

Non-Equivalence at Grammatical and Word Level and the Strategies to Deal with: A Case Study of English Translation into Persian

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Abstract

This present paper tries to examine some obstacles in non-equivalence at grammatical level, and then researches the problems to find equivalence at word level and proposes theoretical strategies and techniques to deal with such difficulties from English translation into Persian. Considering the fact that finding equivalence at grammatical and word level plays a pivotal role in translation, this paper aims to research some difficulties in these areas such as: voice, gender, tense and aspect, person, at grammatical level and culture specific- concepts, and difference in expressive meaning at word level. Moreover, the study's theoretical framework is based on Baker (2011). The findings indicate there are a number of elements which should be considered by translators in order to translate a text at grammatical and word level such as, enough information about the culture of the both languages and research linguistic and stylistic aspects of languages.

Key Words: Non-equivalence, Grammatical level, Word level, Translating, Source Language (SL), Target Language (TL).

1. Introduction

Grammars and words are an inalienable part of each language. Considering the fact that lacking of some certain grammars and words in some languages challenge the process of translating, hence it is an imperative urgent to utilize the best equivalences or at least the closest ones in the target language. Finding the equivalence at grammatical and word level from one language into another obliges translators to have a good knowledge of both source language and target language. This originates in the fact that any language has gotten some certain grammars and words which less or more are different from one another. Thus, there is a main issue in such a case: How to find the closest equivalence at grammatical and word level of one language in another language. "Nida and Taber (1969) explain the process of translating as, translating consist of reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalence of the source language message, first in terms of meaning and second in terms of style" (cited in Akbari, 2013). Through the style and function analysis, translators are expected to be able by generating intention from the SL to TL choose the closest equivalence both at grammatical and word level. Moreover, this is very imperative because, in order to express the experience, grammatical pattern plays a pivotal role. That is why Jakobson (1959) provided a strong support to the importance of this issue and believed "the grammatical pattern of a language (as opposed to its lexical stock) determines those aspects of each experience that must be expressed in the given language" (cited in Baker, 2011, p. 93).

In this study Baker (2011) strongly has been stated the frame of non-equivalence at grammatical level that on the whole, however, deviant grammatical configurations are simply not acceptable in most contexts. Hence, she added this means that, in translation, grammar often has the effect of a straitjacket, forcing the translator along a certain course which may or may not follow that of the source text as closely as translator would like it to (p. 95). In addition, people of different languages use completely different words to cover the same meaning. These words are easy-to-understand for the interlocutors of a similar language. Nevertheless, these words would be nonsense to the speakers of the other languages. Actually, there are some differences in such factors as ideologies and social classes that challenge translators. This originates in the fact that, the source language has gotten some items at word level that are completely different from the corresponding items in the target language.

Baker (2011) strongly remarked in her study that “Non-equivalence at word level means that the target language has no direct equivalence for a word which occurs in the source text. The type and level of difficulty posed can vary tremendously depending on the nature of non-equivalence” (p. 18).

But on the other hand, the accordance case between the source language and target language at both grammatical and word level make a “*Total Translation*” (Catford, 1965, p. 22). Catford (1965) used the term of total translation and defined it as: “Replacement of SL grammar and lexis by equivalent TL grammar and lexis with consequential replacement of SL phonology/graphology by (non-equivalent) TL phonology/graphology” (ibid.).

This present research is conducted on a descriptive and qualitative procedure that facilitates the difficulties in the mentioned areas. First, the researcher carefully has chosen the difficulties relevant to the aim study and classified them into several types. Second, an attempt has been made to exemplify any of these difficulties from English language into Persian language. In addition, some examples at grammatical level have been chosen from *Eat That Frog* book by Brain Tracy (2001) and translation by *Morteza Nazari* (2010). Third, the strategies to cope with these difficulties largely mentioned by Mona Baker’s (2011) “*the diversity of grammatical categories across languages*” (pp. 95-120) classifications and “*non-equivalence at word level and some common strategies for dealing with it*” (pp. 18-44). Moreover, whenever needed some related articles have been extracted from the internet to prevent any further mistakes are being claimed in this research.

2. Non-equivalence at grammatical level

2.1. Grammar, Morphology, and Syntax

“Grammar is the set of rules which determine the way in which units such as words and phrases can be combined in a language and the kind of information which has to be made regularly explicit in utterances. A language can, of course, express any kind of information its need to express, but the grammatical system of a given language will determine the ease with which certain notions such as time references or gender can be made explicit” (Baker, 2011, p. 92). In addition, the term grammar is often used to refer to morphology and syntax together. Morphology is the study of word forms and there are two main divisions in it. First, *Lexical morphology* in which refers to word formation, and Second, *Inflectional morphology* that refers to grammar and conjugation. Further, morphology illustrates about singularity and plurality of words. For example, *س* and *ها* in Persian language (*as ES and S in English*) get the words in the plural forms.

However, syntax is the study of sentence structure and the basic unit is the sentence. Considering this issue Baker (2011) puts: syntax covers grammatical structures of groups, clauses and sentences. Also, it examines the linear sequence of classes of words such as adjectives, verbs, adverbs, nouns, pronouns and functional elements such as subject, predicator and so on (p.93). Strictly speaking, syntax manages the word order to put them in correct position and make a clause at subsequent higher level.

The following discussion of some main categories that illustrates the various types of difficulties that translators often encounter in the process of translating, because of differences in grammatical structures from SL to TL. Further, these difficulties exemplified to make the issue clear.

2.1.1. Voice

In English language both in speaking and in writing the usage of passive tense, rather than the other tenses, is extremely common and obligatory in certain contexts. However, in Persian language as the target language simple past is more common. The major reason is passive might be stylistic less acceptable than the use of the active. Furthermore, past passive and the present one have completely different purpose. The very first one’s concentration is just on the object and work and lesser the subject. But the second one subject has a significant role for sending the message. Consequently, one of the major issues through this difficulty is to keep fidelity and another is generating the message in the target language as well as the source language.

In the given examples, based on two first examples number one demonstrates the dealing between simple past and passive. In spite of the mentioned grammar is past passive in the source text, but simple past was chosen in translating in the target text. Moreover, this example indicates doing the work became cornerstone of message. In example number two, in order to keep both naturalness and fidelity passive was preferred than simple past. However, in third example, subject is more significant and this condition becomes bearer for choosing passive structure in Persian language. In this way, Baker (2011) provided the support that professional translators may decide to replace passive structures in the source text with stylistically more acceptable structures, such as active and the appropriate one in the target language (p.113).

2.1.1.1. Table of passive tense and the process of translating

Past passive	1. I <u>was</u> both <u>amazed</u> and <u>exited</u> with this discovery.	در آن زمان از این کشف حیرت زده و در عین حال هیجان زده بودم.
Past passive	2. A year after I <u>was made</u> a manager, I <u>was</u> a vice president in charge of a ninety-five-person sales force in six countries.	یک سال بعد مدیر فروش شدم و به سمت معاونت بخش فروش شرکت منصوب شدم. من مسولیت یک گروه فروش 95 نفره را در شش کشور به عهده داشتم.
Present passive	3. <u>This book is written</u> to show you how to get ahead more rapidly in your career.	این کتاب به این منظور نوشته شده است که به شما نشان دهد چگونه می توانید زودتر در کار خود به موفقیت برسید.

2.1.2. Gender

Baker (2011) has been claimed “Gender is a grammatical distinction according to which a noun or pronoun is classified as either masculine or feminine in some languages” (p. 99). Moreover, there are three types of gender that challenge the process of translating. First one is *grammatical gender* in which includes correlation pronouns (like *He* and *She* in English). This originates in the fact that, this type of gender is the most complex one, because of lacking of grammatically separated pronouns to indicate masculine or feminine features in the target language.

Second type of gender is *social gender*. This type of gender refers to societal and chronological conditions. Dependency on time in social gender is another important factor that complicates the process of translating. Further, social gender is based on the changes in the society. For example, occupational title, *secretary* was male in the 19th century, but as time was spent female commonly employed this occupation. As a result, translators should be notified about the changes in the society of the source language and subsequently in the target language.

Third type of gender is *biological gender* or *neutral gender*. “Neutral gender based on biological gender differences between two sexes” (Soltani, 2010). Further, in English language producing grammatical linguistic patterns facilitate distinguish the sexuality. However, in Persian language lacking of such patterns have been caused by adding the words male or female after a noun recognize the sexuality.

2.1.2.1. Table of biological gender

English Language	Male	An actor	A waiter	An adventurer
	Female	An actress	A waitress	An adventuresome
Persian Language	Male	بازیگر مرد	پیشخدمت مرد	ماجراجوی مرد
	Female	بازیگر زن	پیشخدمت زن	ماجراجوی زن

Consequently, when different types of gender come to rendering, translators so as to prevent such difficulty gain the various techniques like the explicitation.

2.1.2.2. Explicitation as a technique to translate the gender

Most of the languages around the world have been distinguished the different genders. This is imperative because, in order to be able to categorize the various sexualities, a certain classification is required. Conversely, English language gender’s classification, Persian language does not have the similar classification in some cases. Hence, translators benefit the explicitation. Baker and Saldanha (2011) have been claimed “Explicitation is the technique of making explicit in the target text information that is implicit in the source text (p.104). Hatim and Munday (2004) strongly remarked that “Explicitation in the TT that renders the sense or intention clearer than in the ST (p.339).

2.1.2.2.1. Different types of explicitation

Klaudy (1993) has classified different types of explicitation in translation (cited in Baker and Saldanha, 2011, pp.106-107):

1. **Obligatory explicitation.** Obligatory explicitation involves both semantic and syntactic structure of languages.

e.g.: He is a good person. → اون پسر آدم خوبیه.

2. **Optional explicitation.** It involves stylistic preferences between languages.

e.g.: Mrs. Travis is a morning person. → خاتم تراویز متاهل و سحر خیز است.

2. **Pragmatic explicitation.** It involves differences between cultures.

e.g.: The office worker



خاتم منشی

4. **Translation-inherent explicitation.** Translation-inherent explicitation can be attributed to the nature of the translation process itself.

2.3. Tense and aspect

According to Baker (2011) she suggested that tense and aspect are grammatical categories in a large number of languages. Moreover, the form of the verb in languages which have these categories usually indicates two main types of information: time relations and aspectual differences. She also concludes that time relations have to do with locating an event in time and the usual distinction between past, present and future. In this way aspectual differences have to do with the temporal distribution of event, such as its completion or non-completion, continuation or momentariness” (p. 108). Further, “Jarvie (1993) indicates that tense in English signals the time of occurrence of an action. He also points out that aspect points to the time of the start of the action” (cited in Obeidat, 2014).

Despite the fact that tense and aspect in English language are grammatically classified, but in Persian language lacking of such classification challenges the process of translating. This originates in the fact that grammatical categories of tense and aspect is to indicate time and aspectual relation, they do not necessarily perform the same function all languages (Baker, 2011, p.110). For example, perfect tense indicates completion in English language; however, there is no such a tense in Persian language. As a result, translating perfect tense into Persian language involves lack of grammatical formal equivalence between these two languages.

2.3.1. Translating tense by transposition

Transposition is a change in the grammar from SL to TL. Hence, in order to be able to translate completion tense in Persian language, translators are supposed to transform the presented tense. “Newmark (1988) discusses issues related to grammar which involve a change in the grammar from the source language into the target language and called them “transposition” which could exist between languages and proposed a model for handling certain grammar related issues” (cited in Obeidat, 2014). Thus, translators recognize central theme in SL and attempt to convey the new form in TL. In the given example translator transformed present perfect to simple past.

2.3.1.1. Table of transposition

English language	Persian language
1. She <u>has finished</u> the work.	1. او کار را تمام کرده است.
2. He <u>has reached</u> his goal.	2. او به هدفش رسید.

2.4. Person

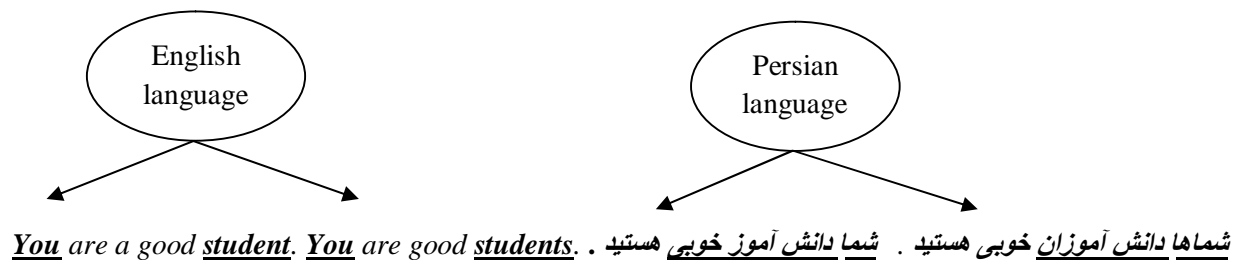
Another difficulty at grammatical level is identifying the person and finding the closest equivalence in the target language. It occurred in cases, where due to many languages around the world differentiated in usage of pronouns to address person. Based on Baker (2011) she stated that the category of person relates to the notion of participants and through this issue a closed system of pronouns which may be organized along variety of dimensions. Further she added the most common distinction is that between first person (identifying the speaker or a group which includes the speaker: English *I/we*), second person (identifying the singularity or plurality of *you* in English language), and third person (identifying persons and things other than the speaker and addressee English: *he/ she/ it/ they*) (p.104).

In English language, second person ‘*you*’ is used both in formal and informal speaking; however, in Persian it relates the addressee’s position. In formal condition, the appropriate translation is *شما*, but in informal one is *تو*. Also, translators ought to detach these two conditions in English and know the precise addressee’s position.

According to Larson (1984/1998) she has claimed “By grouping together words which are related to one another and then systematically looking at the contrast between these words, one is able to determine the meaning” (Hatim and Munday, 2004, p.153). This technique turned to be one of the most common one among translators when second person in English language is hard to distinguish in Persian language. The following examples makes issue clear:

e.g. 1: Hey, you what are you doing? (Informal) —————> هی، تو داری چی کار می کنی؟
 e.g. 2: You are such a real human. (Formal) —————> شما به انسان واقعی هستید.

It is worthy to point that the use of second person to indicate singularity and plurality in English language makes a new issue in process of translating in Persian language. Of course, as mentioned above translators can by grouping together words find out the message. For example:



3. Non-equivalence at word level

Different countries around the world have various cultures that these differences make new words, expressions and etc. As a matter of fact, these alternations at the word level and above the word level in any country demonstrate country's certain thoughts and perspectives. Hence, translators should have perfect knowledge about both source language and target language. However, the most important problem regarding different thoughts is the lack of direct equivalence from SL to TL. Moreover, it is probable that some certain words in the source text show the quality (e.g. how it is done, who did that and so forth) of the works, whereas there are not the appropriate equivalences in the target text. As a result, translators are supposed to use the most appropriate strategies to deal with such difficulties. Two certain difficulties which rule out the process of translating are as following: 1. Culture specific – concepts; and 2. Difference in expressive meaning.

3.1. Culture specific – concepts

In spite of excellent knowledge of both source and target language, that includes proficiency in grammar, spelling, punctuation and pronunciation, socio-linguistic investigation is essential in process of translating. It means translators should be knowledgeable about both cultures and use the most appropriate equivalence to be understandable in the target text. According to second principle out of five principles of Etienne Dolet (1540/1997) he suggested “the translator should have a perfect knowledge of both SL and TL, so as not to lessen the majesty of the language” (Munday, 2012, p.43).

Further, there are some certain words or expressions and even idioms that are unknown in the source language for foreigners. These unknown factors directly connect to particular thoughts, religions, or people's special perspective about the world in the source language. According to Baker (2011), she stated “the source-language word may express a concept which is totally unknown in the target culture. The concept in question may be abstract or concrete; it may relate to a religious belief, a social costume, or even a type of food. Such concepts are often referred to as ‘culture-specific’ (p. 18). Another important factor in translating process of culture specific items is translators must have been scrupulous about the readers in target text, because there are different educational, political, nationalities and etc. levels in a society, so translation should be vastly understandable. Baker (2011) suggested two main strategies to overcome such difficulty: 1. “Translation by a more general word (*super ordinate*)” (p. 23); 2. “Translation by omission” (p. 42).

3.1.1. Translation by a more general word (*super ordinate*)

One of the commonly strategies to translate culture specific-items is the use of general word in translating process. Baker (2011) strongly has been claimed that this is one of the commonest strategies for dealing with many types of non-equivalence, particularly in the area of propositional meaning. She added it works equally well in most, if not all, since the hierarchical structure of semantic fields is not language-specific (p.23).

It is worthy to point out that English language often makes distinction between different types of facilities; however, there is no such a distinction in Persian language. Thus, translators generalize the concept and change to known one into the target language.

e.g.: *Dump truck* → کامیون
 e.g.: *Moving truck* → کامیون

3.1.2. Translation by omission

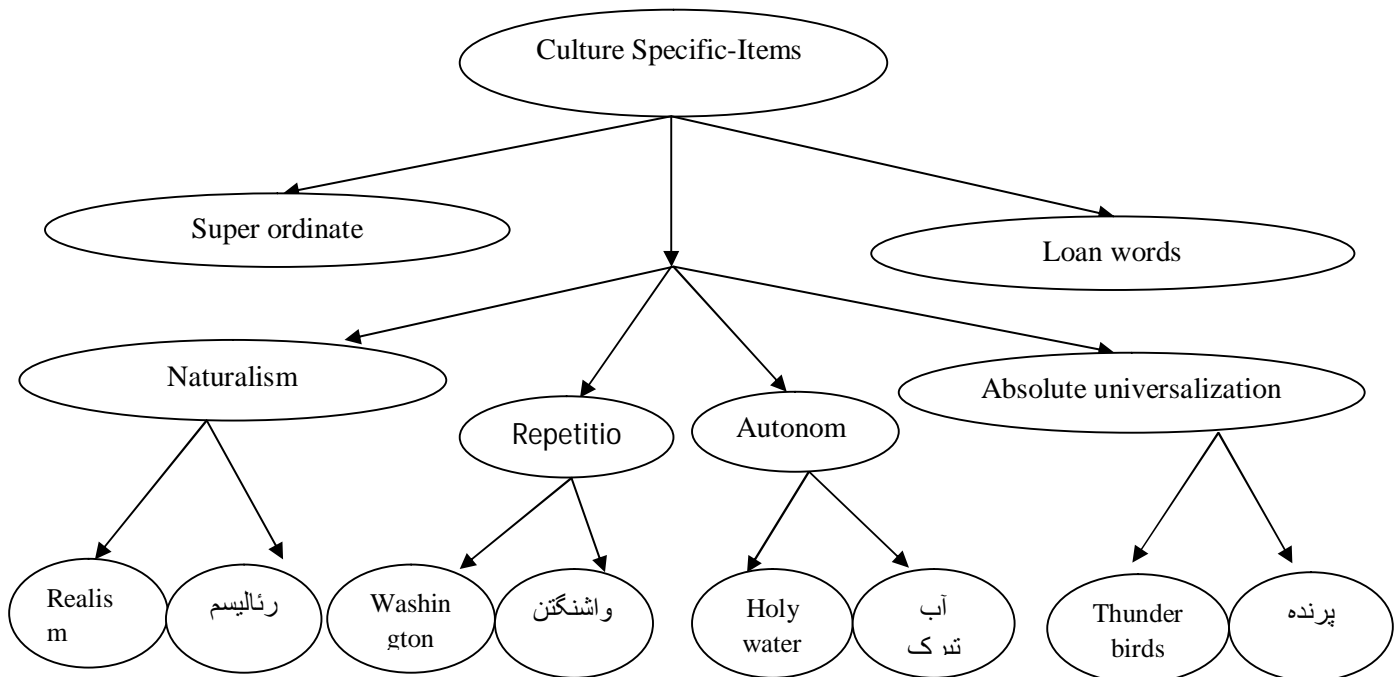
According to Baker (2011), she believed this strategy may should rather drastic, but in fact, it does no harm to omit translating a word or expression in some context. Furthermore, one caution for translating process that must be taken into account as it is very possible to happen be the ignorance the message.

Hence she has been claimed if the meaning conveyed by a particular item or expression is not vital enough to the development of the text to justify distracting the reader with lengthy explanations, so translators can and often do simply omit translating the word or expression in question. It is worthy to point out that she added this strategy only as a last resort, when the advantages of producing a smooth, readable translation clearly outweigh the value of rendering a particular meaning accurately in a given context (pp.42-43).

e.g.: *He got the plunge and left him alone.* → *بالاخره رهاش کرد.*

3.1.3. Main Strategies to translate culture specific items in a sight

There are the other strategies which are as following:



3.2. Difference in expressive meaning

There are many languages in the world each of which differs from one another. Hence, different languages have different ways of expressing meaning. Baker (2011) believed difference in expressive meaning is usually more difficult to handle when the target language equivalent is more emotionally loaded than the source language item. She added this is often the case with items which related to sensitive issues such as religion, politics and sex (p.21).

3.2.1. Translating expressive meaning by modifiers

As a matter of fact, translators to overcome such difficulty benefit the modifier to demonstrate the significance of the given words in the source language. “In other words, if the target-language equivalent is neutral compared to the source-language item, the translator can sometimes add the evaluate element by means of a modifier or adverb if necessary, or by building it in somewhere else in the text” (Baker, 2011, p. 21). For example:

e.g.: *That is cruelty.* → *این به بیرحمی واقعیه.*

4. Conclusion

Throughout different parts of the paper it is shown that there are some difficulties such as: voice, gender, tense and aspect, person at grammatical level and culture specific-concepts, and difference in expressive meaning at word level. Analyses show that these difficulties may occur in any circumstance.

Then some techniques to overcome these difficulties such as exploitations and transposition at grammatical level; and strategically ones such as translation by super ordinate, and translation by omission at word level have been mentioned. Another key concept to be considered is translators who are supposed to have a perfect knowledge in both source language and target language. Moreover, research on linguistic and stylistic aspect between these two is significant. As a result, it is essential for a translator to know both languages as well.

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