَ الْفُكَاةِ وَالرُّسُومِ”; in this sentence, the verb ”تَخْلُو” appears meaning “thiếu” (lack) going with the preposition ”مِنْ” (from). However, when translating into Vietnamese, for the sentence to be fluent, the accompanying preposition ”مِنْ” (from) will be ignored, only the verb is translated. The whole sentence above will be translated as “*Tờ báo không thiếu truyện cười và tranh biếm họa*”.

3.2.2 Prepositions used incompatibly

This is the case where a verb in Arabic is accompanied by a certain preposition, but when translated into Vietnamese, the corresponding verb is accompanied by a

completely different preposition:

One of the sentences in the sample text where the preposition is used incompatibly in Vietnamese and Arabic is the sentence "بَعْدَ أَنْ يَطْمَئِنَّ عَلَى أَحْوَالِهِمْ". This sentence contains the verb "يَطْمَئِنُّ", which in Vietnamese means "yên tâm" (reassured). In the sample text, the verb "يَطْمَئِنُّ" is accompanied by the preposition "عَلَى", which means "trên" (on) in Vietnamese. When translating this verb and accompanying preposition into Vietnamese, the meaning "yên tâm trên" will not be clear, so the preposition used in Arabic is incompatible in Vietnamese. Vietnamese people usually say "yên tâm về" rather than "yên tâm trên".

In the text, there is the sentence "تَتَّصِلُ بِالْتَّعْلِيمِ وَالتَّقَاةِ" including the preposition "بِ" following the verb "تَتَّصِلُ". The preposition "بِ" means "bằng" (with/by), while the verb "تَتَّصِلُ" means "liên quan" (relate/connect). When translating both the verb and accompanying preposition as "liên quan bằng", it will not be suitable in Vietnamese, because in Vietnamese one usually says "liên quan đến" (relate to).

Similarly, a case of a preposition accompanying a verb being used differently between Vietnamese and Arabic is expressed in the sentence "عَلَى الْحَوَادِثِ وَالْفَضَائِلِ" "يُلْقِي نَظْرَةً". In this sentence, there is the preposition "عَلَى" following the verb "يُلْقِي". The preposition "عَلَى" means "trên" (on), the verb "يُلْقِي" means "ném/đưa ra" (cast/give out). Thus, when translating this verb and accompanying preposition, it would be "đưa ra trên". Accordingly, the above sentence will be translated as "Anh ấy đưa ra quan điểm trên những sự kiện và những vấn đề". If translated like this, Vietnamese people can still understand but the sentence is not really natural. Therefore, instead of using the preposition "trên", in this case, Vietnamese people will usually use the preposition "về" then it will be more suitable: "Anh ấy đưa ra quan điểm về những sự kiện và những vấn đề".

On page 3 of the research sample, there is the sentence "بَعْضُ الْجَرَائِدِ يَهْتَمُّ بِالْأَدَبِ" (some newspapers are interested in literature); in the sentence, a verb appears meaning "quan tâm" (be interested) which is "يَهْتَمُّ"; this verb usually accompanies the preposition "بِ", whatever one is interested in will stand after the preposition "بِ". However, the preposition "بِ" translated into Vietnamese means "bằng, bởi" (by, with). But Vietnamese people do not often say "quan tâm bằng" but usually say "quan tâm về" (interested about). Therefore, in the sentence above, the preposition accompanying the verb "quan tâm" in Vietnamese and Arabic are incompatible with each other.

3.2.3 Prepositions that can be translated or not translated

In some cases where prepositions accompany verbs or nouns, that preposition can be translated or not translated in Vietnamese, and in both cases, it does not affect the meaning of the sentence and both sound natural:

For example, in the sentence "إِلَى وَقْتٍ طَوِيلٍ لِلْبَحْثِ عَنْهَا", there are two prepositions "إِلَى" and "عَنْ". The preposition "إِلَى" accompanying the verb "يَحْتَاجُ" is translated in Vietnamese as "cần đến" and the preposition "عَنْ" accompanying the noun "بَحْثُ" is translated in Vietnamese as "tìm kiếm về". Thus, this whole sentence is translated into Vietnamese as "Anh ấy không cần đến thời gian dài để tìm kiếm về nó", this is the way to translate both prepositions accompanying the verb and the noun. If the prepositions accompanying the verb and noun are not translated, the sentence above will be translated as "Anh ấy không cần thời gian dài để tìm kiếm nó". Both of these translation methods can be accepted in Vietnamese and both sound natural.

Another example of the preposition being translated or not translated without affecting the meaning of the sentence and still sounding natural is the sentence "الْخَارِجِيَّةُ يَقْرَأُ بِعَنَاءٍ أَخْبَارَ الدَّوْلَةِ وَالسِّيَاسَةِ". In the sentence appears the preposition "بِ" (with/by) following the verb "يَقْرَأُ" (he reads). If translating the preposition "بِ" (with), the sentence above will be translated as "Anh ấy đọc những tin tức quốc gia và chính sách đối ngoại bằng sự cẩn thận". If the preposition "بِ" (with) is not translated, the sentence above will be translated as "Anh ấy đọc cẩn thận những tin tức quốc gia và chính sách đối ngoại". Thus, when translating the accompanying preposition or not translating the accompanying preposition in the above sentence, the meaning of the sentence is suitable in Vietnamese and both sound natural.

4 Discussion

The difference in the use of prepositions between Arabic and Vietnamese can be explained through the following three aspects:

Firstly: Differences in linguistic typology and syntactic function. In Arabic, some verbs must be accompanied by prepositions to link the verb with the object. If the preposition is missing, the sentence structure will be grammatically incorrect. While Vietnamese is an isolating language, sentence meaning is determined by the word order in that sentence. Therefore, when translating into Vietnamese, many Arabic prepositions

become redundant because the relationship between the action and the object has been clearly expressed through their position in the sentence.

Secondly: Vietnamese verbs often carry very specific descriptive properties; they include both the direction and method of action within. For example, when saying “lướt qua trang báo”, the verb “lướt qua” itself already includes the meaning of surface movement, so Vietnamese people do not need to add the preposition “trên” (على) as in Arabic. Meanwhile, Arabic verbs often have high generalizability, needing accompanying prepositions to orient the action.

Thirdly: Differences in visual imagery and relational logic. The “incompatible” case reveals how the two peoples perceive the world differently. Arabic often uses spatial logic (imagery); when you are “reassured about someone,” you place your concern “on top of” (على) them like a covering, a protection. However, Vietnamese people use relational logic (involvement): we use the preposition “về” (about) to define the scope of the emotion. Similarly, Arabic uses “by/with” (بِ) to indicate connection, while Vietnamese uses “đến” (to) to indicate the direction of the relationship.

5 Conclusion

The research confirms that the structure of prepositions accompanying verbs and nouns between Arabic and Vietnamese contains gaps in terms of typology and deep cognitive thinking. The translation of prepositions cannot be performed according to a mechanical 1:1 contrastive method, but the translator can master three principles:

Use correct prepositions with identical meanings: First, we need to recognize cases where prepositions in the two languages are used completely identically, especially the group indicating direction of movement (such as from and to). Using these pairs of words correctly helps the translation retain the original meaning

and correctly describes the direction of movement of the action as in the Arabic text.

Optimize naturalness through omission: In cases where Vietnamese verbs or nouns already include the meaning of direction or method within the verb (such as “lướt qua”, “giữ lại”), the translator needs to courageously omit the mandatory prepositions of Arabic. This not only helps the sentence flow, avoiding repetitive meaning errors but also helps the translated text sound natural.

Restructure prepositions according to the relational logic of Vietnamese: For cases of logical incompatibility, the research points out that the translator can convert the preposition based on the approach of the native speaker. Instead of keeping the visual imagery of Arabic, the translator needs to switch to the relational logic of Vietnamese so that the reader can easily receive the message in the most natural way.

In summary, the research results carry not only theoretical significance but also contribute a small part to practical significance in being able to somewhat limit language transfer errors during the process of learning and practicing Arabic translation.

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