# Application of Chesterman's Communicative Norm to the Persian Translation of Political Concepts: *Iran between Two Revolutions* in focus

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# Abstract

This research aimed at investigating different strategies used by translators in translating political English concepts into Persian between two revolutions. To this purpose, the researchers extracted and examined six cases of English political concepts from a book called "*Iran between Two Revolutions*" and their corresponding Persian translations. Qualitative research was used to gain insights into the experiences, perspectives, and thoughts for analyzing the quality of the translation. To analyze the data, first the samples were analyzed based on Chesterman's communicative norm, and then, they were compared with their Persian equivalents to determine to what extent the communicative norms had been observed in the translation of political concepts. The results of the analysis showed that the translators faced problems in translating political concepts concerning equivalence, synonyms and cultural specific items.

Keywords: Translation, Political Texts, Chesterman's Theory, Communicative Norm

# Introduction

According to Lederer (2003, p.3) "translation is a process which attempts to establish equivalence between two texts expressed in two different languages". In other words, Hatim and Munday (2004, p.6) defined translation as "the process of transferring a written text from a source language (SL) to target language (TL)". In the same vein, scholars claimed that translation is the substitution of textual material in one language by equivalent textual material in another language (Catford, 1987; Kashgary, 2011; Monalisa, 2015).

The act of translating comprises of duplicating in the receiver language the essential equivalent of the source message, regarding the meaning as well as the style (House, 2017; Sánchez, 2009). Translation is a general term alluding to the exchange of ideas and opinions starting from one language to another (Babaee & Yahya, 2014; Taibi, 2016; Tanku, 2013). Therefore, communication between nations and cultures would be achieved by translation. So, it is important to understand the relation between language and culture. Furthermore, Newmark (1981) argued that there is a cultural value in translation, and language is crucial for successful translation.

Numerous theorists clearly determined that the translation performance is impacted by the source culture and target culture. Politics is the universal aspect of human activity. The significance of political terms translation is expanding because of the rise of new words and expressions which are required to be translated unmistakably. Therefore, translators who endeavor to translate political terms ought to be acquainted with source and target language to perform translation effectively. There might be a better understanding of the concept, if the translators translate appropriately (Newmark, 1991). Based on the argument, it can be concluded that translation is the way toward exchanging message from the source language into target

language. Particularly in translating of political concepts finding the closest natural equivalent of the source language message is an important point.

The outcome of translating is directly and significantly formed by the translator's understanding of the source texts and the particular techniques he/she utilizes(Xianbin, 2007). Moreover, the translation's agency is shown not only in the translator's perception, interpretation and artistic representation of the source texts, but also in the choice of source texts, the translation cultural motivations, the appropriation of strategies, and the manipulation in the preludes of the expected functions of the translations in the target culture(Lathey, 2010; Mingjian & Yu, 2003).

The art of translation contains not just language, but also an extensive variety of cultural features that form part of daily life of the people who speak that language and have it as their mother tongue. Consequently, each society has its own culture which affect on different aspects of its people's life. The writers use cultural items like political concepts in their books to transfer the special meaning. It makes the task of translation difficult to reproduce the same meaning in the target language. Conveying what the source language writer means is a crucial matter in the translation process. Thus translators need to consider all these attributes and cultural norms that administer life in the two cultures engaged with the political translation process. This detailed knowledge of the cultures and traditions of both nations is essential in order to deliver a good translation. But some of the translators try to translate political texts only based on source language. This could be due to the lack of knowledge of cultural norms that can help them to choose the best equivalent which is acceptable in the target language.

The present study is an attempt to investigate these difficulties in the process of political translation, to raise the translators' awareness of such difficulties and to suggest some norms to hopefully overcome them in the process of translation. Based on these goals, the researchers focusing on six English political concepts from a book entitled, *Iran between Two Revolutions*" and their corresponding Persian translations, addressed the following research questions:

**RQ1:** What difficulties did translators face when translating political concepts from English into Persian in the selected corpus?

**RQ2:** To what extent was communicative norms exploited in translating political concepts to fill the cultural gaps between SL and TL in the selected corpus?

# **Review of Literature**

# **Types of translation**

Different scholars have proposed various translation types and shifts. Catford (1965) suggests two types of shifts: level shifts and category shifts. Level shifts happen when a source language form has a target language translation equivalent at an alternate level (Kurniawati, 2015; Retnomurti & Imran, 2010; Rini, 2015). Category shifts mean change from the formal correspondence in translation. Furthermore, it is divided into structure shift, class shift, unit shift and intra shift. Structure shift occurs when the clause structure of the ST is changed (Mobarakeh & Sardareh, 2016). Class shift involves a change in the word class. Unit shifts are those shifts which occur when a source text paragraph is translated into the target text phrase (Herman, 2014). The last one is intra-system shift. It is used when two languages have the same number system (Cyrus, 2006; Gambier & Doorslaer, 2010).

Reiss, Vermeer, and Roinila (1986) believed that the act of translation has an aim and meaning. They emphasized the skopos as the goal of the translation. Regarding this issue, translation is based on its skopos. Moreover, they claimed that translation should lean towards the

target culture and target language (1986). Therefore, during the translation process, the translator should create a text for a new culture and new receptors.

Newmark (1988) mentioned eight translation methods, i.e. literal translation, word for word translation, semantic translation, faithful translation, free translation, adaptation, communicative translation and idiomatic translation. Therefore, a translator has to see which translation techniques and strategies he/she is capable to utilize in translating a particular text. Finally, House (1997) distinguished among two types of translations, i.e. overt translation and

covert translation. Here, translators prefer to use the cultural filter. The cultural filter would not let the cultural elements of the SL to be transferred to the target language.

#### **Cultural translation**

The cultural translation notion was adopted by Walter Benjamin's in the early 1920s (Buden, Nowotny, Simon, Bery, & Cronin, 2009). It was, however, believed that a translation based on Benjamin's notion does not allude to an original text and it has nothing to do with communication (Buden et al., 2009; Chatterjee, 2009). In the 1990's, culture turned to be political, and eventually expanded into a feminist, cannibalism and post-colonialism approach (Tyagi, 2014). Accordingly, it should be noted that translators should be familiar with the language and culture and be aware of the links between them.

#### **Equivalence in political translation**

Equivalence in translation has always been a significant area for the researchers and scientists (Sárosi-Márdirosz, 2014). Yang (2012) emphasizes that political translation plays a vital role in international exchange as well as cooperation. He believes that political translation equivalence is possible based on the following four fundamental principles:

1)Knowing the political setting of the speaker and precisely communicating the connotation of time in the source language. It means that the significance of words and their essences change with time and, therefore, even the same idiom or literary illusions may have diverse implications.

2)Transmitting political implications to the receiver in popular language by combing the policy information of the translation version with the influence of the original version.

3)Operating towards dynamic, instead of political equivalence.

4) Focusing on adjusting the SL and TL, the source language setting and the setting of the audience as well as the speaker.

# **Chesterman's Categorization of Norms**

Chesterman (1993) believes that society builds up norms for translation behavior based on the behavior of people who are considered to be standard context and based on concepts of optimal texts. Norms are two types; namely, product norms and process norms (Lehto, 2017; Pedersen, 2011). Both of them, they think, are related to expectancy norms and professional norms. Product norms (expectancy norms) control process norms. Process norms are determined by the product norms. These two sorts of norms are interrelated, but it does not mean they have the same function.

Chesterman categorizes professional norms into three kinds: accountability norms, communication norms and relation norms (Faber, Hjort-Pedersen, & Faber, 2013). Accountability norms are ethical norms. These kinds of norms are based on the translator's professional standards in the process of translation (Chesterman, 1997). In other words, these norms can control the translator's loyalty to the source text and to the readership. Communicative norms are called social norms and illustrate the translator's role as a communication expert. In

fact, these norms are linguistic norms which focus on the translator's act and how the translator establishes an appropriate relationship between source and target texts.

#### **Background to the study**

Various studies have been conducted on difficulties which translators encounter while translating political texts. As an example, Arabiyat (2016) investigated the theories and strategies of translation of political nuclear texts in the Jordanian Senate. His discussion was divided into two levels: textual and terminological. He came to the conclusion that overt translation involves keeping the attributes of the ST and covert translation generates the comprehensibility of the TT. Moreover, he explicated that the informative text-type from the functional theories considered a suitable choice for the translator to translate the nuclear political terminologies.

Kuryleva and Nikiforova (2012) analyzed the problem of national identity revealed in national marked media texts in political discourse. They focused on foreign and native receivers interviews and how they perceive nationally loaded elements existing within one culture, present translation theoretical framework, describes techniques in translation for transferring cultural specific vocabulary into a foreign language. The results indicated that the ways in which a culturally-marked media messages are decoded may have different effects on the communication outcomes.

A study by Neisi and Gorjian (2017), compared the use of references as cohesive devices in English political news articles written by American natives and Iranian non-natives. This study targeted 200 news articles from international and national online newspapers and magazines which were selected from 2011 to 2014. News articles included 100 on American native political news and 100 on Iranian non-native ones. The results of this study indicated that the researchers of Iranian political news and articles used fewer references than those of American news.

Davaninezhad (2016) examined the impact of utilizing supplementary practices on diminishing translation issues in translating political English news texts into Persian. This study selected 40 B.A. translation students as the sample. Then, a preliminary test comprising political English news sentences was administered. The conclusion was that utilizing supplementary practices had a positive and significant impact on diminishing translation issues in translating political English news texts into Persian.

Aslani (2016) conducted a study on cases of the ideological traces in political texts. This study focused on the concept of rewriting in translating political news texts, especially the news related to the nuclear program of Iran. The study showed that the news organizations ideologies play an important role in the production of news items.

Sivandi-Nasab and Dowlatabadi (2016) conducted a research on critical discourse analysis on newspapers. This study intended to make a comparative study of two daily English newspapers of Los Angeles Times and Tehran Times regarding debates of the nuclear program of Iran. To this purpose, eight reports related to the negotiations of the nuclear program of Iran were collected and analyzed based on the micro and macro strategies proposed by Dijk (2000). The findings indicated that the Los Angeles Times tended to utilize the authoritative, explanation, evidentially and counterfactual discursive strategies; whereas, the Tehran Times utilized the actor description, hyperbole, lexicalization, repetition and situation description discursive strategies.

# Method

This section illustrates the methodology employed to conduct this study. Different subsections below provide and explain some information concerning the design of the study, the corpus of the study, and data collection as well as data analysis procedures.

### Design

Examining the source and target texts of political concepts used in *Iran between Two Revolutions in order to identify the applied* communicative norms, this study has a qualitative research design because, based on Hiatt (1986) it concentrates on revealing and understanding the experiences, prospects, and thoughts for analyzing the quality of the translation. It is also descriptive since according to Hiatt (1986), a descriptive research involves gathering data that describe events, organize, tabulate, and depict the data collection processes.

### Corpus

The corpus of this study comprised the book, *Iran between Two Revolutions* by Abrahamian (1982), alongside with its Persian translations, i.e. Golmohammadi and Fattahi (1998) and Firoozmand, Shamsavari, and Modirshanechi (1998). *Iran between Two Revolutions* concerns the interaction between political organizations and social forces during the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1909 and the Islamic Revolution of 1977-1997. Abrahamian (1982) describes the history of Iran between the two revolutions and focuses on the communist or the Tudeh Party more than other parties. He also focuses on the class and ethnic roots of the major radical movements, especially the constitutional movement in 1900, the Communists Tudeh Party in 1940, the nationalist struggle in the early 1950 and finally the Islamic insurgency in 1970.

#### **Data Collection Procedure**

To answer the posed research questions of the study, relevant data were first collected from the original English book and then from its two corresponding translations. In so doing, first the source text was inspected to find the political concepts based on Chesterman's communicative norm, and then, the target texts were scrutinized to discover their corresponding equivalents.

# **Data Analysis Procedure**

The collected data were first analyzed based on the Chesterman's communicative norm. Then, the phrases and sentences which were missing in the translated versions were extracted. Finally, the selected English political concepts were compared with their Persian equivalents to determine the extent of communicative norms used by the Persian translators. While comparing the source and target texts, mistranslation or any violations of the mentioned norms were specified.

### **Data Analysis**

In this section, the 6 English political concepts extracted from Abrahamian's (1982) *Iran between Two Revelations*, together with their corresponding Persian translations, are examined and the analysis for each one is presented.

#### Sentence 1

The constantly shifting alliances between these seven fraksiuns transformed the Fourteenth Majlis into a complex maze of political bargaining and produced in the course of the next two years many as 7 premiers, 9 cabinets, and 110 cabinet ministers.

 ا ائتلاف های همواره در حال تغییر میان این هفت فراکسیون، مجلس چهاردهم را به محیط پیچیده چانه زنی سیاسی تبدیل کرد و در نتیجه آن، طی دو سال بعدی، ۷ نخست وزیر، ۹ کابینه و ۱۱۰ وزیر بر سر کار آمدند (ص ۲٤٥).

#### Analysis

In this case, the author explains the complicated political situations from February till March 1944, when the new Majlis drastically changes its political atmosphere. A complex maze of political bargaining is in TT1 translated as "محيط پيچيده چانه زنی سياسی". This translation is acceptable and understandable in the target language. TT2 uses this phrase "هزارتوی کامل بده بستان". Maze in this sample pertains to a large number of complicated rules or details that are difficult to understand (Oxford-Dictionary, 2010). Both of these translations are correct, but the equivalent in TT1 sounds more natural and has thus been translated communicatively.

#### Sentence 2

Qavam's next step was to form a central Syndicate of Iranian Craftsmen, Farmers and workers (p. 238).

#### Analysis

ESKI was a trade union center in Iran known by its acronym. Both translations have the same effect on the reader, but the second one has used the original form of ESKI as " اتحادیه " اتحادیه " اتحادیه " Actually, TT1 has omitted the full name of the ESKI, and used its acronym. Regarding this matter, the second translation is more communicative and acceptable in the target language.

### Sentence 3

Moreover, whereas Kashani was politically pragmatic, the Feda'iyan dogmatically committed to fundamentalist (p. 318).

### Analysis

According to Oxford Dictionary (2010), 'pragmatic means practical and solving problems in a practical and sensible way rather than by having fixed ideas or theories'. Based on this definition, in TT1, the translator has found the best equivalent in Persian and rendered it as عمل "عمل" "عمل while, in TT2, the equivalent used is, "مصلحت گرا" which is totally wrong.

#### Sentence 4

In his first cabinet, he chose Baqer Kazemi (Mohzabal Dawleh), a highly religious elder statesman trusted by the ulama, to be foreign minister, and Mehdi Bazargan, the founder of the Islamic Society, to be assistant minister of education (p. 275).

#### Analysis

The Foreign Minister is the head of the ministry of foreign affairs and plays a key role in determining foreign policy. TT1 rendered this as "وزارت دارایی" (Finance Minister). Finance Minister deals with the finance of government and financial matters, while Foreign Minister deals with foreign policy. Accordingly, there is a mistranslation here. TT2 has translated it as "وزير امور امور المور» which is the exact equivalent for the Foreign Minister.

#### Sentence 5

But his tenure premier was to brief; for in January 1965 he was gunned down by a group of religious students who were outraged by his decision to sign additional concessions with foreign oil companies (p. 440).

 ولی دوره نخست وزیری وی چندان طول نکشید، چرا که در اوایل بهمن ۱۳٤۳ به دست یکی از اعضای " هیئت موتلفه اسلامی" که از تصمیم منصور مبنی بر اعطای امتیازات جدیدی به شرکت های خارجی خشمگین شد ه بودند، کشته شد (ص ٥٤١).
اما دوران نخست وزیری اش دیری نپایید، زیرا در اوایل بهمن ۱۳٤۳ به دست گرو هی از دانشجویان مذهبی به دلیل دادن امتیاز ات بیشتری به شرکت های نفتی بیگانه تر ور شد (ص٤٢)

### Analysis

Hassan Ali Mansur was the Prime Minister of Iran in 1940 as well as in early 1950. He was assassinated by a group of religious students. In this particular case, a group of religious students refers to the Islamic coalition party. This was a political party. The most important characteristic of this coalition was allying with Imam Khomeini and his followers and accepting their religious political leadership (Rahnama, 2008). In order to convey the information and vividness of the original, the translators in TT1 skillfully rendered "religious group" into "هيئت" while, TT2 translator translated it literally.

# Sentence 6

As American journal noted "the rich voted with their money long before they voted with their feet." (p. 498).

# Analysis

According to Longman-Dictionary (2008) 'voted with money' means vote for someone or something that you think will help you or have the most money, and 'vote with feet' means show that you do not support something. The first translation attempted to find an equivalent for this idiom but its equivalent carries a different meaning; while the second rendering is an example of word for word translation. Apparently, both of these translations are incorrect.

#### Discussion

The aim of this study was to discover and compare different strategies used by translators in rendering political concepts in the Persian translations of *Iran between Two Revolutions*. It also investigated whether the Persian translations followed a more source-oriented or a more target-oriented pattern.

Chesterman (1997) introduces two kinds of norms, i.e. expectancy norms and professional norms. He asserts that professional norms are divided into several forms such as the accountability norms, the communicative norms, and the relation norms. The data of the study were analyzed based on the communicative norms. This kind of norm is a social norm and specifies the translator's role as mediator. According to this norm, the character of the source texts would be modified, because the translators have to use addition, deletion, and other strategies. Chesterman (2000) believes that the translators are free in the process of translation, but sometimes they commit many translation mistakes and resort to inaccurate translation strategies such as literal translation which twist the real intended meaning. The results of the current study which is based on Chesterman's communicative norm in political texts indicate that along with the similarities, some differences were present in translating political English texts. A study by Davaninezhad (2016) claims that supplementary practices have a positive and significant impact on diminishing translation issues in translating political English news texts into Persian, while the findings of the current study show that the translators face problems in translating political concepts concerning equivalence, synonyms, and cultural specific items. Literal translation and mistranslation are among such problems. In literal translation, the translator uses the literal meaning of the original and the target texts and thus, the readers need an extra effort to interpret it. In TT1, here in this study, for instance, "the religious group" has been made explicit and replaced with "(ميئت موتلفه اسلامی)", while in TT2 it has been left unclear and unknown as it appears in the source text. In the same manner, "Water down version" refers to modified or adjusted law in the source text. The translators in TT2 have used its literal meaning (رقيق شده) and failed to transfer the intended meaning. Actually, translators are recommended to consider the semantic elements of the ST too.

"Mistranslations are the transformation of certain source text values or properties which ought to remain unaltered" (Bakker, Koster, & van Leuven-Zwart, 2009 p.270). They are the semantic changes in the target text which are irrelevant to the translation purpose and are frequently the consequence of misinterpretation. "Foreign Minister", for example, which concerns the foreign policy has been translated into "وزارت دارایی" in TT1. This equivalent is quite erroneous. In TT2, it is rendered to وزیر امور خارجه which is the best equivalent in the target text. Also, deletion occurs when the information completely disappears in the target text. ESKI, for example, stands for Central Syndicate of Iranian Craftsman Farmers and Workers. In TT1, the translators have not provided the sense of this acronym the way it is in SL and have used it just as السلامي (while the translator in TT2 has presented the original information of the SL by keeping the form and meaning of the ST. According to Chesterman (1997) "addition" refers to new information in the target text that cannot be deduced from the source text. As an example, in this study, TT1 has made explicit the information of the SL, through this strategy, and mentioned the name of Ayatollah Taleghani's book.

#### **Answer to Research Question 1**

RQ1. What difficulties did translators face when translating political concepts from English into Persian in the selected corpus?

In response to the first question of the study, it should be noted that at the point when translators deal with politics, they come across particular texts which have specific terminology. They should, therefore, know about the distinctive qualities and attributes of the political texts. Actually, since political texts have a certain stylistic attribute that is utilized to serve its overall

function, they face challenges in delivering the TT which is almost similar to the ST. Here, the translator's choice depends on certain issues in accordance with a specific theory. Regarding this matter, one of such issues is how to choose the equivalent impact of the political terms or phrase, for a wrong choice results in inadequate or inaccurate translation. Another issue is the newness of political concepts, terms, and articulations which give rise to difficulty in selecting the suitable lexical items in the target language. This is where Newmark (1988) pointed out that the principal challenges in translation are lexical.

Another problem in the process of translation of political concepts from English into Persian is the ambiguities lying within the concepts, which requires using a proper strategy. According to the results of the current study, the translators in TT2 have preferred "literal translation" to cope with this problem, but they have failed to achieve successful translation. Lack of political knowledge is another problem. In the translation of political texts and particular political concepts, the message of the text is significant, and thus translators who have inadequate experience and the little acquaintance with political issues cannot achieve the intended meaning of the ST.

### **Answer to Research Question 2**

RQ2. To what extent was communicative norm used in translating political concepts to fill the cultural gaps between SL and TL in the selected corpus?

Concerning the second research question of the study, in TT1 the translators have cared for the readers rather than for the fidelity in terms of the words and language of the original. For this reason, they have made changes to the original text through utilizing such strategies as omission, addition, alteration, and manipulation. They have actually targeted the norms of the TL and the readers' acceptability, while preserving the meaning of the ST. TT1 translators have basically changed the original concepts in terms of content, sense and literary style in many cases; while TT2 translators have been mostly faithful to the original text as to content, style and even sentence structure.

As a final word, it is to be noted here that through applying source language norms, the real intended meaning of the ST has been distorted in some cases in both translations. It can further be claimed that while TT1 is target-text oriented and has tried to find acceptable and understandable equivalents for the political concepts of the original text, TT2 has been faithful to the ST, has preserved the word order and structure of the original text, and has thus made the translated text complicated.

#### Conclusion

The findings of the present study indicate that literal and communicative are the two major strategies employed by translators in rendering the selected parts of the corpus. As for literal translation, it should be stated, it is never completely applicable because no two languages are identical. This is why in the texts under study, some parts which have been literally translated are inadequate. At the same time, conveying just the message or caring just for grammar or style of the original text do not suffice. What is in reality needed is equivalence between the SL and TL at semantic and functional level. Another point to be made here is that the translators' freedom of manipulating the source text should not be limitless, for it results in generating mistranslations. They are essentially expected to decide on appropriate translation strategies in accordance with specific SL items.

As mentioned before, the translators' lack of political knowledge has been another obstacle for them to come up with proper and adequate equivalence between the two languages in many cases. Also, unfamiliarity with political concepts has created a lack of understanding the source text meaning in some instances. Ambiguity of some of the political concepts, where a concept has more than one meaning, has also been another source of making mistakes by Persian. In conclusion, the findings of this study would be beneficial for the students who are studying translation and have no experience of translating political concepts. In fact, they will gain an opportunity to understand how to deal with the translation of such concepts from English into Persian. It will help them to enrich their knowledge about the translation of political concepts. It is also effective for researchers in translation studies to pay more attention to the cultural gap in translation research. Besides, this investigation can assist the translators, especially inexperienced ones, to get familiar with appropriate strategies to translate political concepts more resourcefully.

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