

# Analysis of Arabic Translations of English Implied Conditional Sentences: Difficulties and Implications

Mohammad A Al Kuran

Translation Department, Yarmouk University, Jordan

Khalid Bani Domi

Arabic Department, Yarmouk University, Jordan

**Abstract**—English implied conditionals pose a challenge when translated into Arabic for syntactic and semantic reasons. This study therefore aims to identify some potential problems when translating conditional sentences without the conditional marker ‘if’ or any other conditional marker. To accomplish this goal, thirty Arab students from Yarmouk University were requested to translate a list of inferred conditional structures into their target language (TL) equivalents. The study demonstrates that Arabic conditionals do not accurately convey the syntactic and semantic characteristics of English conditionals that are presented without the conditional particle “if”. It also demonstrates that the implicit conditionals cannot be fully translated into non-conditional forms. The study concludes with a discussion of the study’s implications for class from a pedagogical perspective.

**Index Terms**—conditional clause, restrictive modifiers, syntactic features, semantic features, implied condition

## I. INTRODUCTION

Conditional expressed differently in different languages. Because Arabic contains numerous conditional indicators that establish the meaning of conditional sentences, English, for instance, expresses conditionals differently from Arabic. In order to properly translate a conditional sentence, the translator must first determine which structures indicate a condition and then translate those elements into their comparable structures in the target language. It is doubtful that the syntactic and semantic aspects will be translated correctly into their target equivalents if they are not completely realized.

A conditional sentence consists of two clauses, namely ‘if clause’ and ‘main clause’. The first clause is used to introduce and specify the condition, and the second is used to provide the result or consequence of the condition (Khalil, 2010; Kumakiri, 2013). A large number of English conditionals are introduced by the subordinate particle ‘if’ which expresses a direct relationship between the two clauses. This relationship can be expressed in different types of conditions. Quirk et al. (1985, pp. 1092–97) point out four types of conditional sentences:

- (a) The zero conditional represents facts and certainties, such as if I have a headache, I take an aspirin.
- (b) The first conditional expresses a hypothetical situation, the truth of which is unverified, such as ‘If you study hard, you will pass the exam’.
- (c) The second conditional describes less probable situations and refers to imaginary events such as: If I had money, I would buy a yacht.
- (d) The third conditional refers to contrary-to-fact past events, such as if I had listened to my teacher’s advice, I would not have failed the test.

In the constructions above, conditionals are indicated by the use of if clauses. These constructions have been widely tackled in grammar books. However, not much research has been conducted on implied conditionals and their syntactic and semantic features, especially in English and Arabic. Since the syntactic system determines the production of well-formed sentences, the translation of implied conditionals is seen as a challenge for a translator who lacks the basic skills of their syntactic and semantic knowledge or receives no sufficient knowledge of various conditional structures. English conditional sentences pose a challenge because there are different possible meanings of conditional sentences (Norris, 2003; Ramires, 2005). Similarly, Nekoueizdah and Bahrani (2013) point out that meanings, forms, and time-tense relationships cause the major obstacles in conditional sentences for nonnative speakers of English. Because the translator must recognize different syntactic structures as conditionals before correctly translating them into their TL conditional equivalents, the task may be more difficult when “if” is not present. For instance, even though the word “if” is not used directly, a translator needs to understand that a statement like “should you have a headache, take an aspirin” conveys the meaning of “if”. To be able to set the proper TL equivalent structure, he must also be able to identify the sort of conditional, such as zero conditional (take an aspirin if you have a headache), to be able to set the appropriate TL equivalent structure. Notably, Leech (1982) argues that “word order links (e.g., syntax) represent the transmission of meaning, so knowledge of grammar is a core issue in translation” (p. 3).

In this respect, Thakur (1997) observes that “the syntactic relationship between words in a sentence depends highly on word order and word-class membership” (p. 88). Therefore, forming the words in sentences that do not have ‘if’ or any equivalent conjunction makes the creation of conditional sentences possible. Commenting on this topic, Swan (2000) explains that “placing the verb operator such as were, should, and had before the subject instead of ‘if’ in conditionals occurs in the formal style of English” (p. 261).

Knowledge of grammar not only concerns the surface structure of sentences, but also the deep or implicit structure. People tend to say something in a more economical way to avoid wasting unnecessary time or words. As a matter of fact, concise language is more efficient and effective in communicating a message. People therefore use alternatives to the conditional clause to give readers or listeners different options and meanings for conditionals to get their points across more effectively. Schueler (2008) provides an array of English structures in which implied conditionals are possible, such as noun phrases, prepositional phrases, coordinating conjunctions, restrictive modifiers (restrictive adjectives and restrictive relative clauses), and participles, to mention a few. So, sentences of implied condition do not have any evident conditional clause. The conditional clause is usually preoccupied by another word or phrase, such as a noun or noun phrase, an adjective, or a relative clause. Judging from the main clause, one may assume that anyone who has basic knowledge of conditional sentences has no difficulty taking these nouns and phrases as signs of a conditional sense.

## II. ARABIC CONDITIONAL SENTENCES

Arabic conditionals contain two correlative clauses preceded by a conditional particle. The particle signifies the semantic relation of one clause to another. Unlike English, where the sequence of the verb forms determines the type of condition, Arabic depends on the various markers to specify the type of condition and its semantic implication (Ryding, 2005). Wright (1986) explains “that in Arabic there are more than 16 conditional particles, but the basic conditional particles usually used are *itha*, *inn*, and *law*” (p. 12). Although these conditional particles are roughly equivalent to ‘if’, they have syntactic and semantic differences in Arabic, as shown below:

(A) Particle (*inn*) is the most conditional particle, which originally refers to condition. It introduces one perfect form in the two clauses, or one of them might utilize perfect or imperfect. According to Wright (1986), “the time reference of this particle regardless of the form of the verb is confined to the future” (p. 13). He holds that *inn* introduces a doubted event whose occurrence may or may not be guaranteed. i.e., its function is similar to “if”, which denotes type one in English. Thus, the verb (perfect or imperfect) that *inn* selects in either clause makes no difference in its future reference since the particle, not the tense, is what determines the type of condition in Arabic.

(B) Particle *ithaa* is often followed by the perfect and denotes conditionality whenever the context of the result condition is contingent on the condition. Unlike *inn*, which denotes a type of condition whose realization is skeptical, *ithaa* refers to a type of condition whose realization is certain. Al Jurjani (1983) “treats *ithaa* as a temporal device that denotes the certainty of the action about which the speaker has no doubt and therefore lies beyond the scope of conditionality” (p. 118). In other words, *ithaa* denotes zero conditional. In a similar vein, al Galayni (1980) explains that *ithaa* expresses an occurrence of the conditional clause about which the speaker has no doubts. In this sense, the main clause is not conditioned by the if clause. He further contends that the particle per se determines the type of condition and its semantic function rather than the form of the verb. To elucidate the point further, consider,

1. *inn* tadrus tanjah If you study, you will pass.
2. *ih*a darasta najahta if you study, you pass.

The speaker in (a) is skeptical about the realization of the event. The main clause (passing the exam) is conditioned by the conditional clause (studying) that is possible to occur in the future. As for (b), the condition (the addressee’s studying) is certain as a general rule. There is no doubt about its future occurrence. In this case, (b) denotes a zero conditional clause, while (a) denotes type one condition. The two particles therefore cannot be used interchangeably.

As for the third marker (*law*), it is used in an unfulfilled condition. Ibn Aqil (2011) observes that this marker expresses conditionality that fails to come about in the past or one that is contrary to fact. This conditional marker is often used to express unreal conditional sentences. Although Arabic typically employs the verb in the perfect tense both semantically and structurally, this particle may select the imperfect tense in certain contexts with a past reference. But the impossible situation, according to Ryding (2005), is expressed by the perfect tense.

Unlike English, where condition type is determined by the sequence of verb forms, Arabic condition type is determined by the conditional marker. Therefore, the three conditional markers (*inn*, *ithaa*, and *law*) differ semantically and structurally because the particle determines the type of condition in Arabic. As regards verbs, Frosch and Byrne (2012) mention that English often employs certain verbs such as were, had, and should in conditional sentences to replace if, while Arabic does not employ such verbs. They also mention that the verbs used in English conditional structures agree in tense, whereas in Arabic such agreement is not required.

This background knowledge of conditional markers and their functions in Arabic is essential for rendering English conditionals appropriately into Arabic.

## III. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Implied conditional sentences have not been adequately tackled in the literature from a translational point of view. There is, therefore, a lacuna in the literature in this field of research, specifically in English and Arabic. This study came to bridge the gap in the literature and elucidate difficulties in translating implied conditionals from English into Arabic. By identifying the specific syntactic structures that students fail to grasp as conditionals, the study may have practical implications for curriculum development and reconsideration of teaching grammar as an integral part of the English language to promote students' potential of learning implicit structures. For example, incompetent students who fail to understand conditional sentences as conditionals and fail to translate them as such may require instruction that is different from the approach that only enables students to acquire the basic skills and facts of a subject. The study highlights the significance of implicit language learning as it allows learners to comprehend the message beyond the literal words used and enhances accuracy in comprehension. It also inspires further research to address this issue in a wider context, offer practical solutions, and consider other possibilities for promoting professional understanding of implicit structures.

#### IV. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

A group of 30 translation students (3<sup>rd</sup> year) at Yarmouk University in Jordan were randomly selected to translate 20 English implied conditional sentences into their TL equivalents through a self-administered questionnaire. The group was randomly selected to avoid human bias and represent the population of the sample better. The participants were exposed to English language teaching in the first two years of their major. During this period, they were taught English courses, including grammar.

As for the conditional sentences presented on the questionnaire, each sentence represents a certain structure that implies a conditional sense. In these structures, the conditional clause is occupied by another word or phrase, such as a noun or noun phrase, a relative clause, or an adjective. The items on the self-administered questionnaire have been collected from various books of grammar. These structures fall under various grammatical categories, such as coordinating conjunctions, participial clauses, restrictive modifiers, prepositional clauses, and structures utilizing *were* and *had*. The items (implied conditional sentences to be translated) were chosen equally to exemplify these categories. The inclusion of such various structures helps gain a better picture of the participants' basic knowledge of each conditional structure, as well as their ability to render them appropriately into their Arabic conditional equivalents. See table two.

The items on the questionnaire were arranged randomly to avoid any kind of order bias, the bias that generates from the order of conditional types of sentences. This technique of randomization is used to overcome order bias and withhold students from thinking in a certain direction, which will, in turn, remove discrepancies in the method of collecting data and eliminate bias.

The study does not intend to confirm a specific hypothesis. Rather, it looks for theoretical claims that can be made based on the analysis of the corpus. The authors adopt corpus-driven analysis to avoid being affected by human bias. They intend to derive the results from the analysis of a corpus rather than from an individual opinion. The study therefore confirms no preconceptions or advocates assumptions about the corpus.

To reduce the impact of subjectivity, numerical values have been provided. The quantitative information makes it easy to perform calculations, comparisons, and statistical analyses. The use of numbers is important to establish the significance of the study, document what is known about the problem, and describe the sample. Readers will not lose interest in reading such work, and the numbers provide an adequate summary of the results.

#### V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Students' responses to the various syntactic structures provided on the questionnaire have been reordered according to their respective categories (see Table 1 below). This technique allows one to look for specific evidence to support some emerging themes. The organization of the responses according to their grammatical categories will guarantee that the analysis flows in a logical way and the order makes sense.

TABLE 1  
STUDENTS' CONDITIONAL TRANSLATIONS

Type of sentence	Coordinate conjunctions	Frequencies of conditional translations	Percentages of conditional translations	Appropriate conditional translations
1	Tell the truth, and you will be saved.	4	13%	6%
2	The patient would have passed away, but the nurse had come quickly	26	86%	86%
3	Educate yourself, otherwise, you will be ignorant.	5	16%	-
4	Visit us, or we shall be hard to satisfy.		13%	-
	<b>Participial clauses</b>			
5	Deprived of food, we cannot survive.	14	13%	-
6	Not having enough money, we cannot pay for dinner.	6	20%	-
7	You need to work hard to succeed.	5	16%	-
8	Drinking too much coffee is harmful.	4	13%	
	<b>Prepositional phrase</b>			
9	Without participation, we cannot pass the exam	8	26%	-
10	I would have failed the exam without Rosa.	6	20%	10%
11	Under different circumstances, I would have accepted the offer.	6	20%	-
12	In case of fire, do not use lifts.	5	16%	-
	<b>Restrictive modifiers</b>			
13	A strong man controls himself.	-	-	-
14	A student who comes late will be punished.	-	-	-
15	Students who do not learn time management do poorly in college.	-	-	-
16	An experienced teacher would have tackled the issue differently.	-	-	-
	<b>Introductory were, had</b>			
17	Were this my hotel, I would be ashamed.	30	100%	100%
18	Were it not for the construction works, the road would be open.	30	100%	100%
19	Had the hotel not been awful, I would have enjoyed myself.	30	100%	100%
20	Had Sally decided not to attend the meeting, I would have come.	30	100%	100%

#### A. Conditional Translation

A close look at Table 1 indicates that, in most cases, students are not aware that such constructions imply a conditional sense. They may not be able to judge from the main clause that nouns or noun phrases, relative clauses, prepositional phrases, and forms of participial clauses are signs of a conditional clause. This is evident in their translations of category one, category two, category three, and category four. The highest conditional translation is evidently shown in the third category, with number 9 gaining 26%.

The fifth category is at variance with the other four categories, as 100% of the students think that introductory 'were' and 'had' imply a conditional sense and translate them as such, while the lowest percentage of students (zero percent) think that the fourth category (restrictive modifiers) implies no conditional sense at all. In other words, not a single student is aware that restrictive clauses in the fourth category imply a conditional sense. The translations within this category indicate that all students focus on the primary function of the modifiers, neglecting the condition implied.

It might be interesting to observe that, despite the fact that the highest percentage of students are aware that a conditional sense is implied in every single structure in the fifth category, such awareness is probably impacted by the fact that the conditional clause is almost obvious. For example, sentences 19 and 20 are translated appropriately into their Arabic conditional equivalents, while 16 is not, though all of the three express impossible conditions. The presence of had + past participle in 19 and 20 might explain why implied conditional clauses are easy to detect and hence more accessible by all students as opposed to 16 where the conditional clause is almost omitted altogether.

This observation might be true since the available evidence across the categories seems to verify it. Sentence 10, which falls into the category of prepositional phrase, is translated correctly into its Arabic equivalent only by 10% of the students, which means only 3 students out of six were able to translate it appropriately into its Arabic conditional sense. The omission of 'if' and the conditional clause altogether possibly set up an obstacle for students to notice the conditionality of such structures to a high degree. Unlike sentence 10, where only 10% of the students translated it appropriately into its Arabic conditional equivalent, sentence 2 in the first category was translated appropriately into its conditional equivalent by 86% of the students, though both sentences express type 3 conditional.

This kind of comparison again shows that students are more likely to translate an implied conditional sentence appropriately into its Arabic equivalent when the conditional clause is not entirely omitted. The rendering of sentence 2 into its correct Arabic equivalent cannot be attributed to chance, given that 86% of the students got it right. The reason this type of structure is plain to see as an implied conditional and easily translatable feeds into the fact that only 'if' in the conditional clause is implied and the syntax of the structure is almost in order. This fact is also said of 19 and 20, where the conditional clause is almost preserved except for 'if'. This is not the case when it comes to 11 and 16, though both structures express type 3 conditionals, where the majority of students fail to grasp the conditionality of these two sentences because the conditional clause is implied and requires reordering to be retrieved. However, the order of the two clauses, as findings show, has no influence on how sentences are perceived as implied conditionals. For example, in sentence 2, the main clause precedes the implied if-clause, while in 19 and 20, the implied if - clause precedes the main clause. This position has no significant influence on students' ability to perceive such structures that express type 3 conditions as implied conditionals.

As Table 1 shows, zero and type 1 conditionals expressed in various implied conditional structures pose a serious challenge for students to perceive as conditional sentences. This is evident in the first, second, and third categories, and to a higher degree in the fourth category, where none has understood the restrictive modifiers as implied conditional sentences. The conditional clause in these categories is not as salient as in type 2 and 3 conditional structures, i.e., 17, 18, 19, 20, and 2. Also, these latter sentences, unlike other structures, indicate that the syntax of the conditional clause is almost in order.

The slight differences in students' responses to zero and first type conditions across the categories are not statistically significant. Students' perceptions of zero and first type conditions differ only by a small percentage. The majority of the students are unaware that such structures imply a conditional sense and that they need to be translated as such. In light of the students' responses, it is obvious that students are in general not typically taught the variants of implied conditionals because they failed to perceive them as conditionals.

Even the low percentage of the students who managed to perceive the implied conditionality of the structures given on the self-questionnaire have difficulty differentiating between various types of conditions in translation. They are unable to distinguish between the most frequently used particles in Arabic, i.e., "*inn*", "*ithaa*", and "*law*", which are roughly equivalent to 'if'. Their use of these conditional markers makes no functional distinction in translation between zero conditional, first type conditional, impossible conditional, or counter-to-fact statements. As a matter of fact, the participants used these conditionals as though they were synonymous.

The semantic and syntactic difference between *inn*, and *ithaa* has received a lot of attention by many scholars (Alsharaswneh, 2006; Aaswad, 2005). They explain precisely the function of each particle. They observe that *inn* expresses an open possible condition followed either by perfect or imperfect, while *ithaa* is often followed by the perfect and expresses certainty. In other words, *ithaa* refers to what is certain to happen and *inn* to what is uncertain. Although no more than 26% of the students were able to detect a conditional sense across the first four categories, their translations indicate indistinctive applications of such markers. These markers are used interchangeably. For example, sentences 1, 3, and 9 are translated into *inn/ithaa taqul alhaqiqah satanju*, *inn/ithaa tuthaqqif nafasaka lan takuma jahilan*, and *inn/itha lam nusharik lan nnanjaha*, respectively, as if students believe that the two markers have the same function, or else they are not sure of any semantic or syntactic differences between them. In other cases, students use *law* and *ithaa* interchangeably with real conditional sentences, as in 8 and 12 *law/ithaa tashrub gahwa kathiran tadorka*, *ithaa/law kana hunaka hariqun*, and *fala tastakhdim al masaaid*, respectively. The use of *ithaa* in conjunction with *law* in real conditions indicates that students are not aware that *ithaa* and *law* are semantically and syntactically different.

The use of one particle in conjunction with another different particle indicates students lack the semantic and syntactic skills to use either marker successfully in Arabic. Khalil (2010) states that "situations that are contrary to the fact in the past are denoted by *law* (if) and are followed by a perfect verb in both clauses, condition and main" (p. 287). This statement shows that the use of *ithaa* and *law* interchangeably in students' translations is a serious mistake caused by the lack of adequate knowledge of conditionals in Arabic. Also, the use of *inn* and *ithaa* interchangeably is an indication that they have not received enough practice in Arabic conditional markers. In support of the distinction between these conditional markers, Azis (1989) observes that "*inn* expresses the speaker's skepticism about the realization of the event, while *law* refers to unreal actions in the present. As for *ithaa*, it expresses certainty and is often followed by the perfect" (p. 224).

While students in general misuse the common Arabic conditionals, there is another conditional marker (*law la*) that they applied correctly in 2 and, to a lesser degree, in 10: *law la gudumu almumaridah la matal maridu*, *law la Rosa larasabtu fil imtihaan*. This particle complex, meaning "if it had not been for". It is a negative form of *law* (if. not). Kharma and Hajjaj (1989) observe that "*law la* (if not) should be followed by a nominal in condition and a verbal in main clause" (p. 141). Students' responses to sentences 2 and 10 indicate their use of the complex particle *law la* in the conditional clause and the emphatic *lam* (l) in the main clause. This is an appropriate use in line with the Arabic rules of grammar, "which stipulate that the main clause is frequently but not necessarily introduced by the emphatic *lam*" (Al Aswad, 2005, p. 74). Again, what accounts for more appropriate conditional translations (86% for 2) as opposed to 10% for sentence 10 is the fact that the conditional clause in 2 is almost explicit and in order. Both sentences express the third conditional type. This provides further evidence that what accounts for detecting and then translating an implied

conditional sentence appropriately into Arabic is in general not the type of condition but rather how clearly the conditional clause is stated.

### B. Non-Conditional Translation

Just as students have difficulty translating English implied conditionals into Arabic, their non-conditional translations, though greatly outnumbering conditional translations, are not entirely free from mistakes. This defect in their translation is due to poor grammatical knowledge.

As Table 2 shows, a considerable number of participants are aware that English structures shown in the first category involve coordinate conjunctions, but their translation of such conjunctions using one single equivalent 'aw' without considering the context is a big mistake. This shows in their translations of sentences 1, 3, and 4 in the first category. This behavior has led to inadequate translations expressed in awkward Arabic structures. For example, the Arabic translation of 1 *qul alhaqiqa aw satanju*, literally, tell the truth or you will be saved, makes no sense because the two ideas are not logically connected. A more adequate translation of the sentence could be *qul algaigah liky tanju*, tell the truth in order to be saved. Although the translations of 3, and 4 make sense, they can be better translated by replacing aw with *wa illa* (otherwise), which is more appropriate to contrast ideas.

TABLE 2  
STUDENTS' NON-CONDITIONAL TRANSLATIONS

Type of sentence	Coordinate conjunctions	Frequency of non-conditional translations	Percentage of non-conditional translations	Appropriate non-conditional translation
1	Tell the truth, and you will be saved.	26	86%	77%
2	The patient would have passed away, but the nurse had come quickly	4	13%	13%
3	Educate yourself, otherwise, you will be ignorant.	25	83%	83%
4	Visit us, or we shall be hard to satisfy.	26	86%	86%
	<b>Participial clauses</b>			
5	Deprived of food, we cannot survive.	26	86%	86%
6	Not having enough money, we cannot pay for dinner.	24	80%	80%
7	You need to work hard to succeed	25	83%	83%
8	Drinking too much coffee is harmful.	26	86%	86%
	<b>Prepositional phrases</b>			
9	Without participation, we cannot pass the exam.	22	73%	73%
10	I would have failed the exam without Rosa.	24	80%	61%
11	Under different circumstances, I would have accepted the offer.	24	80%	61%
12	In case of fire, do not use lifts.	25	83%	48%
	<b>Restrictive modifiers</b>			
13	A student who comes late will be punished.	30	100%	50%
14	A student who comes late will be punished.	30	100%	66%
15	Students who do not learn time management do poorly in college.	30	100%	86%
16	An experienced teacher would have tackled the issue differently.	30	100%	66%
	<b>Introductory were, had</b>			
17	Were this my hotel, I would be ashamed.	-	-	-
18	Were it not for the construction works, the road would be open.	-	-	-
19	Had the hotel not been awful, I would have enjoyed myself.	-	-	-
20	Had Sally decided not to attend the meeting, I would have come.	-	-	-

Failing to account for a conditional sense might lead to ambiguity in meaning if the structure of the sentence is not given enough care. The majority of students who failed to detect the conditionality of the first category applied one single word "aw" (or) as equivalent in translation for the three coordinate conjunctions (and, otherwise, and or).

The more appropriate non-conditional translations, as Table 2 indicates, fall in the second category, where the majority of students translated each sentence structure correctly into Arabic. Unlike in the first category, in the second category the majority of students switched the order of the original text in translation but maintained the meaning, as can be seen in 5, 6, and 7, respectively: *la yumkin an naish wa nunu mahrumuna mina attaam*, we cannot survive while we have no food; *la yumkin an nadfa thamana faturna wa nunu la nmlik al mal alkafi*, we cannot pay for food while having no enough money; *tahtaj an tamala bijid litanjaha*, you need to work hard in order to succeed. Their translation here is not

strictly literal since their focus is on delivering the meaning of the original rather than on the order. Such focus has led to a more natural flow than literal translation.

The lowest level of appropriateness shows in the fourth category, where students' attempts to translate literally led to awkward or senseless structures because they failed to make a logical connection between the ideas involved. For example, translations of 13, 14, and 15: *rajulun qawai yadbitu nafsahu*, literally (a man strong controls himself), *ayy talib allathi yati mutaikhran sayagab*, literally any student who comes late will be punished, and *hunaka tullabun althaina yatalumuna idarat alwaqt diafun fi aldirasah kulliyah*, literally there are students who do not learn time management and they are poor in college, respectively are grammatically ill in Arabic. The indefinite must be turned into the definite form, which is marked by al (the). Thus the correct grammatical structure for 13 is *alrajujulu alqawiyyu yazbitu nafsahu*, literally (the man strong controls himself). This definite form in Arabic denotes any man that is strong, rather than a specific man in particular.

As for 14, the Arabic version is grammatically ill since Arabic does not approve the use of a relative clause as a modifier with any indefinite pronoun such as anyone, anybody, etc. Unlike English, where indefinite pronouns require a relative clause as a modifier, in Arabic, the verb comes right after such indefinite pronouns without the need for a relative word. This pitfall in the translation of 13, 14, and 15 indicates poor grammar skills of students in dealing with restrictive modifiers. Apparently, their knowledge of constructing grammatically correct sentences involving definite and indefinite articles is limited.

Literal translation therefore does not always work, especially when some information is implicit. According to Traugott et al. (2010), "some translations do not read naturally because they require a conditional marker to give it a sense" (p. 3). Therefore, conditional translations of such implied structures are more appropriate than non-conditional translations to communicate the message as clearly as possible.

There is further evidence that literal translation produces ill grammatical structures. Sentence 12 is translated literally into *fi hal annar, la tastakhdim almasaa'id*, which is an awkward literal translation that does not read naturally. A more accepted translation requires the use of the conditional marker *ithaa* that expresses certainty: *itha kana hunaka hariq / itha ma waqa hariq, fala tastakham al msaaid*. The use of *ithaa* is more appropriate as it expresses a general rule (zero conditional) and makes the meaning clear. Sentence 11 is another example that non-conditional translation makes no sense as some students used the wrong tense. *Tahta durufin mukhtalifah, saqbalu al ard*, under different circumstances, I will accept the offer. This translation does not express an impossible condition, as the original text indicates.

These failures in translation indicate that certain implied structures do not make sense in translation unless they are translated functionally into Arabic conditionals. A functional approach is therefore more effective than literal translation since it focuses on the specific message and ensures that the target readers understand the message in a relevant and effective way.

It can be noted from the foregoing discussion that there are at least two challenges to be handled, namely, challenges of perceiving implied conditionals in English as conditional sentences and challenges of translating such implied conditionals appropriately into Arabic conditionals. The findings also show that there are far more non-conditional translations than there are conditional translations, since the majority of students neglected the implied conditional sense and preferred to translate them directly. The lowest percentage of students who identified these structures as conditionals and translated them as such into Arabic conditionals had difficulty translating them appropriately into appropriate Arabic structures. They apparently lack knowledge of the functions of the three essential markers in Arabic. With the exception of the fifth category, which 100% of the students translated appropriately into Arabic conditionals, few sentences in the other categories were translated properly into Arabic conditionals.

As for non-conditional translations, they are in general direct and literal, which led to ambiguity in meaning due to the senseless or awkward Arabic structures. Students have difficulty translating coordinate conjunctions into correct Arabic equivalents. They also have difficulty translating restrictive modifiers in particular properly into Arabic. Essentially, the findings indicate that students are in general not typically taught the variants of conditionals, and the deficiency can be traced to not having adequate knowledge of the variants of conditionals in terms of form, meaning, and use.

## VI. IMPLICATIONS FOR PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICE

To help overcome the difficulties of translating conditionals, instructors need to spend adequate time on each type of condition, starting with the easiest type. Real conditionals must be taught before unreal or imaginary conditions. In each type, students need to have sufficient practice to understand it syntactically and semantically in different situations and different stages of learning. Nur (2017) observes that each conditional sentence is significant to learn in terms of form, meaning, and use so that learners can learn syntactic changes of each type and all types' semantics. To make learning closer to their reality, students may be encouraged to use conditionals to express their wishes, requests, and desires in communicative manners.

At later stages, variations of implied conditionals can be introduced through clear explanations and examples. This can be done through an incremental process where a variety of syntactic structures denoting a particular type of condition are presented at a time along with their possible translations in the target language. Instructors may need to use parallel corpora of conditionals to help students learn translational equivalents between the source language and the target language as well as collocational and syntactic patterns. In so doing, instructors enrich their personal knowledge of the

language, design a better classroom curriculum and material, and identify key problems that need to be considered in syllabus design. For example, Siahaan and Silitonga (2020) advocate the inclusion of conditional sentences in all English performances or skills, e.g., listening, reading, speaking, and writing. They argue that knowing the variants of the sentences will make them easier to recognize and understand the message.

At another level, teachers may need to follow Chomsky's theory TGG (transformational generative grammar), where transformations can be made on linguistic structures, in order to clarify some ambiguities in the meaning of conditional sentences and thus help students understand the deep meaning of the sentence. Through substitutions, rearrangement, deletion, and binding as forms of transformation, learners can gain experience in inverted or sometimes reduced conditionals where the reduced conditional presented serves as a surface structure that needs to be linked to the deep structure in which the if clause is to be spelled out. To this end, the instructor may provide students with worksheets containing an array of implied conditional structures that need to be rewritten using conditional sentences. It may also be useful to ask them for their TL conditional equivalents. In so doing, the teacher makes sure that students use appropriate TL equivalents.

The importance of grammar instruction therefore has reclaimed its appropriate place in the language classroom curriculum (Richards & Renandya, 2002). They agree that grammar is too crucial to be disregarded since, for learners, language growth will be hampered. If learners do not have a firm understanding of grammar with all its particularities, they will not be able to express subtle differences in meaning in translation. Kartira and Irma (2021) observe that conditional sentences are a significant obstacle to overcome for students of English as a foreign language.

## VII. CONCLUSION

The study investigated the semantic and syntactic aspects of implied conditionals in translation with a view to highlighting some of the pitfalls that Arab students may encounter in translating such constructions. The study found that the greater majority of students are not aware of the conditionality of the structures provided. They do not seem to dwell on the main clause to detect a conditional sense. Rather, they only translate the sentence as a conditional sentence when the conditional clause is almost preserved except for 'if'. This is most evident in type 2 where the introductory words were and had are obvious, and type 3 conditionals where had + past particle are explicitly stated.

Literal translation is predominant in their translation. Not much attention is paid to the functional translation of a sentence as a whole. Such literal translation sometimes produced unintelligible sentences and poor grammatical structures as a result of students' failing to render them functionally into Arabic conditionals. The study also showed that students in general had poor knowledge of conditionals in the SL. As for Arabic, the low percentage of students who managed to translate sentences into Arabic conditionals across the first four categories had difficulty distinguishing between the different types of condition. This showed in their use of the three Arabic markers interchangeably as equivalents for zero, first type, and third type conditions.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Al-Aswad, D. (2005). *Problems of translating complex English conditional sentences into Arabic*. Unpublished M.A. thesis Mosul: University of Mosul.
- [2] Al Jurjani, A. (1982). *Al-Muqtasid* [the concise book]. Baghdad: Iraqi Ministry of Culture.
- [3] Al-Sharawna, R. (2006). *Uslub AL-shart fi khutab AL-'arab wa wasayahum fi kitab Jamharat aL-'arab* [foundations of conditionality in Arabic literary reservoir and the authors']. Unpublished master's thesis. University of Hebron.
- [4] Aziz, Y., Y. (1989). *A Contrastive grammar of English and Arabic*. Mosul: University of Mosul Press.
- [5] Frosch, C. & Byrne, R. (2012). Causal conditionals and counterfactuals. *Acta Psychologica*, 141(1), 54-66.
- [6] Ibn Aqil, A. (2011). *Sharh Ibn Aqil, 'ala AL-Fiyat Ibn Malik* [Explanation of Ibn Malki's lengthy poem by Ibn Aqil] Beirut: Dar AL-Kutub AL-'ilmiya.
- [7] Khalil, A. M. (2010). *A Contrastive grammar of English and Arabic*. Amman: Jordan Book Center.
- [8] Kharma, N. & Hajjaj. (1989). *Errors in English Among Arabic speakers: Analysis and Remedy*. London: Longman Group Ltd.
- [9] Kumakiri, T. (2013). *Epistemic modality and conditional sentence: On the presentative particle of an Arabic dialect of Tunis* (Tunisia).
- [10] Leech, G., Deucher, M. & R., Hoogenraad. (1982). *English grammar for today: A new introduction*. London: Macmillan Publisher Ltd.
- [11] Nekoueizadeh, M., & Bahrani, T. (2013). "The effect of conversational shadowing on teaching and learning conditional sentences". *International Journal for Applied Linguistics*, 4(1), 253-267.
- [12] Norris, R. W. (2003). *How do we overcome the difficulties of teaching conditional?* Bulletin of Fukuoka International University, 9, 39-50.
- [13] Nur, F. (2017). Aspects of difficulty of conditional sentences in business negotiation. *ESENSI: Jurnal Manajemen Bisnis*, 20(1), 35-60. Retrieved from. <http://ibn.e-journal.id/index.php/Esensi/article/view/49> on August 17, 2024.
- [14] Quirk, R., Leech, G., & Svartvik, J. (1989). *A Comprehensive grammar of the English language*. London: Longman.
- [15] Richards, J. C., & Renandya, W. A. (2002). *Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511667190>.
- [16] Ryding, K. (2005). *A reference grammar of modern standard Arabic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- [17] Schueler, D. (2008). *The syntax and semantics of implicit conditionals: Filling the antecedent*. Available on [http://wwwp/www.linguistics.uvla.edu/www.linguistics.uvla.edu/people/gtrands/Daschuel/Schueler\\_Dissertation.](http://wwwp/www.linguistics.uvla.edu/www.linguistics.uvla.edu/people/gtrands/Daschuel/Schueler_Dissertation.), retrieved on August 12, 2024.
- [18] Siahaan, V. H., & Silitonga, A. J. (2020). Conditional sentences in delivering a message in a newspaper. *Jurnal Darma Agung*, 27(3), 124.
- [19] Swan, M. (2000). *Practical English usage*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [20] Thakur, D. (1997). *Linguistics Simplified: Morphology*, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, New Delhi: Pant.
- [21] Traugott, E. C., Muelen, A., Reilly, J. & Ferguson, C. (2010). *Conditionals*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [22] Wright, W. (1996). *A Grammar of the Arabic language*. Beirut: Librarie dulibon.

**Mohammad A al kuran** is an Associate Professor in the translation department at Yarmouk University, where he has been since 2010. His research interests are in comparative linguistics, translation studies, and cultural communications. He is an author of over 18 papers on theoretical and practical aspects of translation.

**Khalid Bani Domi** is an Associate Professor in the Arabic Department at Yarmouk University, where he has been since 2008. His research interests are in syntax, semantics, and rhetoric. His publications are over 20 papers. He has held the position of vice- dean on faculty academic affairs and now is the editor-in-chief of the journal of the Association of Arab Universities for research.