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## Research Paper

### The Most Common Challenges Facing Iranian English Majors in the Translation Process from English into Persian

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#### Abstract

The main priority for university translation educators is to improve the quality and outcomes of translation courses. To achieve such a goal, the instructors are required to integrate learners' needs, identified with the help of a needs survey, into syllabus content. Accordingly, the present study was conducted to identify the Iranian English majors' difficulties in translating English texts since once a problem is identified, exploring the best pedagogical solutions would follow. The aim was accomplished through qualitative descriptive research conducted at Islamic Azad University, Shiraz Branch tracing the errors committed by the English majors in their exam papers in academic years 2016-2019. Following the model proposed by Miremadi (2008), the syntactic and lexical problems were identified in the exam papers collected during six semesters. Moreover, three more categories were added to the list as the data analysis moved forward: culture problems, stylistic problems, and miscellaneous errors with detailed subdivisions. What appeared to be worthy of attention in the results was the students' weakness in text and sentence segmentation to find the function of the components to approach textual meaning, resulting from the students' poor English language proficiency. The results also revealed the students' poor topical knowledge as well as the lack of knowledge of translation techniques and strategies.

**Keywords:** Error analysis, pedagogical solutions, topical knowledge, translation problems, translation strategies

## Introduction

The term *medical diagnosis* is defined as "the identification of the cause of a patient's illness or discomfort" (Medical Dictionary, 2009). Diagnosing problems in educational research also follows the same procedures as medical research does to find the sources of the problems using a variety of measurement tools to prescribe what seems to result in adequate efficient remedies.

Based on the researchers' experience, students and novice translators are generally not aware of the requirements of the task of translation they are assigned. More importantly, they seem unable to realize many of the problems related to the task in hand. This leads to the gap that exists in translation training programs which is the lack of a detailed classification of problems of translation on the one hand, and of the translation requirements of particular texts on the other. Accordingly, the decision to work on this topic was based on the fact that identifying problems is the first step towards positive evaluation and analysis of successful solutions or strategies to design a course in which the students can realize many of the problems related to the task in hand and get awareness of the requirements of the task of translation they are assigned.

In defining a translation problem, however, a distinction should be made between a process difficulty, on the one hand, and a product error, on the other as the former refers to a problem as a source of puzzlement and the latter implies a defect in performance, i.e., a product "error" (Deeb, 2005). Such a distinction is crucial in the present study as the data comes from the students' errors to find out the sources of puzzlement.

The proposed study draws the attention of instructors to the importance of their own role in teaching and guiding the students to adopt useful techniques and procedures for accurate translation through developing curriculum and materials more effective in translation courses. In fact, as Bowker (2000) argues, "trainers must be able to point out specific problems rather than relying on vague impressions, and they must be able to back up their decisions with more than just instinct or gut feeling" (p.186). In practical terms, consequently, this study intends to provide translation instructors at both undergraduate and postgraduate level with a graded checklist of problems encountered by Iranian students translating from English into Persian in order that they can employ the best possible effective teaching strategies to guide the students to solve such problems.

Moreover, it provides a guideline to the students to identify some of their most crucial weaknesses in translation and to develop skills necessary to be proficient enough in standing against translation difficulties. The study, also, will benefit the future researchers who intend to investigate the same problems in some other educational institutes.

To follow the objectives of the research, the following questions were raised and answered through corpora analysis:

Q1. What difficulties do Iranian English majors have in the translation process from English into Persian as reflected in their common errors?

Q2. What is the nature of such errors and how can they be classified?

## Review of Literature

Translation problems are referred to by different terms in the literature. Some translation scholars such as Clark (2000) use the words *challenges* and *pitfalls* while some others alternate between *difficulties* and *problems*.

Using the terms *problems* and *difficulties* both, Newmark (1988) does not differentiate between the two; Nord (1991), on the other hand, makes a distinction between what she calls translation problems and translation difficulties. She explains that a translation difficulty relates to a difficulty encountered by an individual translator, due to a certain weakness or inability, and a translation problem is a challenge for most, if not all, professionals translating into a certain language.

Similarly, Schaffner (2001) believes that translation problems are objective problems to be identified before producing the target text; "they must not be confused with subjective difficulties a translator may have due to deficient translation competence" (p. 24).

Differentiating between problems and difficulties, Nord (1991, 2005 as cited in Schaffner, 2001) classifies translation problems into four main types: pragmatic, intercultural, interlingual (linguistic), and text-specific problems. Pragmatic problems are due to the contrast between communicative situations in ST and TT including place, time, and address. Intercultural problems result from different cultural conventions such as formal, text type and genre conventions. Structural differences in syntax, vocabulary, and suprasegmental features of the two languages involved result in Interlingual translation problems. Text-specific translation problems arise when specific features such as puns, rhetorical figures, alliteration, and rhyme appear in specific texts.

Theoretical problems of translation, according to Miremadi (2008), are generally divided into two main categories: lexical problems and syntactic problems. Noting that there are certain words in the SL that correspond imperfectly to the words of the TL, Miremadi subcategorized lexical problems into *straight/denotative meaning*, which refers to the words, like *father*, in the SL that can be matched with the TL words as they create the same image, *ironical meanings*, or words or utterances that have contextually opposite meanings, *metaphorical expressions*, *semantic voids*, referring to the words or expressions that have referents in a speech community but not in others, and the *problems of proper names*.

Syntactic problems, as Miremadi (2008) has quoted from Nida (1975) originate from different systems of organizing syntactic constituents such as word classes, grammatical relations, and word order.

Analyzing the errors made by the professional and novice translators, Hubscher-Davidson and Borodo (2012) categorized them into formal, lexical, grammatical, text-level errors and other errors such as idiomaticity and cultural specificity.

Among the recent empirical investigations focusing on the difficulties and challenges facing university students of translation, the studies conducted by Arab researchers seem to be significant in the field. Ghazala (2008) classifies translation problems facing Arab university students of translation into grammatical, lexical, stylistic, and phonological problems. The reasons for grammatical problems are complicated SL grammar, different TL grammar, and different word order.

In a study conducted by Montasser Mohamed (2013) some practical lexical problems in English- Arabic translation confronted by undergraduate students were investigated. The translation problems embraced thirteen lexical features: polysemy, technical terms, proper nouns, compounds, collocations, phrasal verbs, fixed expressions, idioms, proverbs, connotative meaning, synonyms, Arabization, and lexical gaps.

Focusing on the university students' failure to achieve the appropriate equivalence and use the proper techniques in translation, Dweik and Suleiman (2013) conclude that cultural influence resulted in the poor performance of the students.

As far as translation problems of language learners in the Iranian context are concerned, the following recent studies are worth mentioning:

Abbasi and Kariminia (2011) compared the errors of junior and senior students to reach their possible dominant errors which had not been remedied during the years of studying at the university. The identified errors were classified into two main categories namely, lexico-semantic and syntactico-morphological. Lexico-semantic errors included cross-association, the cases where there is one word in the source language for which there are two words in the target language and false cognates. Syntactico-morphological errors included a variety of errors such as wrong use of tense, prepositions, and articles.



In a study conducted to find out students' main problems in translating from English into Persian, using Na Pham's (2005) error analysis, Ardehshiri and Zarafshan (2014) found out that understanding the pragmatic senses was the most distinctive problem the students had, the main reason for which was misunderstanding the source text main message.

The study carried out by Yousofi (2014) investigated the common problems found in the translation products of Iranian graduate or undergraduate students seeking a job as an English translator. The data came from 100 test samples the analysis of which led to categorizing the difficulties into linguistic, cultural, and stylistic ones. Linguistic difficulties included lexical and structural features. Terms or expressions loaded with religious, social, and political connotations led to cultural problems.

The results of a study conducted at Islamic Azad University, Salmas Branch to understand the nature of translation problems of Iranian EFL learners revealed that the biggest challenge the students faced was Persian-English translations since it was much easier to comprehend than to compose English. The most common problems were related to word-order, structure, and vocabulary choice. The researcher, Sadeghi (2011), concluded that inappropriate linguistic competence in English is responsible for the bulk of translations blunders made by the students.

Challenges in English to Persian translation of contracts and agreements were investigated by Karimi, Heidari Tabrizi, and Chalak (2016). The participants were 20 Iranian MA students at Islamic Azad University, Khorasgan Branch receiving a translation task including a land selling contract and a consignment agreement. The findings reflected the students' lack of basic knowledge of legal systems and terminology and layout of legal texts.

Ilani and Barati (2016) investigated the challenges in translating journalistic texts. The analysis of the errors committed by Iranian senior translation students studying at Zand Institute for Higher Education, Shiraz, Iran indicated that the most frequent errors were grammar and terminology errors as well as misunderstanding of original texts.

Focusing on tourism industry guidebooks, Vahid Dastjerdi and Abdolmaleki (2013) investigated the problems of translating such texts trying to discover the most frequent error patterns committed by the Iranian translators. The errors were traced in three hundred sentences randomly extracted from the corpora and subjected to error analysis resulting in categorizing the errors into syntactic ones mostly including grammar patterns, semantic errors including word choice patterns, and pragmatic errors.

Reviewing the relevant literature indicates that focusing on the Iranian students' performance in translation, most of the researchers have discussed the general objective problems faced by the students. However, there seems to be lack of a detailed dissection of English-Persian translation subjective difficulties resulting from deficient translation competence. Accordingly, the present research has attempted to have a thorough investigation into the nature of errors resulting from poor translation competence to answer the research questions.

### **Method**

The present study is a qualitative descriptive research based on content analysis, one of the goals of which, according to Ary, Jacobs, and Sorenson (2010), is to 'analyze types of errors in students' writings and classify their errors in different areas' (p.457). This design, therefore, was chosen to investigate the hindrances or problems confronting the Iranian undergraduate students of translation when translating different texts from English into Persian by analyzing the errors they had made in their exam papers. The purpose of the study was actually conducting a kind of action research that can serve as a significant form of teacher professional development.

## Setting and Participants

The study was conducted at Islamic Azad University, Shiraz Branch, English Department during the six semesters of the academic years 2016 to 2019. The participants in the study, the researcher's students at different translation courses, were 564 Iranian junior and senior students enrolled in the undergraduate program of translation. They were of both sexes, aged between 19 and 26 years old.

The selection of the participants was based on the convenience sampling technique. They were the researcher's students in translation classes. The participants, of course, had already studied many specialized courses including language skills, English grammar, linguistics, Persian language structure and English writing courses. They had also completed at least two courses in translation.

## Instruments

The data collected for the present research came from the assigned papers, quizzes, and exams given to the undergraduate translation students. In order to have dependable findings, increasing the validity and reliability of the results, the strategy of data triangulation and replication logic (Ary et al., 2010) was chosen. The homework assigned to the students, short assigned homework in class individually or in group, quizzes, and formal exams all provided different sources of data for the researcher. Moreover, the study was conducted with the multiple groups during six semesters so that the researcher could obtain consistent findings during three years of teaching translation courses to undergraduate students.

## Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

Methodologically, the present research employed a product-oriented descriptive research method to present the description or analysis of ST-TT pairs. As a result, to detect the problems in the corpora, the researcher followed the procedures of error analysis put forward by Corder (1987) including sampling, identification, explanation, evaluation, and correction of errors.

Initially, the errors found in the students' assignments and exam papers were regularly recorded in a notebook under headings referring to the nature of the problem. A labeling system mainly based on Miremedi's taxonomy of translation problems including syntactic and semantic problems was created to identify the type of potential problems. Those errors belonging to the same category were subsequently grouped together with some sample examples illustrating them. The errors, of course, were gradually and subsequently added to the categorized list during the whole semesters under investigation. As a result, three more categories, stylistic, cultural, and miscellaneous errors identified by the researchers were added to the list to classify the errors found in the corpora.

In addition to the notes, the researcher added some memos checking the translation error identification and classification with two teacher-evaluator colleagues involved in teaching translation courses to increase the reliability of the results.

The next stage was describing the errors mostly through the sample examples including a few stages following the model selected by Lai (2013). First, the problem as reflected in the error was introduced. The source text and its Persian translation by the students were presented. The students' translation, then, were back translated into English so that English speakers could see what the problem was.

To increase the credibility of the research the researcher used triangulation method including peer review so that three of the researcher's colleagues were provided with the raw data along with the researcher's interpretation and explanation in order for them to decide if the findings and interpretations are credible through discussion (Ary et al., 2010).

## Results

In order to answer the research questions the researcher followed the model proposed by Miremadi (2008) which identified two main categories: syntactic problems and lexical problems. Each of these two categories was subcategorized into different types. Furthermore, three more categories were added to the list as the data analysis moved forward: culture problems, stylistic problems, and miscellaneous errors which were further divided into their related subcategories under distinct topics.

Miscellaneous errors, the last category, were those errors that could not fall under any of the other categories. Accordingly, these errors were categorized as miscellaneous, which consisted of the errors related to the lack of general information or the knowledge of the world and the students' weak deduction as well.

The syntactic problems were reflected in two general levels: the problems at the level of words and the problems at the level of sentences. The problems at the level of words included those relating to parts of speech listed as nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, articles, and conjunctions. The problems at the level of sentences were those observed in sentences including deleted subordinate clauses and main clauses, as well as those problems related to the linked elements by coordinators. In terms of general categories of the problems, in fact, the results of the study are in line with other Iranian researchers such as Abbasi and Kariminia (2011) and Yousofi (2014), working on the university students' translation errors; however, the detailed subdivisions and the nature of problems are, in most cases, different from the other studies. Moreover, the syntactic errors fall under two general categories as word level and sentence level including detailed analysis of different components of the sentences individually as well as investigating the linkage or logical relationship between the components in English sentences.

## Discussion

The following source text samples and their translations present the problematic areas. Of course, the samples are abridged forms of the original data due to word limitation. The back translation of each sample is presented to compare the source and the target text to evaluate the compatibility of meaning between the two languages, thereby assessing the accuracy and quality of translation. In addition, the problem reflected in each of the samples is explained and in some cases the suggested translation is added to the discussion.

### Syntactic Problems

#### Problems at the level of words

##### Nouns

Problem: *Changing the grammatical function of the head word in a noun phrase*

ST: female activists

TT: زنان فعال سیاسی /zænanə fæʔʔalə sijasi/

Back translation: women who are activists

The adjective *female* is translated into زنان /zænan/ (women), a noun in Persian; *activists* is translated as an adjective, so that the noun has functioned as a modifier and the modifier has replaced the noun. The suggested translation of this phrase is. فعالان سیاسی زن /fæʔʔalane sijasi zæn/.

##### Pronouns

Problem: *Missing the pronoun referent*

ST: Modern American households are coming to resemble those of centuries past,...

TT: ... خانواده های آمریکایی در حال شبیه شدن به قرون گذشته /qorune gozæʃte/ هستند،

Back translation: The American families are coming to resemble the past centuries,

In the above example, *those* which replaces *the American families* is ignored as the head word of the noun phrase *those of centuries past*, and *the past centuries* has played the role of complement for the verb *resemble*.

### Verbs

Problem: *Ignoring tense harmony*

ST: Margaret sat on the foot of her bed and watched the trees tossing in the wind.

TT: مارگارت پایین تختش نشست /nefæst/ و درختان را نگاه می کرد /negah mikærd/

Back translation: Margaret sat on the foot of her bed and was watching the trees.

The conjunction *and* in the source text has led to a harmony between the tense of the verb phrases joined together. This sense of harmony is not built in the target text where the simple past and past progressive are joined together by *and*.

Problem: *Misuse of tenses*

ST: We will have lived in this house for ten years by the end of this month.

TT: ما در این خانه تا آخرین ماه ده سال زندگی خواهیم کرد /xahim kærd/

Future perfect in English expresses an action that will be completed before some other point in the future. The simple future has replaced future perfect in the translation. The error can be explained as interference of L1 because in Persian, there is no a precise equivalent for future perfect; the present perfect or simple present is used for the same context. The suggested translation of this sentence is: /ta pxære in mah dæh sal æst ke dær in xane zendegi mikonim/.

Problem: *Having difficulty recognizing the verb phrase replaced by an auxiliary in ellipsis-substitution*

ST: The violence between Christian and Muslim militias has escalated in recent months, as have attacks on UN peacekeepers.

TT:

خشونت بین شبه نظامیان مسیحی و مسلمان ماههای اخیر افزایش یافته زیرا به حافظان صلح سازمان ملل حمله شده /zira be hafezane solhe sazeman melæl hæmle fode/

Back translation: The violence between Christian and Muslim militias has escalated in recent months because UN peacekeepers are attacked.

In English grammar, auxiliaries can be used to avoid verb repetition. As substitution is one of the methods of cohesion (Nordquist, 2018), in the above example, it seems that the students had problem connecting two pieces of information, in one of which the verb phrase *has escalated* is substituted by the auxiliary verb *have* and the word *as* is a preposition, meaning *like*, not a subordinate conjunction. One of the reasons might be the confusing structure of the second deleted clause: the inversion of subject and auxiliary after *as* in English, a specific grammatical structure that does not exist in Persian.

### Adjectives and Adverbs

Problem: *Wrong modification*

ST: Developing a smart statewide network of educational programs

TT: توسعه شبکه برنامه های آموزشی هوشمند سراسری /bærnamehaje amuzeji hufmænd/

Back translation: Developing the network of smart nationwide educational programs

The adjective "smart" modifies *network*, while the translator has used this adjective to modify *program*. This problem might be due to either the length or complexity of the noun phrase with multi modifiers and possessive of phrase (Swierzbinska, 2014) or the order of *adjective and noun in*

*Persian which* is different from English in that in contrast to English, Persian descriptive adjectives typically come after the noun they modify.

ST: There is even peace in the storm.

TT: آرامش حتی در طوفان /hætta dær tufan/ هم هست.

Back translation: There is peace even in the storm.

The position of the adverb *even* in a sentence varies depending on which element is focused on. In the above example, the translator has moved the focus from *peace* to the phrase *in the storm*.

The suggested translation of this sentence is:

/hætta arameʃ hæm dær tufan hæst/.

### **Prepositions**

Problem: *Misunderstanding the function of the preposition "for" in adverb phrases of purpose*

ST: Thousands of people were killed in order for him to remain in power

TT: هزاران نفر بخاطر او /bexatere u/ کشته شدند تا در قدرت باقی بماند.

Back translation: Thousands of people were killed for him in order that he can remain in power.

The preposition "for" in adverbial phrases of purpose in English just introduces the agent of the verb in the phrase and does not have the same meaning as *for* in a phrase like *do something for somebody*. In the above examples *for* is translated as *due to* since the function of *for* in purpose clauses seems to have been unknown to the translator. The correct translation of this sentence is

/hezaran næfær koʃte ʃodænd ta u dær qodræt baqi bemanæd/.

Problem: Having *difficulty finding appropriate equivalents*

ST: I feel that I'm dying, and, through the medium of art and mystical experience, I want to be reborn.

TT: حس می‌کنم در حال مردن هستم و در میان /dær mijane/ هنر و تجربه مرموز می‌خواهم دوباره زاده شوم.

Back translation: I feel that I'm dying, and I want to reborn between art and mysterious experience.

This problem might be attributed to the various numbers of prepositions in English, many of which have more than one meaning in different situations. It seems that the first and the most frequent and familiar meaning of the preposition is chosen by the translator without focusing on the contextual clues to find the appropriate equivalent. Through in the example means by, the Persian equivalent of which is با /ba/ or از طریق /æz tæriq/.

### **Articles**

Problem: *Distorting the message by changing a definite article into an indefinite one and vice versa*

ST: The accident was ordinary enough.

TT: حادثه‌ای /hadeseʔi/ معمولی بود.

Back translation: It was an ordinary accident.

When sentences having the English definite article *the* are going to be translated into Persian, the definite article *the* seems to be replaced by a zero article (حادثه /hadese/) or a demonstrative adjective such as *this* or *that* (آن حادثه /an hadese/). However, the lack of precise equivalent for definite article "the" in Persian leads to misuse of indefinite and definite articles.

### **Conjunctions**

Problem: *Misunderstanding the cohesive function of conjunctions*

ST: Every culture has developed preferences for certain kinds of food or drink. However, these preferences are mostly formed in our heads and not in our tongues, for something can taste delicious until we are told what it is.

TT:

هر فرهنگی تمایل خاصی برای غذاها و نوشیدنیهای خاصی توسعه میدهد گرچه /gærtʃe/ این سلائق بطور گسترده در ذهن ما شکل گرفته اند تا در زبان ما برای /bæraje/ چیزی که می تواند خوش طعم باشد تا زمانیکه به ما گفته شود چه چیزی است.

In English, *however* as a conjunctive adverb expresses both *contrast* and *concession*. The data showed that this conjunction, most of the time, is translated as a synonym for *although* meaning اگرچه /ægær tʃe/ in Persian, resulting from the students' focusing on the concessive use of *however* ignoring the fact that what is contrary to expectation follows this conjunction in a compound multiple sentence in contrast to the structure of the complex multiple sentence including *although*, based of which the *although clause* expresses the fact and *contrary to expectation clause* forms the independent clause. The students' failure to notice this point leads to misunderstanding the cohesive function of this conjunction and a translated text without any logical relation between the clauses.

Moreover, *for* is a coordinate conjunction, the cohesive function of which is sometimes misunderstood by the students and is misused as a preposition in their translation. In the example, the translator has translated *for* as برای /bæraje/, a preposition in Persian, without paying attention to the comma before *for* that can act as a contextual clue showing the function of *for* in forming logically linked ideas with a cause- effect relationship in a compound sentence.

## Problems at the level of sentences

### *Subordinate clauses*

Problem: *Missing the link between the reduced subordinate clause and the main clause*

ST: "From being self-made, I want my children to feel the money is precious."

TT: برای خودساخته بودن /bæraje xodsaxte budæn/ می خواهم فرزندانم احساس کنند پول ارزشمند است

Back translation: In order for my children to be self-made, I want my children to feel money is precious.

The initial phrase "From being self-made" in this example is the reduced form of the full subordinate adverbial clause of reason *Because I am self-made*. The poor knowledge of the students on such phrases leads to ignoring the link between the initial phrase and the following main clause and missing the subject of the phrase.

Problem: *Missing the link between the antecedent and reduced adjective clause*

ST: People with the problem of overweighting often try some of the popular fad diets being offered.

TT: مردم با مشکل اضافه وزن اغلب تلاش می کنند که تعدادی رژیم غذایی رایج را پیشنهاد کنند.

/rezime qæzaji rajedz ra piʃnehad konænd/

Back translation: As people financially search for a solution to the problem of overweighting, they often try to offer some of the fad diets.

The verb "try" is misunderstood as *making an effort* (تلاش /tælaʃ/), and the participle "being offered", which is the short form of *which is offered* is mistakenly considered to be the verb coming after "try" as the participle phrase structure is unknown or ignored by the translator.

Problem: *Sentence fragment*

ST: Not much has been done by authorities to address some of the causes of domestic terrorism such as rich- poor inequities and the grievances of Muslim youths in Mumbai.

TT: هیچ اقدامی توسط مسئولین برای نشان دادن بعضی از دلایل تروریسم صورت نگرفته است. برای مثال اختلاف طبقاتی و نارضایتی جوانان مسلمان در بمبئی.

/bæraje mesal extelafe tæbaqati væ narezajæti dʒævanane mosælman dær bæmbæʔi/

Back translation: Not much has been done to show some of the causes of domestic terrorism. For example, social class differences and youth discontent in Mumbai.

*For example*, a conjunctive adverb used to introduce examples in English, is followed by a sentence with the subject and predicate. This conjunction most of the time is treated as "such as" by the students ignoring the fact that a gerund phrase follows *such as*. This may be due to the fact that both of these devices are used to illustrate something in English sentences.

Problem: *Literal translation*

ST: Nora is happily married with a 4-year-old daughter.

TT: نورا به همراه دختر چهارساله اش با شادمانی ازدواج کرده است.

/Nora be hæmrahe doxtære ʃahar saleæf ba ʃadmani ezdevadz kærde æst/

Back translation: Nora, along with her daughter, is happily married.

The phrase *with a four-year-old daughter* in the example is the short form of *who has a 4-year-old daughter*, so the lack of knowledge about such a structure leads to misunderstanding the message and literal translation.

### **Linked coordinated elements**

Problem: *Faulty Parallelism*

ST: Religious artwork often portrays Jesus as a baby, as an undernourished weakling, or as an ascetic who passively submits to whatever befalls him.

TT:

آثار هنری دینی اغلب مسیح را مثل یک بچه /bæʃfe/، لاغر و گرسنه /laqær væ gorosne/ یا /ja/ مثل یک ریاضت‌کش /jek rijazætkef/ که با بی تفاوتی تسلیم چیزی بود که برای او اتفاق می افتاد نشان می دهند

Back translation: Religious artwork often shows Jesus as a baby, undernourished and weak, or as an ascetic who passively submitted to whatever befell him.

The coordinate conjunction *or* in the source text joins noun phrases. However, the noun phrase *undernourished weakling* with *weakling* as the head word is translated as an adjective phrase modifying the preceding noun *baby* distorting the structural balance between the elements joined by *or*.

Problem: *Having difficulty recognizing the elements joined together by the coordinate conjunction "and" when the sentence is long*

ST: We have all heard stories about people being fed a meal of snake or horse meat or something equally repugnant in American culture and commenting on how tasty it was until they were told what they had just eaten.

TT:

همه ما داستان‌هایی شنیده ایم در آمریکا که مردم با گوشت مار و اسب تغذیه شدند /tæqzije fodænd/ و /væ/ توضیح آنکه /towzihe anke/ مزه آنها چطور است تا زمانی که به آنها گفته شود که چه چیزی خورده اند.

Back translation: We have all heard stories about people who were fed a meal of snake and horse meat and to explain how its taste is until they are told what they had eaten.

The participle phrase (*commenting on ...*) after the coordinate conjunction *and* is joined to *being fed* in the source text, but the translator has translated it as an infinitive phrase functioning as a subject without a predicate distorting the logical connection between the elements.

### **Lexical Problems**

Problem: *Unacceptable collocations or wrong choice of synonym ignoring contextual clues*

ST: The driver suffered severe injuries.

TT: /rændʒ bord/ رانده از جراحات زیاد رنج برد

The verb رنج بردن /rændʒ bordæn/, the first synonym of suffering in an English-Persian dictionary, is used for physical or mental pain or disease and is collocated with pain or illness in Persian, while the verb متحمل شدن /motehæmmel foðæn/ (endure) is collocated with injuries.

Problem: *Having difficulty translating multi-morphemic words not found in the dictionary*

ST: unlexicalized type of object

TT: /qeʒre vaʒgani/ یک چیز غیر لغوی /ʃfize qeʒre loqævi/ یا یک صفت غیر واژگانی

Back translation: an object which is not lexical

The word *unlexicalized* could not be translated by most of the participants as it was not found in their own dictionaries. It seems that when a multi-morphemic word cannot be easily found in a dictionary, some students have difficulty guessing the meaning of the word by processing it in terms of its component morphemes, i.e., focusing on the meaning of each morpheme and combining them to get the whole. The suggested translation for this phrase is یک شیء بدون واژه /bedune vaʒe/ or برایش لغتی وجود ندارد /bæraʒæf loqæti vodʒud nædaræd/.

Problem: *Having difficulty finding accurate equivalent in Persian for some participle adjectives in English*

ST: Surrounding yourself with happy fun-loving, optimistic people will bring out your happy side.

TT: /mærdomi ke særgærmī ra dust darænd/ مردمی که سرگرمی را دوست دارند.

Back translation: people who love fun

Some of the participle adjectives are problematic for translators as they cannot be easily found in English-Persian dictionaries. In such cases, literal translation proved to be one of the common translation strategies used by the students.

Finding the definition of such terms in the source language to understand what exactly the term means may be a useful strategy that can be followed by the translator's creativity to find an appropriate equivalent or a way to achieve the same meaning. The suggested translation of this compound adjective is سرزنده /særzende/ or با نشاط /banəʃat/.

Problem: *Inharmonious combination of words*

ST: Confucius believed that respect and obedience are owed by subjects to their rulers.

TT: /hokmranan/ هستند. /æfrad/ کنفوسیوس معتقد بود که افراد احترام و اطاعت را مدیون حکمرانان

Back translation: Confucius believed that individuals owe the rulers respect and obedience.

The source text indicates an association between the terms placed side by side as a couple. The Persian term used for *subjects* (افراد /æfrad/), which is equal to *individuals* in English, however, does not match the Persian word for *rulers* (حکمران /hokmran/). The correct Persian equivalent of *subjects* in this context is رعایا /roʔaja/, which can be collocated with حکام /hokkam/ in Persian.

### Culture Problems

Problem: *Difficulties translating clothing and cuisine terms*

ST: the ladies dressed in demi-state toilets

TT: /xanomha ba lebas væ arajefe kæm/ خانمها با لباس و آرایش کم

Back translation: ladies with light dress and make-up

The term *demi-state toilet* refers to a semi-official dress that is less elaborate than full dress. This term has no a direct equivalent in Persian. The nearest equivalent is لباس مهمانی /lebase mehmani/ or لباس مجلسی /lebase mædʒlesi/) which is the same as English *evening dress*.

ST: If you want one last burrito, you'd better visit Tito's Taco Palace today.

TT: اگر باریتو /barito/ می‌خواهی بهتره کاخ /kax/ تیتو تاکو را ببینی.

Back translation: If you want burrito, you'd better visit Tito Taco palace (a palace called Tito Taco).

The dish names are names with strong ethnic and regional characteristics, for which there are hardly similar names in the target language. The translator, as a result, has borrowed and transliterated the term as a strategy (Pym, 2017), leading to a translation that seems to be confusing to the Persian readers as they have no any concept of what *burrito* is specifically when the term *Palace* as a proper noun is supposed to be a common noun and translated by the translator into Persian as کاخ /kax/, meaning *mansion*. Adding some information such as the main ingredients of the food, as a semantic strategy (Chestarman, 2002), can supposedly convey the meaning of this dish term better than using only transliteration strategy.

Problem: *Difficulties translating metaphors, similes, and expressions*

ST: The Mother's Milk of Politics

TT: شیر مادر برای سیاست /ʃire madær bæraje sijasæt/

The data in this study showed that most of the students have difficulty using the appropriate strategy to face challenges of metaphor and simile translation. They usually render such items by *literal translation*. Of course, literal translation can be used as a strategy whenever it contains cultural elements familiar or clear to the target reader (Newmark, 1988). The Persian suggested equivalent of *mother's milk* is *نَبْضِ حیات* /næbze hæjat/.

ST: surrounding yourself with happy fun-loving, optimistic people will bring out your happy side.

TT: افراد خوشحال و خوشبین در محیط اطراف شما جنبه شاد شخصیت شما را خارج می‌کنند.

/dʒænbe ʃade ʃæxijæte ʃoma ra xaredʒ mikonænd/.

Back translation: Happy optimistic people around you will bring the happy side of your character out.

Expressions are always one of the main reasons for translation problems particularly when the source and the target languages belong to totally different cultural backgrounds. Literal translation, the strategy used in the example, in cases when the TT reader is not familiar with the source language culture may appear weird to the TT audience. The underlined phrase can be translated into Persian as *شادی را در شما زنده می‌کنند* /ʃadi ra dær ʃoma zende mikonænd/.

## Stylistic Problems

### *Formality VS Informality*

ST: I've got loads to do today.

TT: امروز کارهای زیادی برای انجام دادن دارم.

/emruz karhaje zijadi bæraje ændʒam dadæn daræm/.

Back translation: Today, I have a lot of work to do.

### *Fronting*

ST: Such was a beautiful day we could not sit at home.

TT: روز بسیار زیبایی بود بطوریکه نتوانستیم در خانه بنشینیم.

/ruze besjar ziba?i bud betowrike nætævanestim dær xane benʃinim/.

Back translation: It was such a beautiful day that we couldn't sit at home.

Although moving some elements like adverbs to the beginning of the sentences to emphasize the initial element is usual in Persian (Mahootian and Gerbhardt, 1997), it seems that some of the students, ignoring the word order, translate the emphatic sentence as a sentence with ordinary word

order. The example, for instance, begins with *such* to emphasize the adjective, while the translated text does not imply such an emphasis.

### ***Passive vs. Active Style***

ST: A one-year ban was put on new fast-food restaurant by Los Angeles City Council.

TT: ممنوعیت رستورانهای جدید فست فود توسط شورای شهر لوس آنجلس گذاشته شد.

/mæmnuʔijæte resturanhaje dʒædide fæst fud tævæssote foraje ʃæhre losandʒeles gozafte fod/.

Changing the passive voice into active while translating is not advisable as each mode presents a different function in English. However, unlike English, Persian does not usually introduce the agent by using a by-phrase in its passive structure. One way to translate English passive sentences including the agent into Persian is moving the *patient* of the verb to the beginning of the clause and placing the Persian object marker را /rɑ/ before the subject of the active clause in order to keep the focus on the patient as the English passive structure does (Abdollahi and Hua Tan, 2016).

The data, including the above example, show most of the students' tendency to translate English passive sentences including agent by-phrase word by word using the Persian term توسط /tævæssot/ meaning *by*.

### ***Punctuation Marks***

ST: Searching for answers, Michael went to the public body he thought could provide some; Ingle Wood's Police Oversight Commission.

TT:

مایکل به دنبال جواب به جامعه جایی که فکر می کرد می تواند کمیسیون نظارت پلیس شهر اینگل وود را تشکیل دهد رفت.  
/dʒameʔe dʒaji ke fekr mikærd mitævænæd komsijune nezaratæ polise ʃæhre ingelvud ra tæfkil dæhæd/.

Back translation: Searching for answers, Michael went to the society where he thought could form Ingle Wood's Police Oversight Commission.

Marks of punctuation play very important role in giving intended meaning to the language; as a result ignoring the punctuation marks or not knowing their functions in the sentences leads to changing the meaning of the sentence completely and sometimes even convert the sentence to complete nonsense.

In the above example, the colon introduces the public body which was thought to provide some answers, i.e. Ingle Wood's Police Oversight Commission, while the translator has changed this noun phrase to an object for the verb *provide*.

### ***Miscellaneous Errors***

Problem: *Lack of the knowledge of the world (topical knowledge)*

ST: Former President George W. Bush First Lady

TT: همسر اول رییس جمهور سابق /hæmsære ævæle reʔis dʒomhure sabeq/

Back translation: The first wife of the former president

The term "First Lady" is a title used for the wife of an American president. The translator guesses the meaning of the term *Lady* as *wife* but the word *first* is used to place the president's wives in order as the translator does not have any information about this title.

Problem: *Weak inference or deduction*

ST: Two American Indian teenagers who pleaded guilty to attacking a man; instead of were sent to their people in Alaska for traditional tribal punishment.

TT: دو نوجوان آمريکايی هندی /do nowdʒævane amrikaʒi hendi/

Back translation: Two American teenagers from India (in Asia)

The translator has used the first definition of the word *Indian* as s/he does not know that the term *Indian* can also refer to the original inhabitants of America; however, it is possible to guess the nationality of these two teenagers by referring to the context. The noun phrase "*their people in Alaska*" provides enough information to conclude that these two teenagers cannot be from India. Ignoring the context, s/he does not make any inference to evaluate the target term guessing the nationality of these two teenagers.

### Conclusion

The findings of the error analysis procedure indicated the syntactic, lexical, cultural, and stylistic problems the translation students face while translating different English texts into Persian. The miscellaneous errors, also reflected the students' poor general or, in terms of Hatim and Mason (2005), *the encyclopedic knowledge*, and their weakness in reasoning from one or more sentence elements to reach a logically certain conclusion about the meaning of the whole.

A number of factors seem to be linked with these problems. The syntactic problems can result from students' low level of the source language proficiency resulting in having difficulty comprehending the source texts due to inability to parse the *sentences* into their *constituents* and recognize their functions especially when the sentences are long multiple sentences with complicated structure. One of the common errors was losing the text *coherency* so that the sentences in the target text took separate directions as if there were no any logical connections between them. This problem may be due to the students' poor knowledge of linking devices and ellipsis or clause reduction rules in English.

Lexical problems can be related to the students' insufficient linguistic knowledge of both the source and the target languages. The Findings from the analysis of the data showed that the students misused dictionaries in the process of looking for the appropriate equivalent for the source text terms. As the researcher has experienced in translation classes, it seems that ignoring contextual clues to get the correct equivalence, most of the time, the students prefer to select the first definition of a word without searching for another alternate meaning that may better fit the context.

Translation problems posed by culture-specific terms, of course, can be attributed to lack of cultural awareness and interaction as well as the *cultural gap* or a distance between the source and target languages (Newmark, 1991). With regard to culturally untranslatable terms, the students lack sufficient skills and experience to apply appropriate strategies to cope with such terms and transfer the cultural information encoded by the SL vocabulary to the TL.

A large number of the stylistic errors observed in the data are the result of the students' lack of awareness about and sensitivity towards textual features forming the style of a text. In fact, there is a wide range of textual features that makes the style of a text different from others such as "the diction (choices of words); sentence structure and syntax; modality and attitude; processes and participants; the figurative language; recording speech and thought; the patterns of rhythm; cohesion; and narrative structure" (Huang, 2011, p.61). Failing to understand the importance of paying attention to the stylistic features of a text, the students usually translate different texts such as literary and scientific ones in the same way. Such errors become more obvious when some lyrical or artistic words are used in technical texts and scientific terms are used in literary texts.

On the whole, the benefits of detecting problematic areas in translation students' performance have been demonstrated in countless studies as mentioned in literature review (Hubscher-Davidson, 2008; Nicodemus, B., & Swabey, L., 2015; Wang, 2011). What all the experts in the field of translation agree upon is the fact that problem identification is prior to prescription and

medication. Once the problems are identified, the first step to prepare for the battle is course design and planning. In sum, what can be ranked as a highly problematic issue may easily be handled by the interaction and cooperation of teachers and students in the teaching program.

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