MEDIA & COMMUNICATION STUDIES | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Translating immigration in the multicultural and multilingual United States of America

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Abstract: As part of its civic integration of new immigrants into the American society, the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) published a guide for new immigrants in English and its translations in 14 languages. This paper analyzes USCIS’s English publication titled Welcome to the United States: A Guide for New Immigrants and its Arabic official translation titled مرحبا بك في الولايات المتحدة: دليل المهاجرين الجديد. The purpose of this paper is to identify any potential

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Thousands of Arabic-speaking immigrants arrive to the United States every year. The majority of these immigrants speak no to little English. In understanding official communications, Arab immigrants rely on the Arabic translations provided by the United States government. Any mistranslation may lead to misunderstanding thus leading new immigrants to violate the U.S. official instructions which may in turn lead to delays, fines, jail, or deprivation of privileges. Therefore, this article comes to ensure an Arabic translation free from problems. The article reports on the translation problems found in the Arabic translation of the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) guide Welcome to the United States: A Guide for New Immigrants. The article does not only offer solutions to overcome the translation problems found in the Arabic translation, but also a detailed socio-cultural background that would benefit the U.S. officials and society in their cross-cultural communications with the Arabic-speaking community.
translation problems and its impact on the linguistic comprehensibility and the reading experience. Due to the linguistic and cultural differences between English and Arabic, a number of problems are found in the Arabic translation. These problems are categorized under pragmatic, convention-related, linguistic, and text-specific translation problems. The most frequent problems found are linguistic translation problems, particularly semantics and lexical choices. The findings suggest that pragmatic, convention-related, linguistic, and text-specific problems may partially distort the message of the original text, hence contribute to the ambiguity when read by the Arabic-speaking new immigrant to the United States. It is therefore suggested that the Arabic USCIS Guide for New Immigrants needs to be edited by a native professional editor.

Subjects: Intercultural Communication; Bilingualism & Multilingualism; Translation & Interpretation; Language & Communication; Arabic; including dialects

Keywords: immigrants; translation; Arab-Americans; multilingual; cross-cultural communication; USCIS

1. Introduction

The United States of America is a unique multicultural and multilingual immigrant society. While the United States has been a multicultural society for hundreds of years to immigrants from Europe, Africa and Asia, the concept of multiculturalism only started to be incorporated in the political discourse in 1960s as an uprising against the oppression of the monoculture (Goldberg, 1995, I-6). The definition and structure of the multiculturalism of the Unites States are informed and shaped by civil rights movements and advocacy groups as well as the understanding of citizenship and society assimilation. Therefore, we acknowledge the state of multiculturalism in the United States without a clear-cut definition of the term since it is subject to changing factors across times. Rubin and Verheul explain:

Originally mostly used to describe accommodating policy directives that attempted to cope with cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity in traditional immigration countries such as Canada, Australia, and the United States, the term multiculturalism became widely used in many different discourses where it was assigned a variety of meanings. (2009, 8)

The adoption of the notion of multiculturalism paved the way to the adoption of the notion of multilingualism, recognizing the minority communities that constitute the overall structure of a multicultural society of the United States (Goldberg, 2015). This recognition of minority languages speeds the assimilation of immigrants. It also helps these immigrants better understand the U.S. official discourse and the values of the American society (Joppke & Morawska, 2003).

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2019) estimation, the current foreign-born (immigrants) population in the U.S. is 44,932,901. Those foreign-born came from Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America. While 26.3% of the foreign-born population of 25 years and over (39,553,892 people) are less than high school graduate, only 18.5% have bachelor’s degree. Moreover, among the 44,634,617 foreign-born of 5 years and over merely 16% speak English only at home. This means that 84% speak a language other than English at home. The report also estimates that 46.4% of the foreign-born speak English less than “very well”. It also found that 24.2% of the foreign-born households are limited English speaking households. These foreign-born work in most industries in the U.S. and serve different capacities. Accordingly, these figures capture the necessity of multilingual resources of official communications, in the face of those groups that advocating to grant English the status of the sole official language of the United States of America.
In this paper, we study the official Arabic translation of the USCIS English guide for new immigrants. The focus of this study is built around the questions of linguistic comprehensibility and intercultural communication. The justification of this research is realized in the understanding of translation as a salient tool for analyzing immigrants and immigration in multilingual societies. It unveils power relations in the “linguistic and discursive sphere that shape the process of ‘making’ migrants” (Bachmann-Medick, 2018, p. 273). It is also a site for negotiation between immigrants’ self-representation and official labeling. Therefore, any mistranslation in the communications for and involving immigrants is significant and frequent, and adds a layer of complexity, as established in the literature (Augustine-Adams & Nunez, 2021) and discussed under section 2 Literature Review. In addition, there is a gap in literature in studying official communications and translations for the Arabic-speaking immigrant community in the United States. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study that examines the U.S. official translation from English into Arabic, as we discuss under section 3 Research Methodology. We start this paper with a brief introduction on the USCIS and the Arab immigrants to the United States. We then review the literature on official translations and translations in culturally and linguistically diverse societies. After that, we elaborate on our research data collection and data analysis procedures. We then move to offer an exhaustive analysis of the research data, providing several examples. After that, we discuss our research findings in a holistic approach as well as in relation to the literature. Finally, we draw conclusions that summarize the main research aspects and findings.

1.1. The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)

The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is an agency that operates under the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) of the federal government of the United States of America. It was established in 1891 under the Treasury Department (USCIS website). It underwent several reforms, leading to its current form in March 2003 which was triggered by the 9/11 event. It aims to oversee immigration and naturalization processes. USCIS provides services such as citizenship (includes the related naturalization process), immigration of family members of the current permanent residents and U.S. citizens, employment visas in the U.S., verification of an individual’s legal right to work in the United States (E-Verify), humanitarian programs to individuals inside and outside the United States who flee wars or at risk of torture and death, adoption of children from other countries by U.S. citizens, civic integration of new immigrants into the American society through training and guidance, and genealogy that offers researchers with “timely access to historical immigration and naturalization records of deceased immigrants” (USCIS website).

The USCIS website offers various guides and publications related to numerous topics. Several of these publications and information are translated into other languages. USCIS website is offered fully in Spanish. Translations of certain information and documents to other languages are found under its Multilingual Resource Center. These translations are offered in 21 languages. These languages are Amharic, Arabic, Armenian, American Sign Language (ASL), Chinese, French, Haitian, Hindi, Indonesian, Italian, Kiswahili, Korean, Nepali, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Somali, Tagalog, Ukrainian, Urdu and Vietnamese.

It is also worth noting that a publication may be translated to a language but not another. We assume that USCIS determines the translation of a particular topic to a certain language but not another based on the target language immigrant community needs. For example, the Arabic translations section offers an Arabic translation of the English Information Guide for Prospective Asylum Applicants under the title, which wrongly translates the English “prospective” into the Arabic “political”, دليل المعلومات لمقدمي طلبات اللجوء السياسي (Information Guide for Political Asylum Applicants), the Tagalog translations section does not offer a translation to this guide. Instead, the Tagalog translations section offers a translation of the English guide Report Labor Abuse under the title Iulat ang Abuso sa Pagtatrabaho that is not offered in the Arabic translations.
1.2. Arab immigrants to the U.S
In recent years, the Arab-immigrants community has been growing rapidly in the United States. It is mainly made up from those Arabs who have won the Diversity Visa (aka Lottery Visa) and asylum seekers. In addition to these two categories, there are U.S. citizens of Arab origin (Arab-Americans). Those Arab-Americans do not necessarily speak Arabic (Rouchdy, 2002). It is worth noting that the Arab immigrants come from many countries in the Middle East and North Africa, and they also come from various cultures, educational levels, and religious backgrounds.

To discuss the Arab immigration to the United States, we have first to identify what do we mean by Arabs. Arabs are those native speakers of Arabic. However, historically speaking, the Arab world has geographically changed significantly over time (Hitti, 2002). Thus, when speaking about Arabs, we need to identify the era. At present, the Arab world map is changing due to the on-going civil wars that are the prime motivation for the current wave of the Arab immigration to the United States. Having said that, languages other than Arabic are still alive in the Arab world (Perel’tsvayg, 2020) but endangered due to the oppression caused by the Arabic language in the region (Fraijzyngier, 2018). According to the UNESCO Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger, in the 22 Arabic-speaking majority countries, there are more than 100 languages in danger in 14 of these countries. Those languages were spoken widely some time ago before the invasion of Arab and consequently Arabic language to those countries in a form of immigration waves from Arabia (the Arabian Peninsula) in the early era of Islam.

The first waves of “Arab” immigrants reached to the United States before the U.S. independence in July 1776. These immigrants came from the Levant, and they were counted under the Greek, Armenian or Turk category, as a white race (Ajrouch & Jamal, 2007). Only, in late 1800s and beginning of 1900s, the time of dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, Syria and Lebanon categories were created by the U.S. immigration agency. These first waves of Arab immigrants to the U.S. were at limited scale. Over the times, Arab immigration to the United States varied in number and circumstances.

Currently, according to the U.S. Census Bureau (2019) estimation, there are more than 1,260,000 people aged 5 and above speak Arabic at home. Among these people, there are more than 441,000 people who speak English less than “very well”. The same estimation also states that there are more than 2 million people in the United States who claim Arab ancestry. However, according to the Arab American Institute Foundation (2018), the U.S. Census Bureau estimation is significantly lower than the actual number of people who claim Arab ancestry, adjusting the number to more than 3,600,000 people.

1.3. Research AIM and significance
This research aims to identify potential translation problems that may lead to ambiguity and misunderstanding when translating official communications to new immigrants to the United States. The significance of this research is realized in ensuring smooth communication interculturally and interlinguistically which in turn is expected to facilitate the integration and assimilation of Arab immigrants into the American society.

2. Literature review
The discussion of official translation inevitably invites the discussion of institutional translation since both terms are polysemic and ambiguous, hence they are used interchangeably in some cases. Kang (2009) refers to institutional translation as “either to translating in or for specific organizations”. According to Merkle (2013), official translation is a subfield of institutional translation and rarely appears in Translation Studies literature, beyond where a distinction between certified and non-certified translations of official documents is needed. In her attempt to define official translation, Merkle (2013) refers to official translation as “translation and interpretation between the legislated languages within a legally constituted political entity, such as a State or part of a State, a city, or a supranational organization such as the EU”. She furthers that the
concept may also extend to cover the types of texts under translation such as administrative and legal. She argues that the absence of a clear reference to translation in producing official documents in more than a language raises the question of procedural protocols (how it is accurately translated) and a language’s status (the dominant source language versus the minority target language(s)). It also exposes the officially translated languages to the risk of cultural loss when the dominant language culture is heavily borrowed over time (Branchadell, 2011).

Therefore, conventionally, official translations have always posed a challenge to communities of diverse linguistic backgrounds. For example, in translating international instruments, Ivrakis (1955) argues, the challenges posed by official translations include the terminological discrepancies which to a smaller or a larger extent were mis-constructed from the source text. He refers such differences to the fact that governments are the suppliers of the official translations of international instruments. He explains that while in-house professional translators employed by a certain foreign affairs ministry are customized to the diplomatic language, they cannot always produce adequate translations for more specialized tasks.

Furthermore, for the past 30 years or so, triggered by globalization, much scholarship has examined immigration as a norm changer in the nation-states, including political, social and cultural traditions as well as citizenship. In the new dogma, the directionality of immigration integration has shifted from assimilation into multiculturalism (Joppke & Moraw ska, 2003). This paradigm encourages more multilingualism as demonstrated in the emerging official language policies of these liberal states, such as the United States. In this context, the integration of immigrants into the host society can be hindered by unclear or poor translation. In addition to that, the translators’ negligence of the fact that their target audience of immigrants come from diverse educational, linguistic and socio-economic backgrounds leads them to the assumption that an error in the translation would go unnoticed (Rihani, 2019).

Considering the fact that the United States of America has no official language and English is the United States de facto language, all U.S. official communications are issued primarily in English. Some of these communications are translated into other languages. These official translations, as Clasby (1991) discusses, can be a reason for a legal dispute or a social division among the heterogeneous population of the United States. She explains that official translations are not reviewed, rather they are perceived as objective and accurate under the assumption that the translators are certified and “meet minimum training and competency standards” (Clasby, 1991, p. 532), despite the many pragmatic alterations they make. This in turn, she argues, eliminates cultural perspectives of the “distinctive interpretive communities” (Clasby, 1991, p. 530). Therefore, she suggests that bilingual members of these communities may assess the translations in question.

Unlike Clasby, for Lozano, official translations in the now-called United States started with the arrival of settlers, particularly from England, France and Spain, and they were an “important tool of settlement and nation-building” (Lozano, 2021, p. 74) as well as expanding. While no trace of these translations, the fact that one-quarter of the population in 1790 were non-native English speakers, Lozano argues, suggests that official translations were provided to speakers of languages other than English including to those African slaves brought by the settlers. However, the access to such translations varied based on the target group and the subject under translation. In other words, Lozano claims that translations of official communications were selectively made to certain ethnic group of the population rather than others. This is in line with our findings that certain official documents are translated into some languages but not others as discussed in Section 1.1. In this context, one may defend this practice by explaining that this selectivity is to save money and time as well as to cater to immigrants’ needs which vary from an immigrant group to another. But others may argue that such practice raises the question of inclusion in the [political] system of the United States. Furthermore, interestingly, Lozano discusses that in early days of the establishment of the United States, non-English speaker immigrants tend to live in
communities with those who they share the same mother tongue in an effort to exercise political pressure on federal and state legislators to provide funded translations of official communications into their native languages.

Furthermore, the translation between English and Arabic, the language pair of the research data, generally encounters linguistic challenges as a result of their variations. Among these challenges is the “lack of tense equivalence between English and Arabic” (Abdelaal, 2020, p. 70). Unlike English, Arabic does not have structures for continuous, perfect, and continuous perfect aspects of the English tenses. Arabic tenses mainly indicate past, present and tense in their simple structure. For example, the Arabic sentence “🙅‬ لدُّبُّ أذهِبٌ إِلَىِ الجَامِعَة” (literally: Adham went to the university) does not indicate whether Adham has gone, had gone or had been to the university. This problem can also be noticed in the English into Arabic translation of the sentence “Adham is going to the university.” The Arabic translation is “إِذْ حَذَّبُ أَذْهَبَ إِلَيْنَىِ الجَامِعَة” (Adham goes to the university), changing the English present continuous into the Arabic present simple. The source meaning would be then susceptible. Translators therefore have to add some lexical markers to fill the gap in Arabic tense and sustain the source meaning. Hence “Adham is going to the university” becomes “اِذْ حَذَّبُ أَذْهَبَ إِلَيْنَىِ الجَامِعَة” (Adham is going to the university now).

Another problem in the English-Arabic translation is gender. Dissimilar to English, Arabic feminine nouns have different adjectival forms than masculine nouns. In the same context, unlike the English plural mark “s” which generally distinguishes singular forms from plural forms, Arabic noun structure accounts for both gender and number including dual. Therefore, in Arabic, variant adjectival forms correspond to different nouns of various genders and numbers (Albar, 2021). To illustrate, the English noun “car” can be translated into the Arabic “سيارة” (a car), “سيارات” (two cars), and “سيارات” (cars). The English adjective “beautiful” can also be translated into the Arabic “جميلة” (for a masculine), “جميلة” (for a feminine), “جميلان” (for dual masculine), “جميلتان” (for dual feminine), “جميلات” (for plural feminine), and “جميلات” (for plural masculine).

Moreover, a problem may appear in the English-Arabic translation due to their different conventional styles. English uses nominal singular forms for generalization while Arabic uses plural forms for generalization. Thus, a translator may have to change the ST plural form into the TT singular form to comply with the TL conventions. Similarly, uncountable English nouns such as “information” and “advice”, pose a translation problem to translators since they can take singular and plural forms in Arabic “معلومات” and “نصائح” (Blankinship, 2019). In addition, other convention-related challenges encounter the English-Arabic translation is foregrounding and back-grounding as well as shift (Arabic itifat) from a pronoun to another and from tense to another for emphasis and aesthetic purposes which leave the ST susceptible to a different interpretation than intended by the author.

Similarly to the lack of grammatical equivalence between Arabic and English, Abdelaal (2020) argues that there is a lack of lexical equivalence between Arabic and English which results in meaning loss or distortion. He explains that the lack of lexical equivalence may be total as in the absence of an Arabic equivalent to the English “cool”, or partial as in the translation of the Arabic “حَج” into the English “pilgrimage” in which “pilgrimage” does not fully encapsulate all meanings of haj. He also discusses that improper selection of vocabularies due to ambiguity of the ST causes problems to the English-Arabic translation. Translators in these situations need to carefully examine the source context and may also need to go beyond that, searching for more information on the topic or requesting clarification from the client. These many lexical and semantic discrepancies between English and Arabic are translation challenges, let alone the problems in the translation of rhetorical devices.

In addition to the linguistic problems which encounter the translation between English and Arabic, culture poses even more problems to the translation between the two languages. The dissimilarities in beliefs, traditions and customs between the English-speaking world and the
Arabic-speaking world contribute to cultural challenges in the translation between the two languages. In this context, Al-Zgoul and Al-Salman (2022) argue that culture gives meanings to words and therefore a translator must master both the source and the target cultures in order to accurately convey the cultural embeddedness. Among the cultural challenges to translation is the culturally bound terms. While English terms such as “boyfriend” and “girlfriend” do not have equivalents in Arabic, Arabic religious terms such as خلوة (khulwah), قاتية رحم (qatiat rahem) and قيقة (qeeqah) do not have English equivalents. Another cultural challenge to translation is idioms and fixed expressions which should be treated in their entirety rather than their individual components. For example, the English idiom “It is raining cats and dogs” cannot be literary (word-to-word) translated into the Arabic (It is raining heavily). Another yet cultural challenge to translation is collections. Collections are arbitrary and do not follow words’ logical propositional meanings. For example, the English phrase “break the law” does not sound natural to the Arabic ear when translated into “يُخَافَف “ phákh “ rather the Arabic phrase يُكِسر “ phákh “ is more natural. Here, “pák” in the first Arabic phrase literally means “break” while “pák” in the second Arabic phrase means “disobey”. In Arabic, “pák” (break) is only used with physical objects (Baker, 2011).

While the examples provided above may not necessarily relate to official communications, they offer systematic analysis and clear instances for potential English-Arabic translation problems. To offer instances which relate more closely to official communications that the Arabic-speaking immigrant may encounter, consider the following phrases.

1. “You may not enter a USCIS facility if you have …”

This is a phrase quoted from the USCIS article on its response to Covid-19. In English, the pronoun “you” can refer to singular and plural. It can also refer to masculine and feminine. However, translating it into Arabic rises a problem since Arabic makes distinctions among the many nouns that the English “you” may refer to. If the English pronoun “you” refers to a singular masculine, the Arabic translation is “الث”. If it refers to a singular feminine, the Arabic translation is “الث”. If it refers to dual, the Arabic translation is “الث”. If it refers to plural masculine, the Arabic translation is “الث”. And if it refers to plural feminine, the Arabic translation is “الث”. Conventionally speaking, the English pronoun “you” is translated into the Arabic “الث” that refers to a singular masculine or “الث” that refers to a plural masculine for politeness, overlooking the spectrum of pronouns which has recently been expanded significantly. The Arabic translator is then faced with the dilemma of choosing an equivalent pronoun to the English “you”. This quandary is an example of the English-Arabic translation problems a translator may encounter. The translator’s choice of pronouns and words, therefore, would start a debate in the new immigrant’s mind for bigger questions, including inclusion, representation, discrimination, and engagement in the U.S. society.

2. “USCIS will not accept a Form I-693 completed by a doctor who is not a currently designated civil surgeon.”

This sentence is quoted from the USCIS Instructions for Form I-693, Report of Medical Examination and Vaccination Record which is required when applying for adjustment of status to becoming a lawful permanent resident. In addition to the potential translation problem of “doctor” into Arabic since the English “doctor” can refer to a male or a female doctor and it has to be specified in Arabic (i.e. طبيب or طبيب), the English nominal phrase “civil surgeon” poses a challenge to the Arabic translator. In the context of the USCIS text, a “civil surgeon” is a doctor designated by the USCIS as such and does not necessarily mean or refer to a “surgeon”. However, when translated into the Arabic جراح مدني, it leaves the Arabic-speaking immigrant wondering. In most cases, it would lead the Arabic-speaking immigrant to look for a surgeon to perform the USCIS required medical exams and complete the Form. This in turn would cost the immigrant much money and time and may at last not be accepted by the USCIS if the surgeon was not a USCIS designated “civil surgeon.”
3. Research methodology

This research is qualitative in nature. The qualitative nature of the research allows more in-depth analysis which in turn offers an exhaustive account of the subject under analysis. The analysis is benefited from the translation-oriented text analysis approach developed in Nord's (2005). In Holmes' terms (as cited in Munday et al., 2022), this research is called product-oriented descriptive translation studies (also known as product-oriented DTS) in which it examines existing translations. It descriptively analyzes the English source text and its Arabic translation. In other words, since to the best of our knowledge this is the first study carried out to examine the U.S. official translation from English into Arabic, this exploratory descriptive study compares the USCIS English source guide and its Arabic translation, identifying possible translation problems. The outcomes of this product-oriented DTS research may be fed into the theoretical branch of translation studies to contribute to the development of a general or a partial theory.

3.1. Data collection

The source of the research data is the USCIS's English publication titled Welcome to the United States: A Guide for New Immigrants with ISBN 978-0-16-092967-0 and its USCIS Arabic translation titled مرحبًا بالاستلام في الولايات المتحدة: دليل المهاجرين الجدد. Both the English and Arabic publications were collected from the USCIS website. The latest revised edition of the two publications were made available in September 2015. Each edition consists of 116 pages.

This guide is part of the USCIS's civic integration of new immigrants into the American society. It offers various information, including the history and the present state of the United States, as well as its governmental bodies and structures. It also discusses the rights and responsibilities of permanent residents (new immigrants) and how they can maintain their status. In addition to that, the guide provides practical information for the settlement of new immigrants which includes getting their social security number, employment authorization, finding accommodation, finding jobs, childcare, and transportation. The USCIS also takes the opportunity of this guide to educate the new immigrants on how they can protect their money against fraud and scam, as well as how they can manage their finance and pay taxes. The guide also exhaustively talks about the educational and health systems in the United States. It also prepares them to be aware and responsive to any emergencies. The guide ends with a detailed chapter on the U.S citizenship (naturalization processes) as far as those new immigrants are concerned.

The Arabic translation of the USCIS's guide for new immigrants was selected for two reasons. First, the author is a native of Arabic and a researcher in the field of English-Arabic translation. Second, the author is a new immigrant to the United States thus part of the Arabic-speaking immigrant community in the U.S. to which this translation is targeted.

3.2. Data analysis

The data is analyzed in comparative. The Arabic target text of the مرحبًا بالاستلام في الولايات المتحدة: دليل المهاجرين الجدد (Marhaban bekom fi alwilaiat almutahida: dalil almuhajin aljudd) is compared to its English source text of the Welcome to the United States: A Guide for New Immigrants. The researchers took notes of any problems in the translation. The problems found are mainly structural, grammatical, stylistic and semantic. We also found typographical errors. After identifying the problems occurred in the Arabic translation, we grouped them under four main categories: pragmatic, linguistic, convention-related, and text-specific translation problems. We then examined the effect of these problems on the overall understandability of the text as well as the message of the source text. After that, we reported on the problems and their impacts. In each category, we also discussed possible approaches for overcoming these translation problems. The approaches are not set, nor are they proposed as ideal resolutions; they are the outcomes of analyzing original examples of translated texts from English into Arabic and offered as “actual” approaches applied rather than the “correct” approaches to apply.
The research analysis is informed by the translation-oriented text analysis approach of Nord (2005) in which she attempts to offer an exhaustive account for text classification and guidelines for translation quality assessment. In analyzing a translated text, its source and its moment of transfer, Nord proposes an analysis guide that includes 17 factors at three levels: (1) Extratextual factors: sender, intention, audience, medium, place, time, motive, and function; (2) Intratextual factors include subject-matter, content, presuppositions, composition, non-verbal elements, lexis, sentence structure, and suprasegmental; and (3) Effect. These factors, individually or collectively, may lead to translation problems.

While the analysis in Section 4 focuses on the micro level, involving mainly some extratextual and intratextual factors selected in line of this study’s aim, Section 5 focuses on the macro level, i.e., the effect factor, where an example of textual analysis is provided to illustrate a picture of the way these micro components build up the overall message and how the message is misunderstood due to translation problems.

3.2.1. Analytical framework: Nord’s (2005) translation problems
In her translation-oriented text analysis model, Nord (2005) classifies translation problems into four types: pragmatic, convention-related, linguistic, and text-specific. These problems vary in frequency of occurrence. Some of them occur more often than others. (1) Pragmatic translation problems may result from the difference in purpose of the production of the ST versus the TT. This includes the differences between the ST audience versus the TT audience, the ST medium versus the TT medium, and the ST function versus the TT function. In short, pragmatic translation problems can be examined and identified through the analysis of the extratextual factors we mentioned earlier in this section. (2) Convention-related translation problems may appear in a TT due to differences in conventions, norms and culture-specific practices. The emergence of these problems largely depends on the language pair of translation. Thus, they may appear in some translations but not others. These convention problems include linguistic genre and style. (3) Linguistic translation problems occur due to structural differences between the source language and the target language, in sentence structure and lexis in particular. Translating etymologically related words may result in a linguistic translation problem only when “contrasted with a target language which presents more, or fewer, or other semantic or stylistic differentiations” (Nord, 2005, p. 176). (4) Text-specific translation problems are those problems that exist in a particular text but cannot be classified under any of the three main translation problems we discussed earlier in this sub-section. Because they are text-specific, a solution found to overcome a problem of this type cannot be generalized. Among these problems are individual word creations and figures of speech.

Furthermore, the notion of “translation problems” has significant pedagogical implications through allowing a structured aim in the sphere of transfer competence. In other words, the classification of translation problems found in a text defines the translator’s competence level at that point of time. This in turn showcases the areas that the translator needs to enhance within the transfer competence domain.

4. Findings
In this section, we discuss the translation problems that took place in translating the English source text into its Arabic target text. The problems are classified under four main categories: pragmatic, convention-related, linguistic, and text-specific. This classification is not clear-cut since some texts contain more than one problem, thus can be classified under more than one category. Nevertheless, this classification provides systematic analysis. It is worth noting that all back translations are the authors’.

4.1. Pragmatic translation problems
The main pragmatic translation problem found in this study arises from the difference in audience between the ST and the TT. The English guide is read by the English-speaking new immigrants to
the U.S. These immigrants have some general background knowledge of the U.S., and its geography, history, and systems e.g., political, health. The Arabic guide, on the contrary, is read by the Arabic-speaking new immigrants to the U.S. who have no to little background knowledge of the U.S., and its geography, history, and systems e.g., political, health. An example of pragmatic translation problems is found in page two of both the English source guide and the Arabic translated guide. This page offers contact information of some U.S. Departments, Agencies, Administrations, and Commissions that may be of benefit to the new immigrants. The translator’s lack of background knowledge of the variation in government structures (administrative branches) between that of the U.S. and those of the Arab World created a pragmatic translation problem realized in the translator’s mistranslation of several administrative branches. In addition to the mistranslation of the English “Department” into the Arabic “الدائرات” (alqasam, literally: Divisions) that we discuss later under linguistic translation problems, the translator mistranslated the English “U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission” into the Arabic “وزارة تكافؤ فرص العمل الأمريكية” (wazara takafou furas alamrikia, literally: U.S. Ministry of Equal Employment Opportunity), and the English “U.S. Department of the Treasury” into the Arabic “ال служба الضريبية الأمريكية” (maslahat aidarayib alamrikia, literally: Internal Revenue Service). Moreover, while the English guide indents the following branches: U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement under U.S. Department of Homeland Security to establish a relationship; that the fact that these three branches are part of the Department, the Arabic guide does not indent these branches, leaving the Arabic audience to the reading that these branches are independent, not part of the Department.

4.2. Convention-related translation problems

In the English source guide, “USCIS” was introduced at the beginning of the guide as an abbreviation of the “U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services”. It was then used thereafter to refer to thereof. However, Arabic conventionally does not tolerate abbreviation. Therefore, we found that the Arabic translation fully spells “USCIS” into “إدارة خدمات الجنسية والهجرة الأمريكية” (da’rat khadamat aljinsia wa alhijra alamrikia) every time it was mentioned throughout the guide. Such stylistic shift does not affect the understanding of the original message. Nevertheless, the Arabic translation of “USCIS” was not consistent. It was translated into six different phrases: “إدارة خدمات الجنسية والهجرة الأمريكية” (khadamat aljinsia wa alhijra alamrikia), “إدارة خدمات الجنسية والهجرة الأمريكية” (aljinsia wa alhijra alamrikia), “وزارة إدارات جوازات سفر المواطنين والأجانب” (wazara takafou furas muwatana alamrikia wa khadamat aljinsia), “إدارة خدمات الجنسية والهجرة الأمريكية” (dalil idarat da’arat aljinsia wa alhijra) throughout the guide. Such inconsistency may affect partially on the understanding of the original message in some cases or leads to confusion in others. Other examples of English abbreviations that the Arabic translation fully spells out are “HUD” of “U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development”, “IRS” of “The Internal Revenue Service”, “U.S.” of “United States” and “CR” of “conditional permanent resident”.

Another convention-related problem is the repetition of the Arabic “دليل الهاتف” (dalil alhatif) as in “دليل الهاتف المحلي” (yholdi dalil alhatif almaliki) to comply with the English style of “Your local phone book (telephone directory)”. In Arabic, both “phone book” and “telephone directory” are translated to the single phrase “دليل الهاتف” (dalil alhatif) which became a repetition in Arabic. While this repetition does not affect the understanding of the source message, it is suggested to be omitted for clarity and flow of the reading experience.

4.3. Linguistic translation problems

Linguistic translation problems found in this study are mainly syntactic and semantic problems. Syntactic problems include sentence structure problems. Structural problems are expected in translating from English into Arabic and vice versa due to the different syntactic features and properties of the two languages (Hijjo & Almanna, 2022). While English is a subject-verb-object (SVO) structured, Arabic is conventionally a verb-subject-object (VSO) structure. However, due to literal translation, SVO order is now more common in Arabic than before. The Arabic SVO does not
necessarily distort the understanding of the source message, but it still does not sound natural. For example, the English source text “Most federal offices are closed on official holidays” was translated into Arabic into an SVO order “معظم المكاتب الفدرالية مغلقة في الإجازات الرسمية” (muadam almakatib alfidralia muhliqa fi aleijazat alrasmiya) instead of " муظم المكاتب الفدرالية في الإجازات الرسمية" (tughlaq muadam almakatib alfidralia fi aleijazat alrasmiya).

Moreover, several structural problems are found in translating the English dates for holidays occurring in a specific day in a month. For example, Presidents’ Day “3rd Monday in February” was translated into Arabic as “يوم الاثنين الثالث من شهر فبراير” (yawm alaatnayn althulith min shahr fibayrir) which can be read as “Monday 3rd of February” or less likely as “3rd Monday in February”. This English structural style for dates does not exist in Arabic. Nevertheless, it still can be understood when translated into the structural style “ثلاث يوم الاثنين من شهر فبراير” (thalith yawm alaatnayn min shahr fibayrir) which only can be read as “3rd Monday of February”. Another example is the translation of Thanksgiving Day “4th Thursday in November” into the Arabic “الخميس الرابع من شهر نوفمبر” (alkhams airarabie min shahr nufimbir) which reads “Thursday 4th of November” instead of “رابع يوم خمس من شهر” (rabie yawm khamis min shahr nufimbir).

Furthermore, a structural challenge took place in translating the English adjectives “federal, state and local” as in “federal, state, and local community services”, “federal, state, and local government agencies”, “federal, state, and local laws”, “federal, state, and local income taxes”, “federal and state taxes”, “Federal and State Health Programs” to the Arabic as in “المهام الفدرالية، "على مستوى الولاية، وعلى مستوى المجتمع المحلي" (alkhdamat alfidralia, wa alaa mustawaaw alwilaya, wa alaa mustawaaw almajtamaa almahalya), which reads: Federal services, and at the state level, and at the local community level). “الولايات الفدرالية أو تلك الخاصة بالولاية أو المحلية" (alwakalat alhumumia alfidralia aw tilk alkhosa bialwilaya aw almahaliya), which reads: Federal governmental agencies or that of the state or of the local). “المهام الفدرالية أو تلك الخاصة بالولاية أو المحلية" (alqawawin alfidralia watilik alkhosa bialwilaya walmahaliya), which reads: Federal laws and that of the state and local), “المهام الفدرالية أو تلك الخاصة بالولاية أو المحلية" (alqawawin alfidralia watilik alkhosa bialwilaya walmahaliya), which reads: Federal income taxes and that of state and local), “المهام الفدرالية أو تلك الخاصة بالولاية أو المحلية" (alqawawin alfidralia watilik alkhosa bialwilaya walmahaliya), which reads: Federal income taxes and that of state and local)

Semantically speaking, following the American style of government and labelling, “Ministries” are called “Departments”. Therefore, the English source guide maintained the use of “Department(s)”. In Arabic, as in English, the word “department” can mean different things but not that of the meaning “ministry”. However, while in the Arabic translation, it was translated into “وزارة” (wizara: ministry), in few cases, the translator used the general meaning of “department” which is “قسم” (qism: division) instead of “وزارة” (wizara: ministry), such as in translating “Federal Departments and Agencies” to “الوكالات الفدرالية” (alqawawin alfidralia). This semantic problem distorts the understanding of the source message when read by the Arabic-speaking immigrant.

A second example of semantic problems is the mistranslation of lexical choice that took place in translating the “U.S. Department of the Treasury” into “مصلحة الضرائب الأمريكية” (maslahat aldarayib alamrika: U.S. Internal Revenue Service) in the Arabic guide. This completely different choice of lexis leads to a distorted understanding of the source message.

A third mistranslation of lexical choice is found in the translation of the English “New Year’s Day” into the Arabic “اليوم التالي لأولأس السنة” (alyawm attaali lArs alsan) the day follows New Year) instead of
This mistranslation suggests that January 2 is a public holiday, which it is not. Therefore, the Arabic mistranslation leads to a misunderstanding when read by the new Arab immigrants in the United States.

A fourth semantic problem occurs in the Arabic translation of the English source text “As a permanent resident” into “(eindama tusbih muqiman dayman: Once/after you become a permanent resident). This mistranslation severely affects the source text understanding and leads to confusion of the new permanent residents since they already became permanent residents as stated in the Guide: “Congratulations on becoming a permanent resident of the United States of America!”.

A fifth semantic problem is found in the translation of the English source text “notaries public” in “Some consultants, travel agencies, real estate offices, and people called “notaries public” offer immigration services.” Into the Arabic “(aumunin: publics)” in يقدم بعض المستشارين ووكالات السفر “(yuqaddim baed almusharin wawikalat alsafar walmakatib aleaqaria walashkhas almustur eilayhim baism “aumunin” which leads to a mistranslation of “عوميون” “عوميون” means “publics)”. Such mistranslations are avoided when the Arabic translation is read as “kutob alad: notaries public”.

A sixth example of semantic mistranslation resulting from an inaccurate choice of word is realized in translating the English “your” into the Arabic possession phrase “(alkhasa bik: yours, your own, dedicated to you) which distort the understanding of the source text as in “If you do not have a computer at home, you can use one in your public library” which was translated into “edha lam yakun ladayk jihaz kumbutar fi manziliika, fayumkinuk estihkdam jihaz kumbutar fi almaktaba alma alkhasa bik: If you do not have a computer at home, you can use a computer in your own public library). This mistranslation can be avoided by translating “your” into “fi mantqatik: in your neighborhood) so the Arabic translation can read “edha lam yakun ladayk hasub fi manziliika, fayumkinuk estihkdam alhasub fi almaktaba alma fi mantqatik: If you do not have a computer at home, you can use a computer in your neighborhood public library). The same analysis applies to the Arabic translation which leads to the English “You can buy a first aid kit at your own local drugstore” “(yHumkinuk shira sundug alisafat alowala min alsaydalal almahaliyya alkhasa bik: You can buy a first aid kit at your own local drugstore). Having discussed that, this mistranslation occurs only in cases where “your” does not mean “your own/ possession”. Therefore, the Arabic translation “(alkhasa bik) is not inaccurate in general but limited to the cases of non-possession of “yours”.

Furthermore, some lexical choices in Arabic translation may affect the understanding of the source message, including the translation of “a resource” in “a resource for new immigrants” into “مورد للمهاجرين الجديد” (mawrid) instead of “مورد للمهاجرين الجدد” (mawrid ilmuajrin aljudud) which is correct but may not be understood by all immigrants. We suggest “مصدر” (masdar) instead, for better understanding and avoiding any ambiguity. In addition, the Arabic translation “سداد” (sadad) of the English “pay” suggests that it is a bill or an outstanding amount to pay rather than a fee as intended in the original text as in “You may have to pay a fee when calling 411”, “Pay federal, state, and local income taxes” and “You must pay a fee to file Form 1-131”, among others. This unclarity in the Arabic translation can be avoided by translating “paying” to “دفع” (dafaa) instead of “سداد” (sadad). While “سداد” (sadad) may be accepted as a translation of “pay” in the previous examples, it cannot be accepted as a translation of “paying” in “paying a security deposit” into the Arabic “سداد الفروبرون” (sadad arfbrun). The Arabic “سداد” (sadad) in this example means it is not refundable, it is a duty. This contradicts with the source text and the definition of “a security deposit” which by default is refundable. Similarly, we suggest the Arabic translation “دفع مقابل الضمان” (dafaa mablag aldhman) for the English “paying a security deposit”.

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Nevertheless, other lexical choices that do not affect the understanding of the source message include the translation of the English “Tip” into the Arabic “ملاحظة مفيدة” (mulahadah mufidah: useful note) which could be simply translated into “ملاحظة مفيدة” (mulahadah: note) without adding “ملاحظة” (mufrada: useful) as it is inferred in “ملاحظة” (mulahadah: note). Similarly, the Arabic translation of the English “Remove conditions” into “إزالة الشروط” (ezalat alshurut) is a literal translation of “removed” into “زالة” (ezalat) which is conventionally used for something physical. A natural translation of “remove” in Arabic can be “إلغاء” (alga: waiving) or “الملف” (elga: canceling). Another lexical choice problem that also involves inconsistency of translating terms is found in the Arabic translation of the English “Status” as in “Maintaining Your Permanent Resident Status” into “الحفاظ على وضوحية المقيم الدائم” (alhifad halwa Paiyim almuqim aladoom) and “The U.S. government can take away your permanent resident status under certain conditions” into “الحكومة الأمريكية تستطيع أن تحولك من صفة المقيم الدائم في ظروف معينة" (falhukuma alamrikia tastatia an tujarduka min sifat almuqim aladoom fi duruf muayana). The English “status” was translated into “وضعية” (wadeiat: position) and “صفة” (sifat: description, adjective or attributive). Such inconstancy may lead to ambiguity or poor reading experience to the new Arab immigrants in the United States. We suggest that “صفة” (sifat: description, adjective or attributive) is to be used consistently throughout the guide as a translation of “status” in the contexts of the “permanent resident status”. The choice of “صفة” (sifat) is based on its meanings and implications that includes acquirable, attribution, eligibility and changeability.

A last example that illustrates poor lexical choices that do not affect the understanding of the source message is the Arabic translation “أين تلقى المساعدة” (ayn tatalaqa almusaaaaa) of the English source text “Where to Get Help”, for various resources including Internet resources. The translator(s) literally translated “get” into “التلقى” (tatalaqa) which is more of the meaning “receive”. In this context, “get” is better understood by the Arabic “تكون” (tajid: find); “أين تلقى المساعدة” (ayn tatalaqa almusaaaaa: Where to find help).

### 4.4. Text-specific translation problems

The only text-specific translation problem found in this study is typographical errors. Several typographical errors are found in the Arabic translation. The most frequent typographical is the Arabic translation

| Arabic   | English   |
|----------|-----------|
| أميلكياٍ  | America   |
| أمريكيٍ  | American  |
| أمريكٍ   | Americans |

Other typographical errors include

- (انوين) instead of (انوين) (anawin) in page 20 and (انوين) (tanwi) instead of (تدوي) (tanwi) in page 17.
- (اربنان) instead of (اربنان) (arbanun) in page 31.
- (اتكد) instead of (اتكد) (arbdak) in page 32.
- (مرفوك) instead of (مرفوك) (erftk) in page 40 and (مرفوك) instead of (مرفوك) (ermok) in page 63.

While typographical errors generally do not affect the understanding of the source message, in some cases they do. For example, in the typographical error “دومان” (arbanun) instead of “دومان” (arbanun), the meaning changed from the English “a deposit” into the Arabic “two deposits”, and in the typographical error “دومان” instead of “دومان” (mbynaya) instead of “دومان” (mbynaya), the meaning changed from the English “based on” into the Arabic “displayed”.

### 5. Discussion

Several problems are found in the Arabic translation of the source English USCIS’s Guide for New Immigrants. The problems found are categorized under pragmatic, convention-related, linguistic, and text-specific translation problems. The most frequent problems are linguistic problems. These problems are discussed based on their effect on the understanding of the source message and the reading experience.

It is worth noting that while this study attempts to categorize the translation problems found in the Arabic translation, it is by no means a clear-cut categorization. The reason behind this disclaimer is that in most cases of translation problems, more than one category can be called, even at the word level. For example, while “دومان” (arbanun) is a typographical error as we discussed earlier, it is also a semantic problem of lexical choice. The correct translation of “a security deposit” is “اميلغ الدامان” (mablag aldaman).

The Arabic “دومان” (arban) is an advance payment. The difference between “a security deposit” and “an advance payment” is that a security deposit is refundable and nondeductible from the total amount. An advance payment is the first payment paid by a client for an installment or reserving a booking. The reason why Arabs use the two terms interchangeably is due to the absence of the concept of security-
5.1. English source text

5.1.1. Filing USCIS Forms I-751 and I-829

Who: Conditional permanent resident (CR)

Why: Conditional permanent resident status expires two years after the date you became a CR.

When: Conditional permanent resident filing together with his or her spouse must file Form I-751. Immigrant investors must file Form I-829. Both of these forms must be filed within the 90 days before conditional permanent residence status expires. The expiration date is on your Permanent Resident Card.

Where to get the form: You can get the form at www.uscis.gov or by calling the USCIS Forms Line at 1-800-870-3676.

Where to send the form: Send it to a USCIS service center. The addresses of the service centers are in the instructions for the form.

What it costs: You must pay a fee to file Form I-751 or Form I-829. Before you submit the form, check for the most current USCIS filing fees at http://www.uscis.gov/fees.

If you file Form I-751 or Form I-829 on time, USCIS will usually send you a notice extending your CR status for up to 12 months. During this time, USCIS will review your application.

5.2. Arabic translation

I-829 و I-751 تقديم استمارات دائرة خدمات الجنسية والهجرة الأمريكية (CR)

من: المبتدأ: تمثل صلاحية وضع الإقامة الدائمة على أساس شروط خالل 90 يوما بعد تاريخ انتهاء تم تعيين على أول ضرورة. تتم تقديم استمارة I-829. يتم تقديم kısıtl kon الدي سنة 90 يوما قبل انتهاء صلاحية وضع الإقامة الدائمة على أساس شروط يكون في تاريخ انتهاء الصلاحية على بطاقة الإقامة الدائمة من أي أن تتم استمرار على الاستمارة. يمكن الحصول على الاستمارة على الرابط USCIS في US على رقم 3676 - 800 - 1.0

إلى: أمريكا، أو من خلال الاتصال على www.uscis.gov

خط الاستمارات في دائرة خدمات الجنسية والهجرة الأمريكية USCIS.

عندما تتم الإذن، يتم إرسالها إلى مركز خدمات "دائرة خدمات الجنسية والهجرة الأمريكية " توفر USCIS خدمات في الخدمات الموجودة في الاستمارة.

عندما يتم تقديم الاستمارة I-751 أو الاستمارة I-829، تتم دفع التكلفة عن www.uscis.gov/fees.

إذا كنت تقدم الاستمارة I-751 أو الاستمارة I-829 في الوقت المحدد، ستم تتم دفع دائم خدمات الجنسية والهجرة الأمريكية عادة بإرسال فقط. إذا تم تقديم الاستمارة I-751 أو الاستمارة I-829، يتم دفع التكلفة عن www.uscis.gov/fees.

5.3. Back translation of the Arabic translation

5.3.1. Filing American citizenship and immigration services administration forms I-751 and I-829

Who: Permanent resident on a conditional basis (CR)

Why: Permanent resident on a conditional basis situation expires within two days after the date you shifted to a resident on a conditional basis.
When: Permanent resident on a conditional basis must file with his wife Form I-751. Immigrant investors must file Form I-829. Both of these forms must be filed within the 90 days before permanent residence on a conditional basis situation validity expires. The validity expiration date is on the Permanent Resident Card.

From where I get the form: You can get the form at www.uscis.gov or by calling the American Citizenship and Immigration Services Administration USCIS Forms Line at 1–800-870-3676.

To where I send the form: Do send it to an American Citizenship and Immigration Services Administration USCIS service center. The addresses of the service centers are many in the instructions existed in the form.

What are the costs: You must pay a fee to file Form I-751 or Form I-829. Before submitting the form, try to check for the most current filing fees at the American Citizenship and Immigration Services Administration at http://www.uscis.gov/fees.

If you file Form I-751 or Form I-829 on time, the American Citizenship and Immigration Services Administration will usually send you a warning to extend your situation as a resident for 12 months. In this time, at the American Citizenship and Immigration Services Administration (USCIS) will review your application.

In this example, the English “USCIS” is translated into the Arabic “ دائرة خدمات الجنسية والهجرة المصرية” (American Citizenship and Immigration Services Administration). In addition to the problem of constancy as discussed under Section 4.1, this example has the problem of misspelling of “الأمريكية” instead of “الأمريكية”. The misspelling is minor and does not affect the understanding of the source message. Nevertheless, it may affect the flow and the reading experience. In translating the English “Conditional permanent resident (CR)”, the Arabic translator(s) opted to translate the English adjective “conditional” into the Arabic prepositional phrase “على أساس مُشروط” (on a conditional basis). The reason behind this shift is that the adjective “conditional” in Arabic cannot be attributed to a person (i.e. resident), but to his status. In the same English sentence, “conditional permanent resident” was abbreviated to “(CR)” so that the abbreviation is used thereafter. Nevertheless, Arabic, as we discussed earlier in Section 4.1, does not use acronyms, it rather spells them out fully. Accordingly, the acronym “(CR)” does not serve its purpose in the Arabic translation. Having said that, it may be used to educate the Arabic-speaking new immigrants of such terms in English since they may encounter them during their communication with USCIS. The same applies to all English acronyms left untranslated in the Arabic translation. Moreover, the English word “status” is translated to “وضع” (situation) in Arabic. As we discussed in Section 4.3, the lexical choice of “وضع” (situation) that implies a “state” may contribute to the misunderstanding of “permanent resident” in which new Arab immigrants take it for granted as a “permanent state” without observing its terms and conditions. Therefore, we suggest “حالة” that implies “attributions”. Another, yet more importantly, problem is the translation of the English “two years after” into the Arabic “خلال بضعة أيام” (within two days after). This is a mistranslation that leads to ambiguity and confusion that leads in turn to a serious miscommunication between the USCIS and the new Arab immigrants to the United States. The English phrase “the date you become” was translated into the Arabic “تاريخ تحولك ل” (the date you shifted to). The Arabic translation here suggests that the new immigrants had different status in the U.S. This suggestion may apply to those immigrants living in the U.S. and filed for adjustment of status. This in turn compromises the English source narrative “become” which applies to all immigrants regardless of the way they “become” conditional permanent residents. In the next line of this excerpt, the English phrase “filing together with his or her spouse” was translated into the Arabic “السماح مع زوجته” (file with his wife). The Arabic translation jeopardizes the source message of “spouse” that includes either the husband or the wife. We suggest that the Arabic term “زوج” (pair, spouse) to be used here to convey the entire source message to the Arabic readers and to avoid any confusion as a result. Another semantic shift is found in
translating the English auxiliary “are” in “The addresses of the service centers are in the instructions for the form” into the Arabic “لا تتوفر عنوانين مراكز الخدمات في التعليمات الموجودة في الاستمارة.” (The addresses of the service centers are many in the instructions existed in the form.) The Arabic translator(s) confused “لا تتوفر” (available, are) which may distort the reading experience along with the misspelling of “لا تتوفر” (addresses), instead of “لا تتوفر” “عنوانين” (addresses) as discussed earlier in Section 4.4. The question of instruction compliance is raising in the Arabic translation. In this extract, the English command verbs (obligatory) as in “check for the most current USCIS filing fees” is softened into the Arabic “سنقوم دائرة الجنسية والهجرة الأمريكية عادة بإرسال إخطار إلىك” (the American Citizenship and Immigration Services Administration will usually send you a warning to extend your situation as a resident for 12 months.) In the source English text, the message is that the USCIS is sending a letter to the applicant letting him/her to know that the USCIS is extending their CR status. On the contrary, the Arabic translation read that the USCIS is sending a warning to the applicant requesting them to renew his/her CR status.

5.4. The authors’ suggested Arabic translation

تدعم استمارات دائرة خدمة الجنسية والهجرة الأمريكية 571-829-1

من يقبل؟

لماذا؟لا تتوفر تأشيرة صفعة الإقامة الدائمة المشروطة بعد ستين من التأشير الذي أصبحت فيه مقيما دائماً من شروط

من يقبل؟لا تتوفر تأشيرات في زوجة الاستمارة 751-829. ينوي للمستخدمين المهاجرين تقديم الاستمارة 751-829. توفر عنوانين مراكز الخدمات
ثنائي، عبارة عن رفع رسالة صلاحيات مشروطة.

من اين أحصل على الاستمارة؟ يمكنك الحصول على الاستمارة عبر الرابط www.uscis.gov أو من خلال الإتصال

إلى أي رسوم الدائرة 676-800 - 870 - 800 - 1 ين، في الإتصال

عندما يكون في الدائرة في الاستمارة

www.uscis.gov/fees

إذا تم تقديم الاستمارة السابق 1-829-1 في الوقت المحدد، ستقوم دائرة خدمات الجنسية والهجرة الأمريكية بطلب

خطاب تمديد تأشيرة الإقامة الدائمة المشروطة لمدة تصل إلى 12 شهراً. خلال هذا الوقت، ستراجع طلبك دائرة خدمات

الجنسية والهجرة الأمريكية.

6. Conclusion

To conclude, we found that the source English texts in pictures and maps were left untranslated in the Arabic guide. We also found that the Arabic translation tends to (at a limited scale) elaborate on the topic (to satisfy the reader’s curiosity). For example, the translation of the English phrase “United States” into the Arabic الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية (United States of America). We also found that the translator(s) followed mainly a word-for-word translation. This is supported by the equal number of pages as well as formatting and layout of the Guide for both the English source text and its Arabic translation. Having said that, the translator(s) observed the commonly known patterns in Arabic. For example, the English “Congratulations on becoming a permanent resident of the United States of America!” was translated into the Arabic “نتمنى لك الحصول على الإقامة الدائمة في الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية (Our congratulations to you for your obtaining the permanent resident of the United States of America) in which “becoming” shifted to “获得了” (obtaining). The English text could be translated literally into the Arabic “نتمنى لك الحصول على الإقامة الدائمة في الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية (Our congratulations to you for your obtaining the permanent resident of the United States of America).” The omission of the first possessive article gives the translation a better flow.
Moreover, we found that the translator(s) did not pay attention to the inconsistency of translating English terms such as “USCIS” and “Status”. It is also observed that at times, the translator(s) uses Classical Arabic (Old Arabic) instead of Modern Standard Arabic. For example, on page 23, the English source text “For more information about how to protect yourself from becoming a victim of immigration fraud, visit www.uscis.gov/avoidscams.” was translated into the Arabic "المزيد من المعلومات عن كيفية حماية نفسك من الوقوع في باستخدامات الهجرة، اقرأ برواية الوارد" www.uscis.gov/avoidscams." (For more information on how to protect yourself from the traps of immigration fraud, please visit www.uscis.gov/avoidscams.) The Arabic "أجرام" (traps or claws) is a Classical Arabic that is not contemporarily used by the Arabic speaker nor understood by the general public. In addition, "أجرام" does not appear in the source text, it is an addition. Therefore, we suggest that "أجرام" is to be omitted for a better reading experience.

Therefore, these many minor and major problems found in the Arabic translation of the USCIS’s guide to new Arab immigrants collectively would disturb not only the understanding and flow of the text, but also the reading experience which in turn would contribute to discouraging these immigrants from reading the guide. The purpose of the USCIS’s guide for new immigrants is informative and instructional. While the English USCIS guide offers precise information and instructions, the Arabic USCIS offers unclear information and instructions. This ambiguity leads to a gap between what the USCIS intends to communicate and what the Arab immigrants to the United States understand. This in turn creates a miscommunication between the two parties, leading to long-time processes or delays caused by the new immigrants’ responses or actions based on their understanding of the problematic USCIS’s Arabic guide.

Accordingly, we suggest that the USCIS’s Arabic Guide for New Immigrants needs to be edited or updated by a native or a bilingual professional editor. We also suggest that some Arabic-speaking new immigrants may be surveyed to determine the clarity and understandability of the Guide, in agreement with Lesch’s (2004) argument that the reader is the core of the translation quality assessment. Finally, we cannot agree more with Taibi and Ozolins (2016) in encouraging the USCIS to consider orality including audiovisual as a medium for knowledge or advice transfer to minority communities since it is more preferred and effective alternative than written communications.

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Notes
1. https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=Foreign%20born&id=ACSST1Y2019.S0502&hidePreview=false.
2. The foreign-born population is composed of anyone who is not a U.S. citizen at birth. This includes persons who have become U.S. citizens through naturalization.
3. https://www.cnn.com/2018/05/20/us/english-us-official-language-trnd/index.html.
4. https://www.uscis.gov/about-us/our-history.
5. https://www.uscis.gov/about-us/mission-and-core-values/what-we-do.
6. http://www.unesco.org/languages-atlas/index.php.
7. https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=arabic&tid=ACSST1Y2019.C16001.
8. https://censusestimates.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/National_Demographics_SubAncestries-2018.pdf.

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