Translation Shifts in the Persian Translation of a Tale of Two Cities by Charles Dickens

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Abstract

Translators use different strategies and approaches in the process of translation. One of these approaches is shift in translation. This study intends to find the realization of Catford’s shifts in the Persian translation of Charles Dickens’ “A Tale of Two Cities” by Ebrahim Younesi. The aim of this study is to find which types of shifts the translator uses, to compare the SL and the TL versions, and to investigate how faithful the translator is to the original text. Furthermore, it intends to find the problems translators face during the translation process. This paper analyses different kinds of category shifts which Catford divides into four subgroups: structure shifts, class shifts, unit shifts and intra-system shifts in translation. To this end, forty sentences of the first six chapters of the novel were selected randomly and compared with their corresponding parts in the Persian translation. This study shows that among forty sentences that include forty-three shifts, unit shift is the most frequent type of shift. 37.5% of shifts are unit shifts, 30% class shifts, 12.5% structure shifts and 27.5% intra-system shifts. It also shows that shifts are inevitable in some places in the translation process and this is because of different natures of languages and variations that exist among them, so the translator is forced to deviate from the source text.

Key words: Catford’s shift, level shift, category shift, structure shift, class shift, unit shift, intra system shift

1. Introduction

Translation is an effective phenomenon in everyday life. The role of the translator in this activity is of special importance. In transferring meaning from source language to target language, the translator faces many problems and to make amends for these problems he/she uses different strategies. Scholars analyze the translation process based on different theories. They may take into account the cultural aspects of the source language and target language or a linguistic-based approach proposed as translation shifts by Catford.

One of the unavoidable phenomena in translation is translation shift. Shifts are changes that occur during the process of translation from SL to TL. In contrasting texts in different languages translation shifts are observable everywhere. Newmark defined shifts (Catford’s term) or transposition (Vinay and Darbelnet) as “a translation procedure involving a change in the grammar from SL to TL” (1988, p. 85). Shifts are first introduced by Catford (1965) as ‘departures from formal correspondence in the process
of going from the SL to the TL' (p. 73). He presented two main types of translation shifts: Level shifts and category shifts. Category shifts are divided into four subgroups: structure shifts, class shifts, unit shifts and intra system shift. This article attempts to investigate the last three types of shifts in Persian translation of "A Tale of Two Cities" by Ebrahim Younesi.

2. Review of literature:

According to Nida "Translating consists in reproducing the receptor language, the closest natural equivalent of the source-language message, firstly in terms of language and secondly in terms of style" (1982, p. 12).

In addition, Catford defined translation as "the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language (TL)". He further stated that we do not transfer meaning from one language to another, but we replace a source language meaning by a target language meaning—one that can function in the same or a comparable way in the situation. According to Catford, one of the central tasks of translation theory is that of defining a theory of equivalence. (1965, p. 20-21)

Catford considers equivalence as the basis upon which source language textual material is replaced by a target language textual material. In Catford's model, this can be achieved through either formal correspondence or textual equivalence. Formal correspondence implies a comparison between the language systems but not of specific source text-target text pairs. When formal correspondence is not possible, Catford suggests aiming for textual equivalence, which can be carried out through the translation shifts (ibid, 73).

The role of the translator stands as the most recognizable factor. Translators play an active and important role in the process of translation. Newmark (1988) stated that:

A translator, perhaps more than any other practitioner of a profession, is continually faced with choices, for instance when he has to translate words denoting quality, the words of the mental world (adjectives, adverbs, adjectival nouns, e.g. 'good', 'well', 'goodness'), rather than objects or events. In making his choice, he is intuitively or consciously following a theory of translation, just as any teacher of grammar teaches a theory of linguistics. "La traduction appelle une theorie en acte", Jean-Rene Ladmiral has written: Translation calls on a theory in action; the translator reviews the criteria for the various options before he makes his selection as a procedure in his translating activity. (p. 8)

The translator may use a variety of procedures that differ in importance according to the contextual factors of both the ST and the TT. One of the unavoidable phenomena in translation is the application of shifts in translation. Shifts were first introduced by Catford (1965) as 'departures from formal correspondence in the process of going from the SL to the TL' (p. 73).

Hatim and Munday (2004) define shifts simply as "the small linguistic changes that occur between units in a ST–TT pair" and propose an example: On some international trains in Europe, there is or used to be, a multilingual warning notice displayed next to the windows:

French: Ne pas se pencher au dehors
German: Nichthinauslehnen
Italian: Pericoloso sporgersi
English: Do not lean out of the window.

The English warning, the only one to actually mention the window, is a negative imperative, while the French and German use a negative infinitive construction (‘not to lean outside’) and the Italian is a
statement (‘[it] is dangerous to lean out’). Form is different in the four languages but they transfer the same sense. The structures of the words are different, even when the grammatical structures are the same (as in the French and German examples). The number of word forms varies from six (ne pas se pencher au dehors) to two (nicht hinauslehnen) (p. 26).

Popovic (1970) believes that each individual method of translation is determined by the presence or absence of shifts in the various layers of the translation (p. 78).

According to Catford (1965), there are two main types of translation shifts: **Level shifts** and **Category shifts**.

**Level shifts** where the SL item at one linguistic level (e.g. grammar) has a TL equivalent at a different level (e.g. lexis), and Category shifts which are divided into four sub-types:

- Structure-shifts, which involve a grammatical change between the structure of the ST and that of the TT;
- Class-shifts, when a SL item is translated with a TL item which belongs to a different grammatical class, i.e. a verb may be translated into a noun;
- Unit-shifts, which involve changes in rank;
- Intra-system shifts, which occur when the SL and TL possess approximately corresponding systems, but where the translation involves selection of a non-corresponding term in the TL system (p. 80).

Different studies have been done in this issue and scholars named the phenomenon differently. Larson (1984) named this phenomenon “skewing”. Vinay and Darbelnet (1995) used the term “transposition” as one of the four procedures of oblique translation and define it as “a change of one part of speech for another without changing the sense” (Vinay and Darbelnet, 2000 as cited in Baker, 1998). They see this phenomenon as ‘probably the most common structural change undertaken by translators’.

According to Newmark (1988), shift consists of four types: The first type of shift is the change from singular to plural. A second type is required when a SL grammatical structure does not exist in the TL. Here there are always options. Thus for the neutral adjective as subject, there is a choice of at least: ‘What is interesting is that...’, ‘The interesting thing is that...’, ‘It's interesting that...’, ‘The interest of the matter is that...’. The third type of shift is the one where literal translation is grammatically possible but may not accord with natural usage in the TL. The fourth type of transposition is the replacement of a virtual lexical gap by a grammatical structure (pp. 86-87).

Newmark (1988) stated that transpositions illustrate a frequent tension between grammar and stress. Usually, the word order is changed unnecessarily, and it is sometimes more appropriate to translate with a lexical synonym, retain the word order and forgo the transposition in order to preserve the stress. For example, it is not appropriate to translate “completely false” as “There is absolutely no truth”. Transposition is the only translation procedure concerned with grammar, and most translators make transpositions intuitively. However, it is likely that comparative linguistics research, and analysis of text corpuses and their translations, will uncover a further number of serviceable transpositions for us (p. 88). Different scholars have been working on various aspects of this issue.

Cyrus (2006) in his paper describes an interdisciplinary approach, which brings together the fields of corpus linguistics and translation studies. It presents ongoing work on the creation of a corpus resource in which translation shifts are explicitly annotated. The resource described in his paper contains English source texts (parliamentary proceedings) and their German translations. The shift annotation is based on predicate-argument structures and proceeds in two steps: First, predicates and their arguments are annotated monolingually in a straightforward manner. Then, the corresponding English and German predicates and arguments are aligned with each other. Whenever a shift — mainly grammatical or semantic — has occurred, the alignment is tagged accordingly.
Retnomurti and Imran (n.d.) in their work compare the translation of Indonesian Noun Phrases into English and describe the types of equivalence and shift in the English translation of Indonesian noun phrases. They classify the data into two main categories: the equivalence and shift. The equivalence is subcategorized into Textual equivalence: SL subject-NP is translated into TL subject-NP; SL predicate-NP is translated into TL predicate-NP; SL object-NP is translated into TL object-NP. Linguistic equivalence: SL plural-NP is translated into TL plural-NP; SL singular-NP is translated into TL singular-NP, and Dynamic equivalence. The result of this research shows that the shift occurs more than the equivalence, with the percentage of 58 % *and the equivalence with the percentage of 42 %.

Al-Zoubi and Al-Hassnawi (2001) in their article attempt to construct a workable eclectic model for shift analysis and provide a sound machinery to analyze various types of shifts in translation at various levels of linguistic and paralinguistic description. They concluded that the phenomenon of 'shift' should be redefined positively as the consequence of the translator's effort to establish translation equivalence (TE) between two different language-systems; that of the SL and that of the TL.

Sadeghi Ghadi (2010) in his study classifies the cohesion shift of expression based on the theory proposed by Blum-Kulka (as cited in Venuti, 2000) about 'Shifts of Cohesion and 'Coherence in Translation'. This theory is supported by Larson (1998) for the analysis of meaning components of a concept of expression, for the translation equivalent. This paper intends to find the realization of level and category shifts in Persian translation of "A Tale of Two Cities" by Ebrahim Younesi.

3. Methodology

This paper investigates the realization of Catford's category shifts in Persian translation of “A Tale of Two Cities” by Ebrahim Younesi. For this purpose, forty sentences were selected randomly from first six chapters of the novel and compared with corresponding parts in Persian translation to analyze the types and extent of shifts the translator had used.

4. Data Analysis

In this paper, 40 sentences were randomly selected and compared with their corresponding part in Persian translation. The type of shift in each sentence has been defined within Catford's model.

1. …which, strange to relate, have proved more important to the human race than any communications yet received through any of the chickens of the Cock-lane brood. 
   Class shift: Adjective to Noun
   در انگلستان آنقدر نژاد و امینت نیبود که لاف و گزارا ملی را توجیه کند:
   Class shift: Verb to Noun

2. In England, there was scarcely an amount of order and protection to justify much national boasting.
   Unit shift: Word to Group
   هفت راهزن در کمین کالسکه پست نشستند.

3. the mall was waylaid by seven robbers
   structure shift: Passive to Active
   بنیگ این باشند که پتوان کالسکه را به راس تنه رسانند.

4. nobody thought any of these occurrences much out of the common way.
   Class shift: Verb to Noun

5. denying that the coach could be got up the hill
   structure shift: Passive to Active
6. the guard got down to skid the wheel for the descent, and open the coach-door to let the passengers in.

7. The stillness consequent on the cessation of the rumbling and labouring of the coach, added to the stillness of the night, made it very quiet indeed.

8. Our booked passenger showed in a moment that it was his name.

9. not because they had the least relish for walking exercise, under the circumstances

10. I belong to Tellson’s Bank.

11. every one of those darkly clustered houses encloses its own secret

12. and the mud, and the mail, were all so heavy…

13. With drooping heads and tremulous tails,

14. but evincing a tendency to keep his own counsel

15. Bed, sir?

16. loaded with heavy dark tables

17. the two tall candles on the table in the middle of the room

18. Miss Manette to be, for the moment, in some adjacent room.

19. Mr. Lorry’s thoughts seemed to cloud too.

20. It was told me by the Bank that the gentleman would explain to me the details of the business.
30. various scraps of leather were at his feet and on his bench.

31. When he had stood, for a minute or two, by the side of Defarge,

32. The look and the action had occupied but an instant.

33. He glanced at the shoe with some little passing touch of pride.

Class shift: Noun to Adjective
34. ‘Is that all?’

Unit shift: Group to Word

35. …and I have made *shoes* eversince.

Intra system shift: Plural to Singular

36. some long obliterated marks of an *actively* intent intelligence in the middle of the forehead ...

Class shift: Adverb to Noun

37. *gradually* forced themselves through the black mist that had fallen on him.

Unit shift: Word to Group

38. *They’ were overclouded* again

Intra system shift: Plural to Singular

Structure shift: Passive to Active

39. He looked at the two, less and less *attentively* ...

Class shift: Adverb to Noun

40. *And* resumed his work.

Unit shift: Word to Group

5. Conclusion

This study intended to find the realization of Catford’s shifts in the Persian translation of “A Tale of Two Cities” by Ebrahim Younesi. This paper analyzes different types of shifts in translation. For this purpose, forty sentences of the first six chapters of the novel were selected randomly and compared with their corresponding parts in the Persian translation. The results indicate that among forty sentences that include forty-three shifts, unit shift is the most frequent type of shift. The extent to which each of the different types of shifts is used is as follow:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of shift</th>
<th>Structure shift</th>
<th>Class shift</th>
<th>Unit shift</th>
<th>Intra system shift</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>30%</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
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The investigation also shows that shifts are inevitable in some places during the translation process and this is because of different natures of languages and variations that exist among them, so the translator is forced to deviate from the source text.

References


