TRANSLATING ADJECTIVES ACROSS LANGUAGES AND CULTURES: ACCURACY, OMISSION, AND ERROR PATTERNS IN STUDENT RENDERINGS

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Abstract: This study investigates the challenges faced by student translators when rendering English adjectives into Arabic, using selected passages from *Midaq Alley* as a corpus. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the analysis combines quantitative assessment of accuracy with qualitative examination of error types. Translations were classified as similar, different, or unattempted, allowing for a systematic evaluation of both correctness and omission. The findings reveal recurrent difficulties related to agreement, syntactic placement, semantic nuance, and figurative meaning. Complex noun phrases and culturally embedded adjectives produced the highest error rates, while omissions frequently occurred when adjectival meaning depended on contextual inference. The study highlights the need for targeted pedagogical strategies that integrate contrastive grammar, contextual interpretation, and stylistic awareness in translator training.

Keywords: English–Arabic translation, adjectival equivalence, translation errors, mixed-methods analysis, literary translation, contrastive grammar, semantic nuance, translator training

1. Introduction

The study of translation equivalence has long emphasized the centrality of grammatical and semantic accuracy in achieving a coherent and communicatively effective target text. Within this broader framework, the translation of adjectives occupies a particularly sensitive position, as adjectives contribute not only to propositional meaning but also to stylistic nuance, evaluative stance, and textual cohesion. In English–Arabic translation, these functions become even more complex due to the structural and morphological differences between the two languages. Arabic adjectives must agree with the nouns they modify in gender, number, definiteness, and case, forming a tightly regulated system that differs markedly from the more flexible adjectival patterns of English. According to Mansoor (2017: 216-217), Arabic adjectives must agree with the noun they post-modify in gender, number, case and definiteness a requirement that frequently challenges novice translators and leads to recurrent errors in both syntactic placement and semantic interpretation. These difficulties are compounded in literary translation, where adjectives often carry connotative, cultural, or stylistic weight that cannot be rendered through literal equivalence alone.

Despite the importance of adjectives in shaping the semantic and stylistic profile of a text, research on English–Arabic translation has tended to focus more extensively on verbs, tense–aspect systems, and syntactic structures, leaving adjectival equivalence

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comparatively underexplored. Recent linguistic research has begun to examine adjectives in specialized discourse, such as meteorological communication (Hauer & Dejica 2024), yet studies focusing on adjectival behavior in translation remain scarce. The present study addresses this gap by examining how senior-level translation students render English adjectives into Modern Standard Arabic when translating selected passages from Naguib Mahfouz's *Midaq Alley*. The novel, already used as a corpus in previous research on verbal occurrences (Mansoor & Dejica 2025), provides a rich and varied adjectival landscape, combining descriptive, evaluative, and culturally embedded modifiers that test the translators' ability to navigate both linguistic and contextual constraints. Although the English version used for analysis is itself a translation from Arabic, this does not diminish the value of the study. On the contrary, it introduces an additional layer of complexity that requires students to reconstruct adjectival meaning through contrastive reasoning. The English text reflects choices already shaped by cross-linguistic mediation, and engaging with these choices challenges students to identify underlying semantic and stylistic intentions rather than relying on surface-level lexical transfer.

The study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative analysis of error frequency with qualitative examination of error types and their underlying causes. This dual perspective provides a comprehensive view of how student translators handle adjectival equivalence and reveals the specific areas in which difficulties tend to cluster. Translations are classified into three categories—similar, different, and unattempted—allowing for a systematic assessment of both accuracy and omission. The results show that many students struggle to select appropriate adjectival equivalents, particularly when faced with complex or context-dependent modifiers. Errors range from failures of agreement and incorrect syntactic placement to semantic misinterpretation, overgeneralization, and inappropriate literalism. These patterns suggest that students often rely on surface-level lexical substitution without fully considering the grammatical, semantic, and stylistic constraints that govern adjective use in Arabic.

By analysing these errors in detail, the present article aims to contribute to translation pedagogy in two ways. First, it provides empirical evidence of the specific challenges faced by student translators when dealing with adjectives, thereby enriching the broader literature on translation quality assessment and contrastive grammar. Second, it offers recommendations for improving the teaching of adjectival equivalence, emphasizing the need for explicit instruction in Arabic morphological rules, contextual interpretation, and stylistic sensitivity. The findings highlight the importance of integrating contrastive linguistic awareness into translation training and of providing students with opportunities to practice adjectival translation in contextually rich and semantically demanding environments.

Section 2 of the article outlines the theoretical framework, drawing on translation studies, contrastive linguistics, and Arabic grammar. Section 3 describes the methodology, including corpus selection, participant profile, and analytical procedures. Section 4 presents the findings and discussion, examining general trends, morphological and syntactic errors, semantic and pragmatic issues, and patterns of omission. Section 5 offers recommendations for translators and translation lecturers, and Section 6 concludes with reflections on the study's implications and suggestions for future research.

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2. Theoretical Framework

The analysis of adjectival equivalence in English–Arabic translation must be situated within the broader theoretical landscape of translation studies, where the concept of equivalence has long served as a central yet contested construct. Classical approaches, beginning with Nida's (1964) distinction between formal and dynamic equivalence, emphasize the need to reproduce either the structural form or the communicative effect of the source text. Catford (1965) similarly frames translation as the replacement of textual material in one language with equivalent material in another, foregrounding the linguistic constraints that govern such replacements. Later theorists, including House (1997), Newmark (1988), Dejica (2008, 2010) and Baker (2018) refine these perspectives by highlighting the interplay between linguistic, pragmatic, and cultural factors in determining what counts as an acceptable equivalent. In literary translation, where adjectives often carry stylistic, evaluative, and affective weight, these theoretical tensions become particularly salient, as translators must balance semantic accuracy with the preservation of tone, register, and authorial intent.

Within this theoretical context, contrastive linguistics provides essential insights into the structural differences between English and Arabic that shape adjectival translation. English adjectives are relatively invariant, typically preceding the noun and exhibiting minimal morphological marking. By contrast, Arabic adjectives are morphologically rich and syntactically constrained, requiring full agreement with the noun they modify in gender, number, definiteness, and case (Mansoor, 2017: 216-217), a rule that governs both simple and complex noun phrases and that significantly influences translation choices. The post-nominal position of adjectives in Arabic further distinguishes the two systems, often requiring translators to restructure the noun phrase to maintain grammaticality and coherence. These structural divergences mean that literal transfer from English to Arabic is rarely possible, and successful translation depends on the translator's ability to navigate morphological inflection, syntactic ordering, and semantic nuance simultaneously.

Beyond morphology and syntax, semantic and pragmatic considerations play a crucial role in adjectival equivalence. Adjectives frequently encode evaluative meaning, cultural connotations, or context-dependent nuances that resist straightforward lexical substitution. Baker (2018) highlights the challenges posed by polysemy, collocation, and semantic fields, noting that adjectives often participate in fixed or semi-fixed expressions whose meanings cannot be deduced from their individual components. In Arabic, where lexical fields and collocational patterns differ significantly from those of English, translators must attend not only to dictionary definitions but also to usage norms and stylistic appropriateness, especially when dealing with adjectives that carry implicit cultural or emotional associations. These challenges are amplified in literary texts, where adjectives contribute to characterization, atmosphere, and narrative voice, and where inappropriate choices can distort the stylistic fabric of the text.

The theoretical framework must also account for the role of stylistics and discourse in shaping adjectival meaning. Jakobson's (1959) view that grammatical and lexical patterns jointly govern meaning is particularly relevant here, as adjectives often function at the interface of grammar and style. Halliday's (1970) systemic-functional perspective further emphasizes that linguistic choices are motivated by communicative purpose and contextual factors, suggesting that adjectival translation cannot be reduced to isolated lexical decisions but must be understood within the broader discourse

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structure. In Arabic literary discourse, where rhetorical devices, rhythm, and imagery play a prominent role, the translator's task involves not only reproducing semantic content but also aligning with the stylistic conventions of the target language. This requires sensitivity to the pragmatic force of adjectives, their role in evaluative stance, and their contribution to textual cohesion.

Finally, translation quality assessment frameworks provide a methodological lens for evaluating adjectival equivalence. Scholars such as Kussmaul (1995), Nord (1997), and Honig (1998) argue that translation errors must be analysed in relation to communicative function, contextual appropriateness, and target-language norms. The error classification grid used in this study—distinguishing between similar, different, and unattempted translations—aligns with these perspectives by assessing not only formal accuracy but also semantic adequacy and contextual fit.

These theoretical strands—equivalence theory, contrastive linguistics, semantic and pragmatic analysis, stylistics, and translation quality assessment—provide a comprehensive framework for examining how student translators handle adjectives in English–Arabic literary translation. They underscore the multifaceted nature of adjectival equivalence and the need for translators to integrate grammatical knowledge, semantic interpretation, and stylistic awareness in order to produce accurate and contextually appropriate translations.

3. Methodology

The present study adopts a mixed-methods research design that combines quantitative and qualitative procedures in order to investigate the accuracy and nature of adjectival equivalence in English–Arabic translation. This methodological choice reflects the dual objective of the research: to identify recurrent error patterns in the translation of adjectives and to explore the underlying linguistic and interpretive factors that contribute to these errors.

As in our previous study on verbal occurrences (Mansoor and Dejica 2025), the mixed-methods approach allows for a systematic analysis of both the frequency and the quality of student translations, thereby offering a comprehensive perspective on the challenges posed by adjectival structures. The quantitative component focuses on the distribution of similar, different, and unattempted translations, while the qualitative component examines the semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic dimensions of the errors identified. This combination of methods is particularly suitable for translation studies, where numerical trends must be interpreted in light of contextual and linguistic considerations.

The corpus used for analysis consists of selected passages from Naguib Mahfouz's *Midaq Alley*, translated into English by Trevor Le Gassick. These passages were chosen because they contain a rich variety of adjectival forms, including descriptive, evaluative, and context-dependent modifiers that test the translators' ability to navigate both linguistic and cultural nuances. The use of a literary text is consistent with the study's aim of examining adjectival translation in a context where stylistic and semantic precision are essential. Although the English version is itself a translation from Arabic, this layered configuration does not diminish the validity of the analysis; rather, it introduces an additional dimension of complexity that requires students to reconstruct meaning through contrastive reasoning.

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The participants in the study were ten senior-level translation students enrolled in a translation studies program (AL-Mustansiriyah University, Department of English Translation in Iraq). They were selected randomly, on a voluntary basis, ensuring ethical compliance and minimizing selection bias. All participants had completed foundational coursework in translation theory and practice, as well as advanced courses in English and Arabic grammar. Their linguistic background and academic preparation make them an appropriate group for examining the challenges of adjectival translation, as they possess sufficient theoretical knowledge to attempt accurate equivalents but may still struggle with complex grammatical and semantic structures. The students were instructed to translate the selected passages into Modern Standard Arabic, the variety used in academic and professional contexts, and were permitted to consult dictionaries and reference materials during the translation process.

The analytical framework employed in this study is based on an error classification grid that distinguishes between three types of translations: similar translations, which accurately preserve the meaning of the source text without grammatical or semantic deviation; different translations, which fail to provide an appropriate equivalent and result in inaccuracies; and unattempted translations, in which the adjective is omitted entirely. This tripartite system, grounded in established approaches to translation quality assessment, enables a nuanced evaluation of both accuracy and omission. By categorizing translations in this way, the framework captures not only the correctness of individual lexical choices but also the broader patterns of difficulty that emerge across the dataset, thereby offering insight into how student translators manage adjectival structures and where targeted pedagogical support may be most needed.

Data analysis proceeded in two stages. The quantitative stage involved counting the occurrences of similar, different, and unattempted translations for each adjective in the corpus. These frequencies were then converted into percentages to identify general trends and areas of difficulty. The qualitative stage involved a detailed examination of the translations classified as different or unattempted. This analysis focused on identifying the types of errors made—such as failures of agreement, incorrect syntactic placement, semantic misinterpretation, or inappropriate literalism—and on exploring the possible causes of these errors. Particular attention was given to instances where the adjective carried cultural or stylistic significance, as these cases often revealed deeper issues related to contextual interpretation and lexical choice.

Throughout the analysis, the study adhered to the principles of contrastive linguistics and translation theory outlined in the theoretical framework. The examination of errors was informed by the structural differences between English and Arabic, the semantic and pragmatic functions of adjectives, and the stylistic conventions of literary discourse. This methodological alignment ensures that the findings are grounded in both empirical evidence and theoretical insight, thereby enhancing the validity and relevance of the study.

4. Findings and Discussion

The analysis of adjectival translations produced by the ten senior-level students reveals a complex interplay of grammatical, morphological, and semantic challenges that significantly affect the accuracy and quality of English–Arabic translation. As in the earlier study on verbal occurrences (Mansoor and Dejica 2025), the quantitative results show

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that the number of “different translations” exceeds that of “similar translations,” while “unattempted translations” appear with notable frequency in contexts where adjectives carry complex semantic or stylistic functions. These tendencies confirm that adjectives constitute a particularly challenging category in English–Arabic translation. The findings also demonstrate that errors arise not from a single source but from the interaction of morphological, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic factors, each of which contributes to the translators’ difficulty in achieving accurate equivalence.

A general trend emerging from the data is the translators’ tendency to rely on literal, dictionary-based equivalents without sufficiently considering the grammatical constraints of Arabic or the contextual meaning of the adjective in the source text. This tendency is especially visible in cases where the English adjective participates in a descriptive sequence or contributes to the narrative tone. For example, “a man of medium height, pallid complexion, and slightly heavy build” was rendered as “شاحب متوسط القامة، ميال للبدانة”. While this version respects Arabic adjectival agreement and stylistic norms, several student translations violated agreement rules, producing forms such as *متوسطةالقامة* (incorrect feminine agreement) or *ميال* جدا للبدانة (adding unjustified intensification).

Morphological and syntactic errors constitute another significant category of difficulties. Arabic adjectives must follow the noun and maintain full agreement, yet many of the “different translations” identified in the corpus stem from failures to observe these rules. For instance, the description “long thin face” was correctly rendered in the model translation as"*وجهاً* مستطيلا" ونحيلا but several students altered the form or order of the adjectives, producing combinations such as*وجه طوياً ونحيف* جدا or *نحيفه مستطيل وجه*, which either violated agreement rules or disrupted the natural rhythm of the Arabic noun phrase. In another example, the adjective “nice” in “nice clothes” was sometimes translated as *لطيفة* rather than the idiomatic *جميلة*, resulting in a semantically awkward collocation. These examples illustrate that many morphological errors arise from incorrect agreement marking, misplacement of adjectives within the noun phrase, or confusion regarding permissible adjectival patterns in Arabic. Such deviations demonstrate that students often struggle to integrate morphological accuracy with syntactic and stylistic appropriateness when rendering adjectival structures.

Semantic and pragmatic errors also feature prominently in the corpus, particularly in cases where the English adjective carries connotative or culturally embedded meaning. Adjectives that express evaluation, intensity, or emotional tone were often mistranslated or rendered with inappropriate equivalents. For example, “gems of times gone by” was rendered by some students as جواهر *الأزمنة الماضية* a literal but stylistically inappropriate phrase. The correct rendering *تحف العهود الغابرة* captures both the metaphor and the cultural tone of the original. “Nice clothes” was sometimes translated as لطيفة *ثياب* which is semantically odd in Arabic; the idiomatic collocation *ثياب جميلة* was used in the model translation. The figurative expression “a burning firebrand like you” was mistranslated by several students as *مشتعلة نار*, losing the metaphorical sense of temperament and reducing the phrase to a literal physical description. Another example concerns “a pallid complexion,” where students often chose literal or weak equivalents such as *الوجه باهت* or omitted the adjective entirely, thereby losing the atmospheric and evaluative nuance encoded in *الوجه شاحب*. These cases illustrate how figurative and connotative adjectives require sensitivity to imagery, tone, and cultural associations, and they reflect the challenges associated with translating adjectives that

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function beyond simple description, particularly when they contribute to characterization, mood, or stylistic effect.

Quantitative evidence further supports these observations. Simple adjectives—particularly those describing basic physical attributes or straightforward qualities—tended to yield higher accuracy rates, with approximately half of the student translations classified as similar, while the remainder were divided between different and unattempted translations (Table 1). By contrast, accuracy declined sharply when students encountered complex noun phrases or figurative adjectival expressions. In these cases, only about one-third of translations were similar, while the majority displayed semantic weakening, structural distortion, or inappropriate lexical choices. For example, the phrase *الشاملة الحياة بجذور بأعماقها تتصل حياة* was rendered accurately by only a minority of students, with most producing versions that failed to preserve the depth and cohesion of the original description. These patterns indicate that semantic density and structural complexity correlate strongly with translation difficulty, particularly when adjectives contribute to metaphor, imagery, or layered descriptive meaning.

Adjective Type	**Example (ST → TT)**	**Similar (%)**	**Different (%)**	**Unattempted (%)**
Simple physical attribute	"thin face" → *نحيل وجه*	50%	40%	10%
Basic evaluative adjective	"nice clothes" → *جميلة ثياب*	50%	40%	10%
Complex descriptive noun phrase	"roots connect with life as a whole" → *تتصل حياة بأعماقها...*	30%	60%	10%
Figurative adjectival expression	"burning firebrand" → *جمرة موقدة*	30%	60%	10%
Multi-adjective sequence	"long, thin face" → *نحيلاً وجهاً مستطلاً*	40%	50%	10%
Implicit adjectival meaning in context	"make herself look pretty" → *الجميلة بالثياب تتزين*	40%	50%	10%

Note: Percentages reflect the distribution of student translations across the three evaluation categories.

Table 1. Accuracy of Adjective Translation by Complexity Type

Omission represents another recurrent issue in the students' translations. "Unattempted translations" frequently occurred when the adjective was embedded in a complex noun phrase or when its meaning depended on contextual inference rather than direct dictionary lookup. For example, several students omitted one of the two adjectives in the phrase "long, thin face," producing translations that rendered only *نحيل الوجه* or *الوجه طويل* and thereby weakening the descriptive precision of the original. Similarly, the evaluative adjective in "strange men" was sometimes omitted, resulting in neutral renderings such as *رجل* اجنبي instead of *رجل* غريب . The figurative adjective in "burning firebrand" was occasionally dropped altogether, reducing the vivid metaphor *جمرة موقدة* to a plain noun phrase with no descriptive force. These omissions diminish the expressive richness of the target text and indicate that students often avoid translating adjectives whose meaning is context-dependent, metaphorical, or semantically dense.

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Such patterns highlight the need for pedagogical strategies that encourage translators to engage more actively with challenging adjectival items rather than omitting them when uncertainty arises.

When comparing the findings on adjectives with those from the earlier study on verbs, several parallels and divergences emerge. Like verbs (Mansoor and Dejica 2025), adjectives pose challenges related to morphological inflection, syntactic placement, and contextual interpretation. In both categories, students exhibited a tendency toward literal translation and insufficient attention to grammatical rules. However, the nature of the errors differs in important ways. Whereas verb errors often involve tense, aspect, or agreement, adjective errors more frequently concern semantic nuance, stylistic appropriateness, and cultural connotation. This distinction suggests that adjectives require a different type of linguistic and interpretive competence, one that integrates grammatical knowledge with semantic sensitivity and stylistic awareness. The findings therefore reinforce the need for translation pedagogy to address grammatical categories not in isolation but in relation to their semantic and pragmatic functions within the text.

Overall, the analysis demonstrates that the translation of adjectives from English into Arabic presents a multifaceted challenge for student translators, involving the interplay of morphological, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic factors. The prevalence of errors across these dimensions indicates that students require more explicit instruction in contrastive grammar, contextual interpretation, and stylistic nuance. The findings also highlight the importance of integrating authentic literary texts into translation training, as such texts expose students to the full range of adjectival functions and encourage the development of advanced linguistic and interpretive skills. By identifying the specific areas in which students struggle, this study provides a foundation for targeted pedagogical interventions aimed at improving the quality of adjectival translation and, by extension, the overall competence of future translators.

5. Recommendations for Translators and Translation Lecturers

The findings of this study indicate that the translation of adjectives from English into Arabic presents a multifaceted challenge for student translators, involving the interplay of morphological, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic factors. The prevalence of errors across these dimensions suggests that both translators and translation lecturers must adopt more targeted strategies to address the specific difficulties associated with adjectival equivalence. The recommendations below are grounded in the empirical evidence presented in Section 4 and in the broader theoretical considerations outlined earlier in the article.

For translators, the first priority is to develop a deeper understanding of the contrastive grammatical structures that govern adjective use in English and Arabic. The data show that many errors stem from insufficient mastery of Arabic agreement rules, particularly in relation to gender, number, definiteness, and case. Translators must therefore cultivate a more systematic awareness of how adjectives function within Arabic noun phrases and how these structures differ from their English counterparts. This requires not only theoretical knowledge but also repeated exposure to authentic Arabic texts in which adjectival patterns are used correctly and idiomatically. Translators should also engage in deliberate practice with complex noun phrases, figurative expressions, and culturally embedded adjectives, as these categories were shown to produce the highest rates of error. Such practice should emphasize the integration of morphological

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accuracy with semantic nuance, encouraging translators to move beyond literal equivalence and toward contextually appropriate rendering.

A second recommendation concerns the development of contextual analysis skills. Many of the errors identified in the corpus resulted from a failure to interpret the adjective within its broader narrative or descriptive context. Translators must learn to consider the communicative function of the adjective—whether it conveys evaluation, atmosphere, characterization, or stylistic tone—and to select Arabic equivalents that preserve these functions. This requires sensitivity to collocation, connotation, and cultural resonance, as well as the ability to infer meaning from context when dictionary definitions prove insufficient. Translators should be encouraged to consult parallel texts, literary corpora, and reputable Arabic translations of similar works to gain insight into how experienced translators handle comparable adjectival structures.

A third recommendation relates to problem-solving strategies. The frequency of unattempted translations in the corpus suggests that some students avoid translating difficult adjectives rather than attempting to resolve their meaning. To address this issue, translators should be trained in lexical inference techniques, such as analyzing morphological components, identifying semantic fields, and using contextual clues to approximate meaning. They should also be encouraged to adopt a more exploratory approach to translation, testing multiple possible equivalents and evaluating them in relation to the surrounding text. This process fosters greater confidence and reduces the likelihood of omission, which can significantly weaken the expressive power of the target text.

For translation lecturers, the findings highlight the need for more explicit instruction in contrastive grammar, particularly in relation to Arabic adjectival structures. While students may possess general knowledge of Arabic grammar, the data suggest that they struggle to apply this knowledge consistently in translation contexts. Lecturers should therefore incorporate targeted exercises that focus specifically on adjective agreement, syntactic placement, and morphological derivation. These exercises should be embedded within authentic translation tasks rather than taught in isolation, allowing students to see how grammatical rules operate within real texts. Lecturers should also provide detailed feedback on adjectival errors, explaining not only what is incorrect but why the error occurred and how it can be corrected.

Another pedagogical recommendation concerns the integration of literary texts into translation training. The complexity of adjectival usage in *Midaq Alley* demonstrates the value of literary material for developing advanced linguistic and interpretive skills. Lecturers should select texts that contain a rich variety of adjectival forms and that challenge students to engage with stylistic nuance, figurative language, and cultural context. Classroom discussions should focus on how adjectives contribute to narrative voice, characterization, and atmosphere, encouraging students to appreciate the aesthetic dimensions of translation. Such discussions can help students move beyond literal translation and toward a more holistic understanding of textual meaning.

Finally, lecturers should foster an environment that encourages experimentation, reflection, and collaborative learning. Group translation activities, peer review sessions, and guided discussions can help students articulate their reasoning, compare alternative solutions, and learn from one another's strategies. These collaborative practices align with the broader pedagogical aim of developing translators who are not only linguistically competent but also reflective, adaptable, and capable of making informed decisions in complex translation scenarios.

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These recommendations underscore the importance of integrating grammatical precision, contextual interpretation, and stylistic awareness into both translation practice and pedagogy. By addressing the specific challenges associated with adjectival equivalence, translators and lecturers can contribute to the development of more accurate, nuanced, and culturally sensitive translations, thereby enhancing the overall quality of English–Arabic literary translation.

6. Conclusion

The present study set out to investigate the challenges associated with translating adjectives from English into Arabic, using selected passages from *Midaq Alley* as a corpus and drawing on translations produced by senior-level students of translation studies. Through a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative frequency analysis with qualitative examination of error types, the research has demonstrated that adjectives constitute a particularly demanding grammatical and semantic category for novice translators. The findings reveal that errors arise from a convergence of morphological, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic factors, each of which contributes to the difficulty of achieving accurate and contextually appropriate adjectival equivalence.

The quantitative results show that “different translations” significantly outnumber “similar translations,” while “unattempted translations” appear with notable frequency in cases involving complex noun phrases, figurative expressions, or culturally embedded adjectives. These patterns highlight the need for more systematic training in contrastive grammar and contextual interpretation, as students often struggle to select appropriate equivalents when adjectives carry layered or context-dependent meaning. The qualitative analysis further reveals that many errors stem from insufficient mastery of Arabic agreement rules, overreliance on literal translation, and limited sensitivity to stylistic nuance and collocational norms. In several instances, students produced grammatically possible but contextually inappropriate equivalents, demonstrating that adjectival translation requires not only linguistic competence but also interpretive and stylistic awareness.

The study also underscores the pedagogical value of literary texts in translation training. The rich adjectival landscape of *Midaq Alley* exposes students to a wide range of descriptive, evaluative, and figurative expressions, challenging them to navigate the full spectrum of adjectival functions. By engaging with such texts, students develop a deeper understanding of how adjectives contribute to narrative voice, characterization, and atmosphere, and they learn to appreciate the aesthetic dimensions of translation. The findings therefore support the integration of authentic literary material into translation curricula, alongside targeted instruction in Arabic morphology, syntax, and semantic nuance.

While the study offers valuable insights into the difficulties faced by student translators, it is not without limitations. The sample size is relatively small, and the analysis is restricted to a single literary text, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research could expand the corpus to include a wider range of genres (Dejica 2011), explore adjectival translation across different proficiency levels, or examine the impact of computer-assisted translation tools on the handling of complex adjectival structures. Longitudinal studies could also provide insight into how students’ competence in adjectival translation develops over time and in response to specific pedagogical interventions.

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Despite these limitations, the study contributes meaningfully to the field of translation studies by highlighting the central role of adjectives in shaping semantic precision and stylistic coherence in English–Arabic translation. By identifying the specific areas in which students struggle and by offering targeted recommendations for both translators and lecturers, the research provides a foundation for improving translation pedagogy and enhancing the overall quality of literary translation. Ultimately, the findings reaffirm the importance of integrating grammatical accuracy, contextual interpretation, and stylistic sensitivity into translation training, thereby equipping future translators with the skills necessary to navigate the complexities of adjectival equivalence with confidence and competence.

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