Translating English Perfect Tenses into Arabic: A Comparative Study of Two Translations of Pearl Buck’s Novel ‘The Good Earth’

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0. Introduction:

This paper attempts to provide an approach to the translation of English perfect tenses into Standard Arabic based on a comparative study of two translations of Pearl Buck’s novel ‘The Good Earth’, namely those of Baalbaki (1988) and Iskandar (1999). It starts with a brief reference to Fayyad’s (1997) fourteen Arabic tenses which will be adopted for the structures used to translate English tenses. Then it explains the study aim and technique. After that, it presents an analysis of the results of the study by discussing the different renderings of the English perfect tenses in the two Arabic translations of the novel. For the phonemic symbols used to transcribe Arabic data, see the Appendix and for the symbols and abbreviations employed in the paper, see the Notes section.

1. Fayyad's Fourteen Arabic Tenses:

Tense is a "grammatical feature or category expressing a temporal relation between the event described by the verb and the moment of utterance" (Kerstens, Ruys & Zwarts 1996-2001). Aspect, on the other hand, is "a cover term for those properties of a sentence that constitute the temporal structure of the event denoted by the verb and its arguments" (Ibid). In English, tense and aspect categories combine to produce as much as sixteen different structures. There are four tense forms: present, past, future and future-in-the-past or conditional. Each tense has four aspectual references: simple, progressive, perfect and perfect progressive.

In Arabic, the fundamental differences between verbs are based on aspect rather than tense. As indicated by Wright (1967: I/51), there are two aspectual forms of the Arabic verb: “The temporal forms of the Arabic verb are but two in number, the one expressing a finished act, one that is done and completed in relation to other acts (the Perfect); the other an unfinished act, one that is just commencing..."
or in progress (the Imperfect).” Certain verbs such as /kaana/ ‘to be’ and certain particles like /qad/ ‘already’ combine with these two forms of the verb to convey various meanings. Thus, one of the major problems that face translators from English into Arabic is to identify the Arabic verb form and the verbs or particles that can combine with it in order to convey a particular English tense.

A widely-held and false assumption of students of Arabic is that Arabic verbs are confined to limited indications of past, present and future. This is not correct, as Fayyad (1997) illustrates. He combines tense and aspect to present the following fourteen Arabic tenses (translation is mine):

1. Simple Past, expressed by the perfect form of the verb,
2. Near Past, formed by /qad, laqad/ + perfect,
3. Distant Past, formed by /kaana/ /kaana qad/ or /qad kaana/ + perfect,
4. Progressive Past, formed by /Zalla/ or /kaana/ + imperfect,
5. Approaching Past, formed by /kaada/ or /?awšaka/ + (?an) + imperfect,
6. Futuristic Past, formed by /kaana/ + /sa/- + imperfect,
7. Simple Present, expressed by the imperfect form of the verb,
8. Progressive Present, formed by /ya-Zall-u/ + imperfect,
9. Approaching Present, by /ya-kaad-u/ or /yuŠik-u/ + (?an) + imperfect,
10. Commencing Present, formed by /?axað-a/, /šara9-a/, /ja9al-a/ or /?anša?-a/ + imperfect,
11. Progressive Composite, formed by /maa zaal-a/ or /laa ya-zaal-u/ + imperfect,
12. Near Future, formed by /sa/- + imperfect,
13. Distant Future, formed by /sawfå/ + imperfect, and

As will be shown in the analysis of the results (Section 3), two more tenses can be added to Fayyad’s (1997) list and some more structures can be added to the tenses in that list.

2. Study Aim & Technique:

This study aims at comparing two translations of Pearl Buck’s novel ‘The Good Earth’ to find out how English perfect tenses are rendered into Arabic. One translation is that of Munir Baalbaki (1988) and the other is that of Ibrahim Iskandar (1999). The Good Earth has been chosen as a source language (SL) text because it won Buck the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1932 and the Nobel Prize for literature in 1938. The two translations analyzed as receptor language (RL) texts have been selected because Baalbaki’s translation is the only complete translation of
that novel and Iskandar’s translation is the biggest of all other translations.

The study compares the two translations to analyze the various Arabic translations of English perfect tenses. A corpus of 215 sentences has been randomly selected from the SL text, together with their translations in the RL texts. The sentences chosen from the SL text are then sorted into five groups:
- 100 sentences represent the present perfect tense,
- 100 sentences represent the past perfect tense,
- 2 sentences represent the future perfect tense,
- 2 sentences represent the present perfect progressive, and
- 11 sentences represent the past perfect progressive.

No sentences represent the future perfect progressive because no examples of this tense are found in the SL text. The reason for the small number of sentences representing the future perfect, present perfect progressive and past perfect progressive is their infrequency in the SL text and/or the nonexistence of the translations of sentences representing them in the second RL text, i.e. Iskandar's (1999).

The two translations of all the sentences are compared and analyzed in terms of syntactic and semantic features. A frequency count of the various translations of English perfect tenses and their percentages is performed to explain the ways in which these tenses are rendered into Arabic. Then, the contextual reference of each translation is studied and accounted for. Moreover, differences between translations of the same structures are explained with attempts to understand the reasons behind them.

The method utilized for the comparison of the Arabic RL texts with each other and with the English SL text is the “parallel reading technique” used by Lindquist (1989: 23) who asserts that: “the most natural way of analyzing or evaluating a translation is to read the SL text in parallel with the TL text, noting anything that is remarkable, and then to list deficiencies (or felicities) of all kinds.” The names of Arabic tenses proposed by Fayyad (1997) will be adopted for the structures used to translate English tenses.

3. Analysis of the Results:
3.1. Translating English Present Perfect into Arabic:

As illustrated in Table (1), one third of the Arabic translations of the English present perfect are in the near past tense, formed by /qad, laqad/ ‘already’ followed by the perfect form of the verb. Examination of the corpus reveals that this translation is used for the basic meaning of the present perfect, i.e. expressing a past action that is connected, through its result, with the moment of speaking. It is also used when
Table (1)
Frequency of Arabic Translations of
English Present Perfect in the Two RL Texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arabic Translation</th>
<th>Baalbaki</th>
<th>Iskandar</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1- Near Past</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>33.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2- Simple Past</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>28.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3- Neg. Simple Present</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4- Simple Present</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5- Progressive Past</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6- Distant Past</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7- Nominal Sentence</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

that tense expresses the repetition of an activity before now. Past actions connected with the present are exemplified by (1) and repeated actions are illustrated by (2):

(1) a. You have bought the land from the great house. (Buck 63)
   b. lagad ištaray-ta l-?arD-a mina l-?usrat-i l-kabiirah. (Blbk 59)
   c. wa-qad ištaray-ta ?arD-an min ?aal-i l-bayt-i l-kabiir. (Iskn 64)

(2) a. There have been worse days. (Buck 78)
   b. lagad 9araf-naa min qabl ?ayyaam-an ?aswa?. (Blbk 71)
   c. lagad kaan-at hunaaka ?awqaat-un šarr-an min haadhihi l-?awqaat. (Iskn 76)

The present perfect can also be employed to refer to completed activities in the immediate past. To render it into Arabic, the near past tense is also used, as in (3):

(3) a. I have planted the seeds in the western field today. (Buck 31)
   b. lagad nadrar-tu l-bidār-a l-yawma fi l-kaql-i l-garbīyy. (Blbk 34)
   c. lagad zara?-tu l-hubub-fi l-kaql-i l-garbīyy l-yawm. (Iskn 38)

Table (1) shows that the second Arabic structure utilized to translate the English present perfect is the simple past, formed by the bare perfect form. The data reveals that this translation is employed when that English tense conveys a connection between past and present, as in (4), or a repetition of an activity before the moment of speaking, as in (5):

(4) a. Has he come for the woman? (Buck 16)
   b. hal ?aqbal-a ?iltimaas-an li-l-mar?ah. (Blbk 21)
   c. hal jaa?-a fii Talab-i l-mar?ah. (Iskn 25)

(5) a. How you have eaten! (Buck 84)
   b. maa ?akdar-a maa ?akal-ta. (Blbk 77)
   c. maa ?aTyab-a maa ?akal-ta. (Iskn 81)
One must notice here that the near past and the simple past are interchangeable for the translation of the English present perfect when it expresses a connection between past and present and when it shows repeated past actions. Thus, one translator may use one tense and the other may use the other tense, as in (6) for the connection between past and present and in (7) for repeated actions:

(6) a. Here we have eaten the beasts. (Buck 78)
   b. nahnu hunaa ?akal-naa l-bahaa?im. (Blbk 72)
   c. nahnu hunaa qad ?akal-naa d-dawaab. (Iskn 76)

(7) a. We have seen such boxes and boxes. (Buck 130)
   b. laqad ra?ay-naaq ?aalaaf-an wa?-aalaaf-an mina S-Sanaadiiq. (Blbk 116)
   c. ra?ay-naaq Sanaadiiq-a haa?ilah. (Iskn 120)

As revealed by Table (1), there is a complete agreement between the two translators in the translation of the English negative present perfect. Both of them use the Arabic negative simple present, formed by the negative particle /lam/ 'not' + the imperfect form of the verb in the jussive. Defining the jussive as one of the moods of the imperfect, Haywood & Nahmad (1982: 129) state that it may be used after /lam/ "to deny a statement. When so used it gives the verb the meaning of the Perfect."

(8) a. I have never tasted a sweet cake. (Buck 130)
   b. ?ana lam ?a-duq qaTTu min qabl?u qurS-a kalwaa. (Blbk 116)
   c. ?inna-nii lam ?a-duq ?ayya ka9kah. (Iskn 121)

Table (1) indicates that a small number of examples representing English present perfect are translated into Arabic by the simple present tense, formed by the bare imperfect form. Careful examination of the data shows that this translation is resorted to when the English present perfect expresses past experience, as in (9) and when it is used in a subordinate clause to stress the completion of an action in the future before another action occurs in the future, as in (10):

(9) a. It is the first time I have had silver money in my hand. (Buck 34)
   b. li?-awwal-i marrat-in ta-nDamm-u ?uSaabi9-u yad-ii 9ala naqd-in fiDDiy. (Blbk 37)
   c. haaðhi ?awwal-u marrat-in ta-qbiD-u fii-haa yad-ii 9ala 9umlat-in fiDDiyah. (Iskn 42)

(10) a. When the young lords have their affairs settled in other parts, they will come back. (Buck 155)
A few rare cases of English present perfect structures are rendered into Arabic by the progressive past tense, formed by /Zalla/ or /kaana/ + imperfect'. This translation is used when the present perfect stresses the continuity of an action for some past time until the moment of speaking:

(11) a. So have I wished for these last two years. (Buck 162)
   b. ḍaalika maa kun-tu ?a-tamanna-hu fi s-sanat-ayni l-ʔaxiirat-ayn. (Blbk 144)
   c. ḥaadā maa kun-tu ?a-tamanna-hu Tuula s-sanat-ayni l-ʔaxiirat-ayn. (Iskn 144)

Fewer still are those English present perfect examples translated into Arabic by the distant past tense, formed by /kaana/ + /qad/ + perfect. This is resorted to when the present perfect stresses the completion of a past action, as in:

(12) a. If I have paid my penny… (Buck 99)
   b. ṭiḍaa kun-tu qaḍ dafa9-tu ṭaman-a l-ʔurz-i. (Blbk 89)
   c. maa-dum-tu3 qaḍ dafa9-tu ḍ-dirham. (Iskn 92)

The least number of English present perfect examples are rendered into Arabic by using nominal or equative sentences. This translation is used for circumstantial clauses by Iskandar (1999) only. Baalbaki (1988) uses the near past tense, formed by ‘/laqad/ + perfect’, instead:

(13) a. Since those two last ones were born together I have not been well. (Buck 168)
   b. laqad saa?-at ḥaal-ii munḍu wulid-a ḥaadāani T-Tifl-aani l-ʔaxiir-aan ma9an. (Blbk 149)
   c. munḍu walad-tu T-Tifl-ayni l-ʔaxiir-ayni wa-Sihkaat-ii lays-at 9ala maa yu-raam. (Iskn 147)

3.2. Translating English Past Perfect into Arabic:

Table (2) illustrates that nearly half of the translations of the English past perfect are in the Arabic simple past tense. This translation is adopted mainly when the English past perfect occurs in a subordinate clause and the main clause refers to past time, as in (14):

(14) a. He thought of the hundred courts he had come through. (Buck 19)
   b. fakkar-ā fi l-ʔarwiqat-i l-mi?at-i llati jtaaz-a-haa. (Blbk 24)
   c. taḍakkar-ā huwa kaṭrat-a l-guraf-i llati marr-a bi-haa. (Iskn 28)
Table (2)
Frequency of Arabic Translations of English Past Perfect in the Two RL texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arabic Translation</th>
<th>Baalbaki</th>
<th>Iskandar</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1- Simple Past</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>46 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2- Distant Past</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>19 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3- Neg. Simple Present</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4- Near Past</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5- Progressive Past</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6- Verbal Noun</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7- Subjunctive Verb</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8- Simple Present</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9- Neg. Distant Past</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10- Progressive Future</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>200</strong></td>
<td><strong>100 %</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

About one fifth of the translations of the English past perfect are in the Arabic distant past tense, formed by /kaana/ + /qad/ + perfect. This is used when the past perfect expresses an activity that was completed before another activity or time in the past. This is the usual function of this tense in English, according to Azar (1989: 39).

(15) a. He added a fourth piece which he had long kept by him. (Buck 34)
   b. ?aDaaf-a ?ilay-haa qiT9at-an raabi9at-an kaan-a qad ihtafaZ-a bi-haa munou 9ahd-in Tawiil. (Blbk 36)
   c. ?aDaaf-a ?ilay-haa qiT9at-an raabi9at-an kaan-a qad iddaxar-a-haa Tawiil-an. (Iskn 42)

Most of the examples representing English negative past perfect are translated into Arabic using the negative simple present:
(16) a. He had never been in a great house before. (Buck 11)
   b. ?inna-hu lam ya-dxul bayt-an kabiir-an qaTTu qabla l-yawm. (Blbk 17)
   c. ?inna-hu lam ya-dxul qaTTu bayt-an kabiir-an min qablu. (Iskn 21)

However, in very few cases the English negative past perfect is rendered into Arabic by the negative distant past:
(17) a. He had not yet told his father. (Buck 7)
   b. lam ya-kun qad ?axbar-a ?aba-hu ba9d. (Blbk 12)
   c. lam ya-kun qad ?anba?qa-waalid-a-hu ba9d. (Iskn 17)

In one example, Baalbaki (1988) uses the negative simple present whereas Iskandar (1999) uses the negative distant past for the translation of the English negative past perfect, which shows that both Arabic tenses are interchangeable in this case:
a. He had never heard so many words from her before. (Buck 33)

About one tenth of the Arabic translations of the English past perfect are in the near past tense. This translation is adopted when the reference is to an activity or state that was completed in the past, but near the present time. However, there is no agreement between the two translators on this translation. Where one uses the near past, the other uses the simple past or another past tense.

a. It seemed to him he had gone through a hundred courts. (Buck 14)
b. badaa la-hu ?anna-hu qad ijtaaz-a mi?at-a ruwaaq-in. (Blbk 20)

The Arabic progressive past follows the near past in the translation of the English past perfect. This translation is employed when the past perfect refers to an action that continued for some time in the past before being completed. However, Iskandar (1999) uses it more often than does Baalbaki (1988):

a. It had been like taking a piece of his life and giving it to someone. (Buck 35)
b. kaan-a ya-sta?9ir-u wa-ka?anna-hu ya-ntazi9-u qi9at-an min kayaat-i-hi wa-yu-qaddim-u-haa ?ilay-h. (Blbk 37)
c. kaan-a ya-99ur-u ka?anna-hu ya-b?ul-u qi9at-an min kayaat-i-h. (Iskn 42)

Some of the examples representing the English past perfect are rendered into Arabic by the verbal noun, as in (21b) or the subjunctive verb, as in (21c). By the verbal noun, I mean one that is derived from a verb to signify the process expressed by that verb without reference to time. It is approximately like the gerund in English. The subjunctive refers to an imperfect verb preceded by one of the subjunctive particles /?an/ ‘to’, /?an/ ‘not’, /li-, kay, likay/ ‘in order that’ and /?atta?/ ‘until’. The complementizer /?an/ is called by the Arab grammarians (e.g. Wright 1967: II/26) /?an ?al-maSdariyyah/ which, together with its following verb, has the equivalent meaning of the verbal noun of that verb. These translations are adopted for the past perfect in a subordinate clause whose superordinate clause includes a past simple verb. However, although the two translations are interchangeable in meaning the data analysis shows that the verbal noun is a little more common. (See Table (2)): 
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(21) a. She did not rest herself until the ox had been fed. (Buck 28)
   b. lam ta-frug ?ila r-raaḥat-i ?illaā ba9da ?it9aam-i θ-θawr. (Blbk 31)
      θ-θawr. (Iskn 36)

A few number of the examples representing the English past perfect are translated by the Arabic simple present tense. Data analysis also shows that this translation is used when the past perfect is found in a subordinate clause whose superordinate clause has a past simple verb:

(22) a. It was the first time he had mentioned the house from which she came. (Buck 33)
   b. kaan-at haāoiihi ?awwal-u marrat-in ya-ḥkar-u fiī-haa l-bayt-a
      l-kabīr-a munū du jaa?-at min-hu. (Iskn 40)

In one example from Iskandar (1999) the English past perfect is translated into Arabic by the structure ‘/sa-/ + /ya-kuun/ + imperfect’ which is not mentioned by Fayyad (1997) but can be added to the structures representing his progressive future tense. Compare:

(23) a. She had first seen the child thus clothed. (Buck 35)
   b. kaan-at hiya ?awwal-a man ra?aa l-walad-a maksuuw-an 9ala
      haāa a n-kaakh. (Blbk 37)
   c. sa-ta-kuun-u ?awwal-a man ya-raa T-Tifl-a murtadiy-an tilka
      θ-θiyaab. (Iskn 43)

Careful investigation of the context in which this example occurs in the SL text shows that Baalbaki’s (1988) translation is better than that of Iskandar (1999). Before the example is stated, O-lan, the heroine of the novel, told her husband how she had imagined the way her child would be dressed when she took him to the great house in the following year. The example shows how Wang Lung thought of the way his wife had imagined their child wearing such and such clothes. So, the meaning of the verb ‘seen’ in the example is ‘imagined’ or ‘thought’. For that reason the distant past in Baalbaki’s translation is more suitable than the progressive future in Iskandar’s translation.

3.3. Translating English Future Perfect into Arabic:

The basic meaning of the future perfect is to show that an activity will be completed before another time or event in the future (Azar 1989: 53). This is expressed in Arabic by the perfect future tense, formed by the imperfect or future of /kaa-
na/, i.e. \((sa-)ya-kuun/ + the perfect form of the main verb with or without /qad/ ‘already’ between them. This tense is not provided by Fayyad (1997) but it can be added to his list of tenses, as number (15), to signify an activity that will be completed before another time or event in the future. Consider the following example which is not in the corpus:

(24) a. By 2020, man will have landed on Mars.
   b. qabla ?alf-ayn wa-9išriin (sa-)ya-kuun-u l-?insulaan-u (qad) habaT-a 9ala l-marriix.

Only two examples of the English future perfect occur in the SL text. The first is translated by the Arabic subjunctive verb in both RL texts:

(25) a. Only wait until tomorrow… I shall have given birth by then.
   (Buck 80)
   c. fa-l-na-ntaZir hatta l-gاد-i likay ?a-Da9-a haml-ii. (Iskn 77)

The second example representing the English future perfect is translated into Arabic by the near future in Baalbaki (1988) and by the near past, after changing it to reported speech, in Iskandar (1999). Compare:

(26) a. Tell your young lord that … (on the third day from now) I will have feasts prepared. (Buck 260)
   b. quلل l-
   i-s-sayyid-i S-Sagalir-i ?inin-ii sa-?u-qim-u l-ma?aadib. (Blbk 224)
   c. wa-kallaf-a daalika r-rasul-a ?an yu-nbi?-a walad-a-hu bi-?anna-hu gاد \(a9add-a/ waliimat-a l-9urs. (Iskn 186)

A closer look at the context of the two translations in (26) shows that Baalbaki’s (1988) translation is more accurate than Iskandar’s (1999) translation. Wang Lung is ordering one of his servants to go to the south and inform his son that in three days he will have the preparations of his wedding done. Although Iskandar changed the sentence to reported speech, he did not use the perfect future \(sa-yakuunu qad \(a9add-a/ but he used the near past \(qad \(a9add-a/. The fact of the matter is that at the time of speaking the feasts had not been prepared yet. So, the use of the near future by Baalbaki (1988) is more appropriate.

3.4. Translating English Present Perfect Progressive into Arabic:

According to Azar (1989: 36), the basic meaning of the present perfect progressive is to “indicate the duration of an activity that began in the past and continues to the
present”. This meaning can be expressed in Arabic by the active participle form, as in (27b) or the progressive composite tense, formed by the quasi-auxiliary verb /maa zaal-a/ ‘be still’ + the imperfect, as in (28b). In addition, a structure that is not stated by Fayyad (1997) but can be added to his progressive composite tense structures is ‘/maa zaal-a/ + active participle’, as in (29b):

(27) a. I have been sitting here since nine o’clock.
   b. ?anaa jaalis-un hunaa munðu s-saa9at-i t-taasi9ah.

(28) a. It has been raining since the morning.
   b. maa zaal-at tu-mTir-u munðu S-Sabaak.

(29) a. They have been sleeping since ten o’clock.
   b. maa zaal-uu naa?im-iina munðu s-saa9at-i l-9aaširah.

Two examples in the corpus represent the English present perfect progressive tense. The RL writers agree on the translation of one and disagree on the translation of the other. In the following example, both translators render the English present perfect progressive using the Arabic structure ‘/kaana/ + active participle’ in (30b-c). This structure is not given by Fayyad (1997) but it can be added to his progressive past tense structures. Nevertheless, the progressive composite, as in (30d), would have been more suitable since the English example in (30a) stresses the duration of an action that began in the past and continues up to the present.

(30) a. I have been sitting here like a man with his own first son coming.

   (Buck 301)
   b. kun-tu jaalis-an hunaa miθla rajul-in ya-ntaZir-u mawlid-a
      ?ibn-i-hi l-bikr. (Blbk 256)
   c. kun-tu jaalis-an hunaa qaliq-an ka-man yuulad-u la-hu ?awwal-u
      walad. (Iskn 204)
   d. maa zil-tu ?a-jlis-u hunaa miθla rajul-in ya-ntaZir-u mawlid-a
      ?ibn-i-hi l-bikr.

To translate the second example, Baalbaki (1988) uses the Arabic simple present, as in (31b). But in (31c), Iskandar (1999) uses the structure ‘/laqad/ + /kaana/ + imperfect’ which is not discussed by Fayyad (1997) but can be added to his structures representing the progressive past tense. Nevertheless, the progressive composite, as in (31d), would have been better because the English example in (31a) emphasizes the continuity of a past action that extends to the present moment.

(31) a. He has been dragging a crop out of it this way and that for twenty years. (Buck 52)
   b. fa-munðu 9išriina 9aam-an wa-huwa ya-ntazi9-u l-makSuul-a
      ntiza9-an bi-Tariiqat-in ?aw bi-?uxraa. (Blbk 51)
c. *laqad kaan-a ya-stamidd-u min-ha l-makSuul-a Tuula l-9išriina sanat-an il-maaDiyah.* (Iskn 57)

### 3.5. Translating English Past Perfect Progressive into Arabic:

The English past perfect progressive emphasizes the duration of an activity that was in progress before another activity or time in the past. As revealed in Table (3), half of the translations of this tense are in the Arabic progressive past. The following example is translated by Baalbaki (1988) using the structure ‘*kaana/ + active participle*’ and by Iskandar (1999) using the structure ‘*kaana/ + imperfect*’:

(32) a. He had for a long time been desiring this child to sleep in his bed.  
   (Buck 57)
c. *kaan-a ya-rjuu min zamaan-in ba9iid-in ?an ya-naam-a haadga T-Tifl-u ma9a-hu fii sariir-i-h.* (Iskn 60)

Immediately after the Arabic progressive past comes the simple present for the translation of English past perfect progressive. This is used when that English tense occurs in a subordinate clause, whose superordinate clause is also past:

(33) a. When she had been working in the fields beside him (she had been planning all this out.)  (Buck 33)
b. *wa-hiya ta-9mal-u ?ila jaanib-i-hi fi l-kuquul.* (Blbk 36 & Iskn 41)

The Arabic near past, formed by ‘*qaad, laqad/ + perfect*’, is used to translate one tenth of the examples representing the English past perfect progressive. For the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arabic Translation</th>
<th>Baalbaki</th>
<th>Iskandar</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
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<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>3- Near Past</td>
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<td>--</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>4- Distant Past</td>
<td>--</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>10 %</td>
</tr>
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<td>5- Simple Past</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6- Perfect Prog. Past</td>
<td>--</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
following example, Iskandar’s (1999) use of the progressive past, formed by /kaana/ + imperfect, is more suitable than Baalbaki’s (1988) use of the near past. That is because the English example in (34a) stresses the continuity of a past action before another action. O-lan had been planning many things for the good appearance of her baby before it was born.

(34) a. She had been planning all this out! (Buck 33)
   b. laqad waDa9-at haadoihin la-xuTTat-a kull-a-haa. (Blbk 36)
   c. kaan-at tu-dabbir-u-hu. (Iskn 41)

Also, the Arabic distant past, formed by /kaana/ /qad/, /kaana qad/ or /qad kaana/ + perfect, is adopted for the translation of one tenth of the examples representing the English past perfect progressive. For the following example, Baalbaki (1988) uses the structure ‘/kaana/ + active participle’ which is not stated in Fayyad (1997) but can be added to his structures representing the Arabic progressive past. This is better than Iskandar’s (1999) use of the distant past because the English example in (35a) describes the condition of a rich man just before Wang Lung came upon him:

(35) a. He had been lying naked in his bed. (Buck 136)
   b. kaan-a muDTaji9-an 9aariy-a l-jism-i fii sariir-i-h. (Blbk 123)
   c. kaan-a qad naam-a 9aariy-a l-jism-i fii sariir-i-h. (Iskn 126)

Furthermore, the Arabic simple past is utilized for the translation of one tenth of the examples representing the English past perfect progressive. In the following example, Baalbaki’s (1988) use of the progressive past is better than Iskandar’s (1999) use of the simple past. This is due to the fact that the English example in (36a) stresses the continuity of a past action that was cut by another action. The slave had been tending the pipe for the old lady when the latter caught it:

(36) a. Her hand closed upon the pipe which a slave had been tending for her. (Buck 16)
   b. yad-u-haa ?aTbaq-at 9ala l-galyyun-i llaodii kaan-at ika <i>da l-jawaarii ta-ta9ahhad-u-h bi-9inaayat-i-haa. (Blbk 21)

For the rendering of the English past perfect progressive, one example in Iskandar’s (1999) translation uses the Arabic perfect progressive past, formed by ‘/kaana/ + /qad/ + /Zalla/ + imperfect.’ This tense is not provided by Fayyad (1997) but it can be added to his list of tenses, as number (16), to stress the duration of a completed past action:
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(37) a. This earth they had been eating in water for some days. (Buck 84)
   b. kaan-uu qad Zall-uu munðu ?ayyaam-in ya-?kul-uuna haada
   T-Tiin-a mamzunj-an bi-l-maa?. (Iskn 81)

3.6. Translating English Future Perfect Progressive into Arabic:

The future perfect progressive emphasizes the duration of an activity that
will be in progress before another event or time in the future. This meaning
should be rendered in Arabic by the perfect future tense, formed by the
construction: (/sa/- ‘will’) + /ya-kuun/ ‘be’ + (/qad/- ‘already’) + the perfect
form of the verb. It can be noticed here that /sa/- indicates the future, the
imperfect /ya-kuun/ signifies the continuation of the action and ‘/qad/- +
perfect’ implies the perfection of the action. No examples of English future
perfect progressive are found in the corpus. However, one can compare the
English sentence in (37a) and its Arabic translation equivalent in (37b):
(37) a. I’ll be tired because I’ll have been driving all night.
   b. sa-?a-kuun-u mut9ab-an li?ann-ii (sa-)a-kuun-u (qad) qud-tu
      (s-sayyaarat-a) Tawaala l-layl.

4. Conclusion:

This paper provides an approach to the translation of English perfect tenses
by comparing their various Arabic translations in two translations of Pearl
Buck’s (1958) novel ‘The Good Earth’: that of Baalbaki (1988) and that of
Iskandar (1999). Fayyad’s (1997) fourteen tenses were adopted for the
structures used in translating English tenses. In the analysis, it was
discovered that two more tenses can be added to his list of tenses given in
Section (1) above:
15. Perfect Future, formed by ‘/(sa-)ya-kuun/ + (/qad/) + perfect’ and
    imperfect.’

Moreover, I added some structures to those representing Fayyad’s (1997)
tenses. To the progressive past, I added the structures ‘/laqad/ + /kaana/ +
imperfect’ and ‘/kaana/ + active participle’. To the progressive composite,
I added the structure ‘/maa zaal-a/ + active participle’. And to the
progressive future, I added the structure ‘/sa/- + /ya-kuun / + imperfect’.
Furthermore, three forms not discussed by Fayyad (1997) were adopted in
this study: the active participle, the verbal noun and the subjunctive verb.
According to the approach developed in this study, the Arabic translation equivalents of the six English perfect tenses and the contextual references of each translation are presented below.

First, the English **present perfect** can have the following Arabic translations in order of frequency:

1. Near past for past actions connected with the present, repeated past actions and completed activities in the immediate past,
2. Simple past for the connection between past and present and for the repetition of a past activity,
3. Negative simple present for the English negative present perfect,
4. Simple present for past experience and for the completion of an action before another in the future,
5. Progressive past for past actions continuing to the present moment,
6. Distant past for completed past actions, and
7. Nominal sentence for circumstantial meanings.

Second, the English **past perfect** can have the following Arabic translations in order of frequency:

1. Simple past for subordinate clauses whose main clause has a past reference,
2. Distant past for actions completed before other actions in the past,
3. Negative simple present for English negative past perfect,
4. Near past for actions completed in the immediate past,
5. Progressive past for continuous past actions,
6. Verbal noun for subordinate clauses whose superordinate clauses include a past simple verb,
7. Subjunctive verb for subordinate clauses whose superordinate clauses include a past simple verb,
8. Simple present for subordinate clauses whose superordinate clauses include a past simple verb,
9. Negative distant past for a few cases of English negative past perfect,

Third, the English **future perfect** can have the following Arabic translations:

1. Perfect future for actions completed before other actions or times in the future,
2. Subjunctive verb for the subjunctive mood,
3. Near future for future actions, and
4. Near past for future actions in reported speech.
Fourth, the English **present perfect progressive** can have the following Arabic translations:
1. Progressive composite for the duration of actions that began in the past and continue up to the present,
2. Progressive past for continuous past actions, and
3. Simple present for circumstantial clauses.

Fifth, the English **past perfect progressive** can have the following Arabic translations:
1. Progressive past for continuous past actions,
2. Simple present for subordinate clauses,
3. Near past for past actions completed near the present moment,
4. Distant past for actions completed before other past actions,
5. Simple past for past actions, and
6. Perfect progressive past for the duration of completed past actions.

Finally, the English **future perfect progressive** can be translated into Arabic by the perfect future tense to express the duration of completed future actions.

**Notes**

1 These symbols and abbreviations are employed in the paper:
   - /   / phonemic transcription
   -    morpheme boundary
   SL   Source Language
   Blbk Baalbaki (1988)
   RL   Receptor Language
   Iskn Iskandar (1999)

2 The Arabic quasi-auxiliary verb /maa daam-al/ ‘as long as’ is one of the sisters of /kaan-a/ ‘be’.

3 The word /tawwaaq/ ‘desiring’ with the form [Fa99aaL] is one of the intensive adjectival forms that resemble the active participle in meaning and are termed in Arabic /?al-?asmaa?-u l-mušaabihat-u li-?ism-i  l-faa9il/ ‘nouns resembling the active participle’ (Haywood & Nahmad 1982: 351).
### Appendix

#### A. Consonants of Standard Arabic

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#### B. Vowels of Standard Arabic

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Abstract

This paper proposes a model for translating English perfect tenses into Arabic based on a comparative study of two translations of Pearl Buck’s novel ‘The Good Earth’, namely those of Baalbaki (1988) and Iskandar (1999). It starts with a brief reference to Fayyad's (1997) fourteen Arabic tenses which will be adopted for the structures used to translate English tenses. Then it explains the study aim and technique. After that, it presents an analysis of the study results by discussing the different renderings of the English perfect tenses in the two target texts. A corpus of 215 sentences has been randomly selected from the source text, together with their translations in the target texts. The two translations of all the sentences are compared and analyzed in terms of syntactic and semantic features. The various Arabic translations of the English perfect tenses are presented with a count of the examples representing them in the corpus and their percentages. Then, the contextual reference of each translation is studied and accounted for.
Résumé:

Cet article propose un modèle pour traduire les passés composés anglais en arabe basé sur une étude comparative de deux traductions du roman de Pearl Buck 'The Good Earth'. Il commence par une brève introduction sur le temps et l'aspect en anglais et en arabe. Puis il explique le but et la technique de l'étude. Ensuite, il présente une analyse des résultats de l'étude en discutant des différentes traductions des passés composés anglais dans les deux textes d'arrivée.

Un corpus de 215 phrases a été choisi au hasard dans les texte de départ, ainsi que leurs traductions dans les textes d'arrivée. Les deux traductions de toutes les phrases sont comparées et analysées en termes de dispositifs syntaxiques et sémantiques. Les différentes traductions arabes des passés composés anglais sont présentées avec un décompte des exemples qui les représentant dans le corpus et leurs pourcentages. Puis, la référence contextuelle de chaque traduction est étudiée et expliquée.

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