

Translation Quality Assessment of English Equivalents of Persian Proper Nouns: A Case of Bilingual Tourists' Signposts of Isfahan

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Abstract

This study evaluated the TQA (translation quality assessment) of English equivalents of Persian proper nouns in the tourist signs and bilingual boards in Isfahan. To find different errors in translations of the bilingual boards and tourist signs, the data were collected directly by taking picture or writing exactly from the available tourist signs and bilingual boards. Then the errors were assessed by MeLLANGE (Multilingual eLearning in Language Engineering) translation error typology, a model for evaluating and marking the errors of a project by Leonardo da Vinci center of education and culture in the University of Paris. The findings revealed that the most frequent errors in Persian translating to English was related to errors of incorrect cases in full upper cases, errors of transferring the content by source language intrusion in the untranslated translatable cases and errors related to the syntax of language. As a conclusion, using expert and knowledgeable translators, applying a consistent method, a comprehensive and standard system for decreasing the errors can be effective.

Keywords: Bilingual boards, MeLLANGE translation error typology, tourist signs, translation quality assessment

Introduction

The present time is called the age of communication and technology. All of the countries need to communicate with each other; this relationship is requisite for political, economic, cultural and social goals. The tourism industry can include one part of the cultural and economic goals of knowing and using English language. By increasing day by day of tourism industry, the necessity of knowing and using the English language well and perfectly as an instrument of universal and international relationship, becomes prominent. When a tourist visits a country, s/he encounters different cases such as the names, tourist signs and titles of boards and signposts that exist in cities, now assume that the names and titles have not been written in the correct way and there have been different types of errors and mistranslations in their writing. This study assesses the quality of translation from Persian to English in the bilingual boards, signposts and tourist signs and finds different types of errors and the causes of those errors by MeLLANGE Translation Error Typology and attempts to investigate the quality of English equivalents of bilingual tourists' signposts in Isfahan and also to find out in which categories of the MeLLANGE Translation Error Typology, do the errors found in English translation of such signposts fall?

Literature Review

Translation and Tourism

In the topic of translation of tourism texts the issue of language becomes prominent and the importance of proper translation for this purpose becomes highlight. "Tourism uses language to manipulate reality turning an anonymous place into a tourist destination; therefore, language is the most powerful driving force in the field of tourism" (Delforouz, 2010, p. 34)

In translation of a text there are different types of effects that maybe occur during the process of translation, which influence on the quality of a perfect rendition. Merkaj (2013) declared: There are at least five kinds of influences that need to be considered when translating tourist texts from SL to TL, and they are: (a) the influence of associative and connotative meanings, (b) the influence of different understandings and thoughts, (c) the influence of metaphors and expressions, (d) the influence of religions and myths, and (e) the influence of values and lifestyle. (P.4) Muñoz (2011) introduced tourist translations as a mediation tool and highlighted the importance of acceptable translations of tourist texts and its numerous difficulties; also he expressed the necessity of training and professionalism of translators in this field as a specialized language in which cultural and linguistic mediation in a high degree is present continuously.

Translation and Error

There are numerous models and different classifications for translation errors, from so general divisions to so specific types. One of the general types which was not technical and described simply the most elemental forms of errors by Pym (1992) are: binary and non-binary errors, which in binary errors there are just right and wrong answers and non-binary ones that there are at least two correct answers and then the incorrect ones. Errors can occur in numerous levels such as culture, language, pragmatic and other levels and by different causes; for instance: "lack of comprehension, inappropriateness to readership, misuse of time" (Pym, 1992, p.4). Baker (2001) pointed that Errors in translation generally come from the non-equivalence among the source and target languages. Therefore in assessing the quality of translation of texts considering to the mentioned cases are inevitable. Alaeeny (2008) enumerated different types of errors of translators in a way that can say it is almost a comprehensive description; such as the ability and science of translators about translation or competence errors that include: lexical errors because of do not knowing the terminology errors of specialty fields, the structure of compound words, false friends, the meaning range of equivalents and also do not knowing the rate of natural equivalents, English grammar and sentence structure and not distinguishing proverbs and idioms of ordinary sentences. She also named the cultural errors, collocation, extra linguistic and approach errors from this category.

Another type of error that Alaeeny (2008) cited in her article is pragmatic errors that are divided into the following groups with its various subsidiaries such as: (a) approach, (b) method, (c) reader-oriented errors, (d) communicative errors, (e) meaning-based errors and (f) performance. These functional errors are associated with critical conditions such as stress, fatigue, noise, heat and light of workplace, physical illnesses and work related stressors. Visual errors, auditory errors, errors of confidence, errors arising from the production, errors resulting from the lack of interest in translation and errors resulting from time constraints are also another various kind of errors.

Translation Quality Assessment (TQA)

In spite of a lot of national and international translation standards about TQA, there is no an objective criteria which is accepted generally for evaluating the quality of translations. As Williams (2009) believed TQA cannot be values-free and for being useful it is based on criteria of goodness, and by passing the test of validity and reliability he tried to design TQA models objective as much as possible.

There are lots of different models of translation quality assessment (TQA), the MeLLANGE translation error typology is one of them that in this study has been used for evaluating the quality of translations.

MeLLANGE Project

The MeLLANGE (Multilingual eLearning in Language Engineering) project by Leonardo da Vinci center of education and culture in university of Paris is a manual annotation of errors for Learner Translator Corpus or LTC. It is a hierarchical scheme that covers the issues of syntax, terminology, register and style. The MeLLANGE translation error typology has divided the errors into two main groups: content transfer related errors and language related errors. These two fundamental categories are divided into several subcategories and also more specific error types for every one of them. The error types are marked by an abbreviation code (for instance: TR-OM means translation omission &...) that attributes to incorrect words, phrases or sentences during the annotation process of translated text. The purpose of this matrix is helping to mark or to give feedback to students' translation and also knowing and achieving data and information about frequent errors, for further studies. In the website of MeLLANGE project three most frequent errors in LTC by TL has displayed: language incorrect terminology and lexis (LA-TL-IN), distortion of the original content (TR-DI), and language inconsistent terminology and lexis within the target text (LA-TL-IT). The target languages of the project of these overall three most frequent errors were: ca, de, en, sp, fr, and it.

In a study by Castagnoli et al. (2011) 10 most frequent errors in the MeLLANGE LTC has presented : Incorrect Terminology and Lexis in Language (LA-TL-IN), Distortion in Content Transfer (TR-DI), Too literal in SL Intrusion of Content Transfer (TR-SI-TL), Awkward Style in Language (LA-ST-AW), Omission in Content Transfer (TR-OM), Tense/Aspect in Inflection and Agreement of Language (LA-IA-TA), Punctuation in Hygiene of Language (LA-HY-PU), Term Translated by Non-Term in Terminology and Lexis of Language (LA-TL-NT), Number in Inflection and Agreement of Language (LA-IA-NU), Inconsistent within TT in Terminology and Lexis of Language (LA-TL-IT).

The advantages of MeLLANGE error annotation matrix is that, it is an objective, new and update model, it has revised twice after annotation tests. The end of this classification, in each part of error types is open (*user-defined* category), it means that if there is a new type of error or a kind of error in the translated text that is not mentioned before, can add to this categorization and has been explained. In addition in this matrix the rater can score to different errors and grade each category of errors according to different texts and the importance of each category in the text and distinct the gravity and weight of seriousness of errors according to the text type.

Methodology

Raters

The researchers in this study as the raters collected the data for evaluation and interpretation. Moreover for analyzing the data as the intra and inter raters two researchers with PhD. degrees and one researcher with M.A. degree in translation studies assessed the data. Also, since the access to a native one was not possible, for evaluating the errors and their TQA got helped from an Iranian citizen in United States that has lived there for 37 years old, and the errors checked by him. This research was not an experimental type, it was a descriptive and qualitative research; therefore, there were no participants or members and any intervention on them, too.

Materials

The population of this study was 200 items of bilingual signposts and the brown tourist signs of Isfahan that have been included 300 phrases or names of places and the directions. The sampling of these cases was non-randomly and was a convenience sampling. These samples have been gathered by the researcher directly by observing the cases and registering them exactly in the same written form as the boards were written or have been taken pictures and then these samples were categorized and were filed for evaluating and explaining the errors.

The signposts and tourist brown signs were the materials that were evaluated in two main areas according to MeLLANGE translation error typology. The major parts were errors related to the transferring the content of the texts and errors related to language such as Syntax, terminology, register, style and so on. Also MeLLANGE matrix has the third major category has named user defined that has been used for the materials and other extra or new issues related to errors in the texts of translations that not mentioned in this category and the raters could add these cases. The material, the bilingual signposts and tourist boards, are more in the form of one or several words or a phrase or a small sentence, not in the form of long sentences or paragraph.

Instruments

The instrument of this study was the theoretical framework of the MeLLANGE translation error typology of Leonardo da Vinci project, which used for categorizing and evaluating the frequency and the percentage of the errors. There are two versions of MeLLANGE translation error matrix, one the 2006 version of MeLLANGE project itself and another version by little changes of Leeds University, that in this study was used the main version of Leonardo da Vinci project and for understanding better, was assisted from some short explanations of Leeds version matrix.

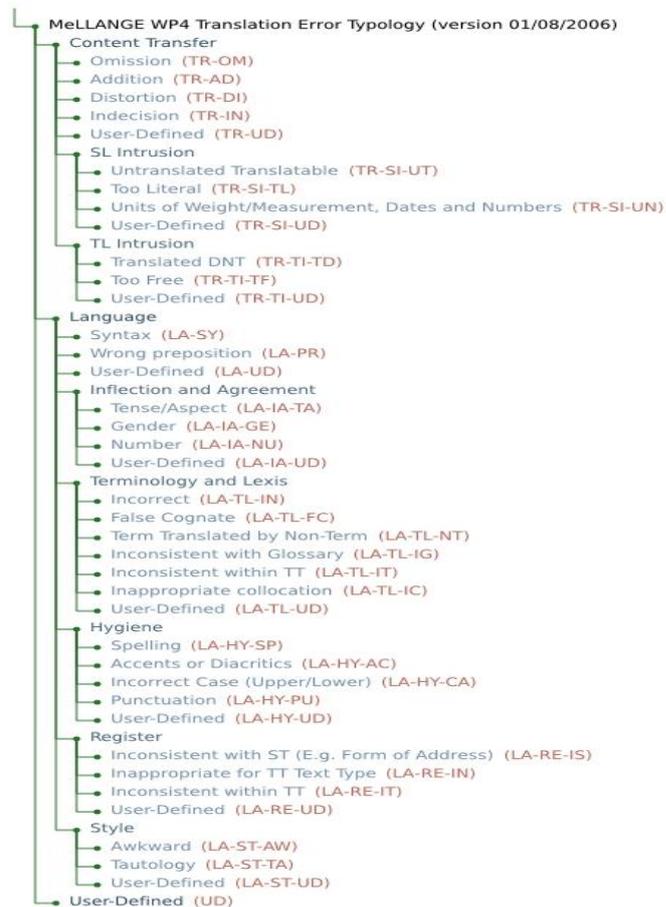


Figure1. MeLLANGE Translation Error typology (version 01.08.2006) taken from MeLLANGE website

The tool of collecting data was observation sheet and a camera that caused the process of gathering the data would be easier, faster and more convenient and more accurate. For evaluating the data by different levels of MeLLANGE matrix, two tables according to two major categories of MeLLANGE matrix were designed that were table of language errors and table of content transfer errors which has been evaluated subcategories of these two main groups more detail.

Procedure

The data as primary data collected directly by going to the places and was collected by the main way of gathering the data that is observation. The signposts and boards of directions and their English equivalence, that the most of them existed near and in the corner of intersections, Junctures and the city's main squares, were written exactly or were taken picture. These processes have been done in a period of two months. Then the data categorized in a logical way and were filed and was placed in two basic dimension and its subcategories according to MeLLANGE translation error typology for assessing them in more understandable and more accessibility way. The analysis of data was content analysis, which have been analyzed error types according to MeLLANGE translation error typology.

For analyzing the data has been sent an E-mail for the authorities and experts in this field, MeLLANGE typology, that maybe the analyzing and evaluating of this research to be more accurate, but there were not any answer to this request. For analyzing the data and finding the errors in true way, at first the errors were classified separately in two major groups of language and content. Then they were evaluated by considering to each level of MeLLANGE typology and then have been set in sub categories of the schema. For more precision and accuracy, analyzing of data was assessed by inter and intra raters, the coauthors with PhD degree in translation studies and the student with M.A. degree in translation studies, then for achieving to consensus of opinions, was debated about some of the different results and ideas and through this way the reliability of the results reached to one.

Results

Results of Errors Related to Content Transfer

In Table 1 the frequency and percentage of errors related to content transfer was shown. As it is clear the percentage of intrusion in source language, in Untranslated translatable cases was the most types of errors in the group of errors which was recognized as the transferring the content of the text.

Table 1, Errors Related to Content Transfer

Content Transfer	Frequency	Percentage
Omission	3	1
Addition	0	-
Distortion	7	2.33
Indecision	0	-

SL Intrusion	Untranslated translatable	27	9
	Too literal	0	-
	Units of Weight/Measurement, Dates and Numbers	0	-
TL Intrusion	Translated DNT	0	-
	Too Free	0	-

Results of Errors Related to Language

In the evaluation of these 300 signposts, 110 cases of errors have been allocated into the language related errors of MeLLANGE typology. 23 Items of these 110 errors related to Language set in the syntax subcategory of language errors. An example of errors connected to syntax of language was the *praying room* or *pray room* for the *prayer room* that has been used frequently, too. In this collection there were 5 cases of prayer room that just in one case the true form has been regarded.

There were 14 items of language errors in syntax level, which has not been observed the rules of the target language in order of nouns and their adjectives; and they have been translated according to Persian rules and the nouns have been located before the adjectives the same as Persian language grammar that have caused inconsistently and inappropriately with target text types. (e.g., Mosque Almahdi instead of Almahdi Mosque, *Park Behesht* instead of *Behesht Park*). There is no abbreviation form for the word mosque, nevertheless there were various types of errors in writing the abbreviation form such as *Mosq.*; *Masq.*; *Msq.*; *MQ.* and etcetera for it, therefore can placed these boards in the subcategory of inconsistent errors within TT, or according to different and frequent error cases of abbreviation may be able to add a new level in user defined part of errors related to language and name it wrong abbreviation.

There were also some errors of terminology and lexis such as inappropriate collocation and incorrect forms. In the errors related to terminology and lexis can add a part for cases such as cross road and junction that has been used frequently for the intersections; either in complete form or in abbreviation form, that can named this level as the errors not common in TL.

In the observation and collecting data for this research there were different types of full upper cases in bilingual boards and signposts such as *MOSQUE BABOLRAHMEH*, *MOSQUE-AGHANOOR*, *MOSQUE ALMAHDI*, *EMAM KHOMEINI (RH) SQ.*, *CHEHELSOTUN MUSEUM*, *AFARINESH MRKT Alley, B.*, *AHANGARHA Alley, 2nd ST BLIND ALLEY*, *FERDOSI BRG.*, *SH A GHODOSI AVE.*, *TOURISM HOUSE* and *TOURISM INFORMATION OFFICE*, *SHEYKH LOTF ALLAH MQ.* and so on; these kind of writing of full upper cases, apart from other major and minor errors that has been seen in some of them and more or less explained former or has been clarified in the continue; has been realized abundantly. At first by observing these full upper cases for some significant places such as the mosques and religious places assumed that upper cases has been applied for respect but there were written unimportant places and even a small dead end and blind alleys by full capital letters arbitrarily by the functors without any order or purpose. Of course writing the full upper case for respecting and giving more importance for the religious places of Iranian and Muslims is not acceptable in the tourist's bilingual boards, because the full upper cases have some kind of imposition of higher to the lower religion believes, therefore causes misunderstanding impolitely, insult and a kind of imposition for the visitors and tourists.

Other types of errors that can mentioned, were the misspelt terms specially substitutions in errors related to language hygiene for instance using Emam instead of Imam, *Sg.* for *Sq.* and *Mousoleum* instead of *Mausoleum*. There were errors of register such as inappropriate forms for target text type, too. For instance the *municipality graveyard* has been written for

the municipal cemetery without any paying attention to the inappropriate meaning of graveyard, apart from using the *municipality* case that it was better to be municipal, too.

Awkward style in cases such as: *TO THE BOARDING THE AIRPLANE*, the full upper cases board that had redundant too and causes an awkward style in English language. The word concept of Boarding is comprehensible lonely and there is no need for more explanation. The cases such this item has seen much in Persian to English translations.

In table 2 the results of errors that correlated to language has been displayed. As can be seen, the rate of errors in level of hygiene in language had the most frequency that is related to not paying attention to the incorrect cases of full uppercases. The errors of syntax in noun and adjective and not observing the rule of noun and its modifier in English language has took second place in the chart. Other results are in the following too.

Table 2, Errors Related to Language

Language		Frequency	Percentage
Syntax		23	7.66
Wrong Preposition		0	-
Inflection and Agreement	Tense/Aspect	0	-
	Gender	0	-
	Number	0	-
Terminology and Lexis	Incorrect	5	1.66
	False cognate	0	-
	Term Translated by Non-Term	0	-
	Inconsistent with Glossary	0	-
	Inconsistent within TT	11	3.66
	Inappropriate Collocation	6	2
Hygiene	Spelling/Misspelt Term	7	2.33
	Accents or Diacritics	0	-
	Incorrect Case (upper/lower)	32	10.66
	Punctuation	0	-
Register	Inconsistent with ST	0	-
	Inappropriate for TT Text Type	7	2.33
	Inconsistent within TT	0	-
Style	Awkward	3	1
	Fluency/TL Expression	0	-
	Tautology	0	-
User-Defined			
(Not Common in TL)		11	3.66
(Wrong Abbreviation)		5	1.66

As it is clear by considering to the results of two charts of errors and the rate of obtained results, from assessing the 300 tourists signs and bilingual boards, 147cases or about half of them have errors that some of them were related to transferring the content of the text and some of them were language related errors. In Figure 2 the graph of the frequent errors what about language or content has been shown completely, there has been demonstrated clearly that the most range of errors were attributed to which levels.

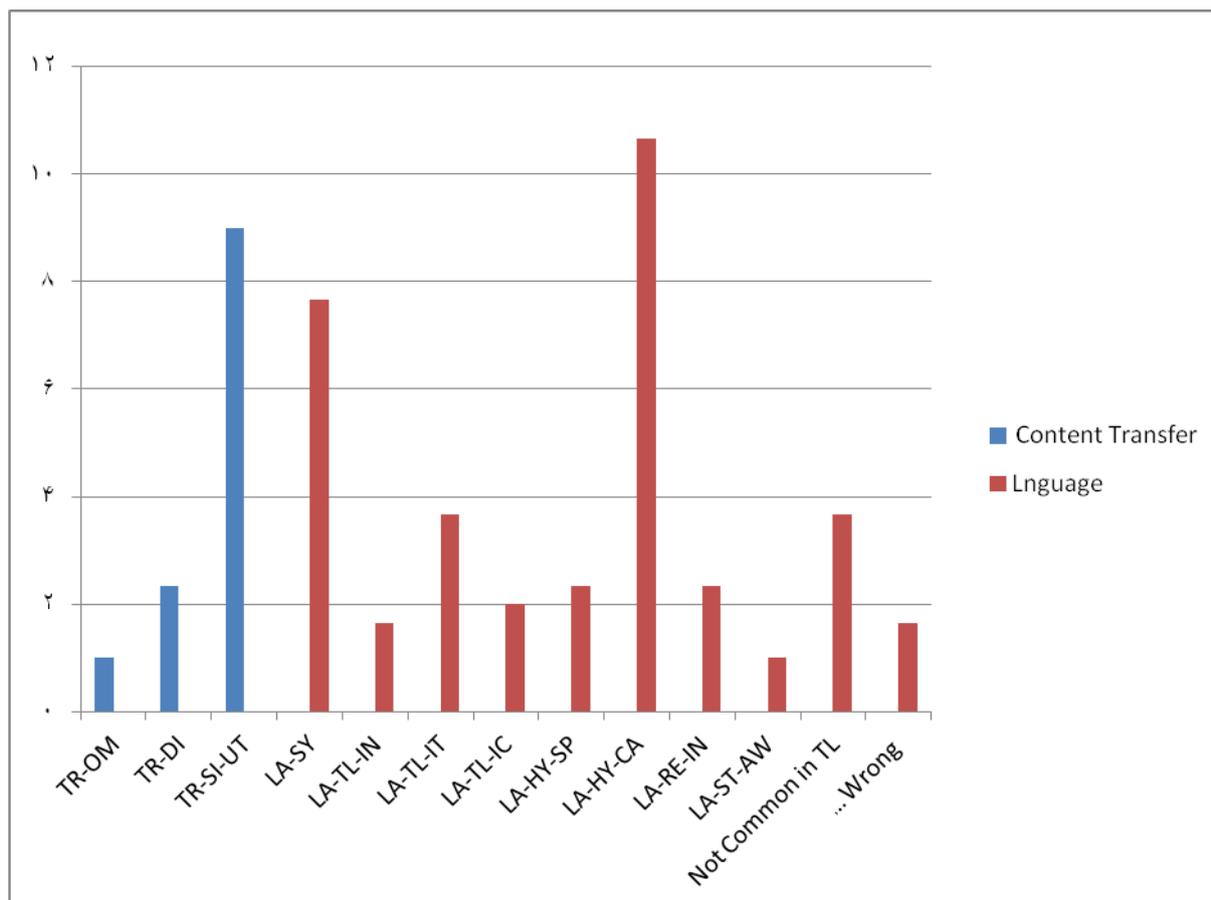


Figure: *The most frequent errors of tourist signs and bilingual boards by MeLLANGE error typology*

Discussion and Conclusion

In this study 300 cases of bilingual boards and tourist signs were assessed. The boards that were evaluated were the signposts and tourist signs of directions and have been showed just the name of the places and streets, or it is better has been said here there was more facing to the small units of text, for instance the words and phrases between one to four or five words only, not the clauses, the whole sentences, a paragraph or a complete texts; therefore, according to classification of MeLLANGE matrix, the errors were more related to the language than to the content transfer. In addition by considering to this subject, the errors related to inflection and agreement, Fluency, Expressions, Tautology, prepositions, redundancy, indecisions and many other kind of errors decrease.

In the process of collecting the data, there were tourist signs in brown tableaus that just had been written in Persian and they were not bilingual boards with English translation; these cases caused the percentage of Untranslated translatable cases of study increase and include the second case of the most frequent of errors in this study. The first cases of errors allotted to hygiene incorrect cases by the high percentage of full upper cases in the boards.

There were seen several cases of bilingual tableaus that had been written for the tourists, but they had been become so colorless and old that their writing was not distinguishable for the visitors. For instance some of the boards that were installed for introducing different parts of Chehelsotoon Palace (one of the most famous and historical places of Isfahan); these cases can effect on the industry of tourism and tourist attraction and its international aspect. Also

there were different types of places and their boards that have been written in the white and brown boards the same as tourist signpost however there were no related to tourists at all.

By paying attention to the results of 300 cases of bilingual boards, and comparing the results for responding to the first question, can conclude that there were some mistakes, errors and lost in translation of tourist signs and bilingual boards. The quality of translation of these cases and their English equivalents had some issues for more attention and evaluation. Of course this research only had a glance to a limited number of signposts and tableaux, but by considering to the results that about half of the boards had errors and different types of mistranslation, paying attention to the quality of bilingual boards becomes highlight.

The most frequent errors in this study were: hygiene incorrect case of full upper cases, source language intrusion in the translatable cases that were not translated, errors of syntax specially errors of noun and its definer that follows it, inconsistent errors of lexis within target text, errors in translating to the not common words in target language, distortion in content transfer, errors of spelling specially substitution cases, errors of register in inappropriate cases for target text type, errors that founded in the terminology and lexis of language in the incorrect form and the terms translated by non-terms and inappropriate collocation, wrong abbreviation, translation omission and awkward style in language.

The findings of this study were almost in line with the most frequent errors in MeLLANGE LTC by TL according to MeLLANGE corpus site and the frequent errors of LTC in the research that has done by Castagnoli et al (2006). The three most frequent errors in LTC in the MeLLANGE project were language incorrect terminology and lexis, distortion of the original content, and language inconsistent terminology and lexis within the target text. However, the most frequent errors in this research are LA-HY-CA, but the causes of these errors are: not being a consistent system for standard translation in different groups that have done this task. The full upper cases have been caused of, as they wish and their style in translating; more than distinct error of don't knowing. The cause of the high range of TR-SI-UT errors has been referred to the cases that could translate and were tourist signs but there were no English translation for them and were monolingual boards. But the cause of the errors of syntax as the third case of errors were resulted in different way of using the noun and its definer in Persian that is in different form of English, that the most cases of this level of errors were related to this issue. In a study by Castagnoli et al. (2011) in the MeLLANGE LTC the errors LA-TL-IN, TR-DI, LA-ST-AW and LA-TL-IT were in line with this study.

In a study on the evaluation of the quality of English translations of Persian historical tourist catalogues and brochures produced by Iranian non-native translators, according to seven different types of translation category by Ivir (1987) was presented that Addition, omission and substitution were the most strategies in translation; which shows that this study is rather in line with its findings, when the use of additional words according to Ivir's model, caused the awkward translations of MeLLANGE model; or the substitution of crossroad and junction for intersection, or expansion for the highway were in line with the result of that research.

This study aimed to find translation errors in boards and to find out factors that causes mistranslation of boards and suggests some solution for avoiding these problems. According to this study can say the qualities of English equivalents of bilingual tourists' signposts in Isfahan are not well and are not in an acceptable and standard way when there were some problems and mistakes in the studied cases that were caused about half of the boards had some major and minor errors. Therefore the importance of paying more attention to the first cases that a visitor as soon as coming to a country watches, the tourist signs and different boards that were installed abundantly everywhere in a city such as Isfahan, becomes highlight. The necessity of a consistent system with a defined pattern for translating the public boards and taking advantage of skillful and knowledgeable translators repeats. This research

reminds to the students, translators and faculties that: how easily there is a lot of lost in translation and mistranslation in such simple cases and they should consider these types of errors will be exist in every part of the processes that are related to translating; and it is the duty of translators to accentuate their job acclamatory.

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