Research Article

A Corpus-Based Study of Translation Strategies in Persian Versions of UN General Assembly Resolutions

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ABSTRACT

This research analyzes the translation strategies employed in Persian translations of United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolutions based on the political and ideological undertones of the resolutions. The research utilizes a corpus-based content analysis method and selects ten politically sensitive English-Persian resolution pairs based on Newmark's (1988) typology: literal translation, modulation, adaptation, and transference. The findings indicate that literal translation is the most frequent option (41.2%), indicating a preference for formal equivalence and institutional objectivity. Modulation (30.2%) is then the major strategy for dealing with ideologically loaded lexis, but adaptation (18.9%) and transference (9.7%) also occur less often as a response from institutions against localization. The theoretical framework combines Descriptive Translation Studies and Critical Discourse Analysis for investigating the intersection of political power and linguistic practice. The findings support the notion that translation in this high-stakes sector is shaped by conservative institutional norms and ideological sensitivity, particularly within the Iranian sociopolitical context. The research contributes to translation theory and political linguistics through empirical knowledge of the frequently understudied Persian language domain. The research also highlights the importance of open and uniform institutional translation policy and training in advanced strategy implementation. Future research is invited to employ multilingual corpora and machine resources in conducting further study of ideological trends in diplomatic translation.

Keywords: Ideology, Persian Translation, Political Translation, Translation strategies, UN Resolutions

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's age of global diplomacy, the role of translation is crucial in promoting cross-cultural communication and proper transmission of information between nations. United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolutions, being their political and legal importance, necessitate high standards of accuracy, impartiality, and contextual sensitivity in translation. As a critical policy-making channel, such texts will typically have ideologically and culturally sensitive content, particularly when translated into politically heterogeneous languages like Persian. The political character of such texts necessitates that translators use intentional strategies attentive to both source-language functions and target-language conventions (Schäffner & Bassnett, 2019). In this regard, corpus-based translation studies (CTS) proved to be a successful methodological approach to explore politically translated discourse patterns and trends (Olohan, 2021).

Although official UN publications are increasingly available in Persian, thorough studies of the translation policy followed in such publications are rare. More recent scholarship has concentrated on whether or not the translations are smooth or accurate, without regard to the wider ideological effects of translational decisions within political texts (Tymoczko, 2018). Iranian translations of UNGA resolutions typically involve evasive vocabulary, tone, and modality shifts, perhaps reflecting greater socio-political orientations or linguistic conventions. Nothing is known about the frequency and types of such shifts, and how these map onto well-established translation strategies like domestication, foreignization, and modulation. This research aims to fill this gap by examining a corpus of English-Persian UNGA resolutions in the hope of establishing recurring patterns of translation and the possible ideological foundations. The following research questions addressed in the present study:

1. What are the translation strategies used in English to Persian translation of selected UN General Assembly resolutions based on Newmark's (1988) model?

2. What are the most frequent translation strategies used in English to Persian translation of selected UN General Assembly resolutions?

3. What are the least frequent translation strategies used in English to Persian translation of selected UN General Assembly resolutions?

This research enriches political linguistics and translation theory through empirical proof of the practice of translation in high-stakes political discourse. Employing a corpus-based approach, it deviates from anecdotal and impressionistic critique to a controlled, data-driven explanation of translation practices. The findings will be valuable for professional translators, policy-makers, and researchers of political communication, international relations, and corpus linguistics. Second, the research provides pragmatic advice on how to enhance translation quality and impartiality in diplomatic cables, based on models like the Multidimensional Quality Metrics (MQM) and other internationally accepted norms of translation (Lommel, Burchardt, & Uszkoreit, 2014). Due to the political character and international influence of UNGA resolutions, translation accuracy and clarity are not just issues of language, but issues of democracy.

2. LITRATURE REVIEW

2.1. Theoretical Framework

This study is based on three theoretical frameworks: Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS), Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), and Newmark's (1988) model of translation strategy. As noted by Toury (2012), Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS) focuses on the archaeological regularities of translated texts as well as translation norms within a specific socio-cultural system. DTS broadens the scope of the researcher's analysis to the product and process of translation without value criteria, which gives clarity and objectivity to the study. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA),

a Fairclough-informed model, analyzes the nature and functions of language in social power relations within any society. In political discourse, CDA examines how the choices made in translation serve to reinforce, reframe, or resist dominant ideologies (Calzada Pérez, 2021). The combination of DTS and CDA creates a balanced framework to explore detailed linguistic choices in combination with broader sociopolitical forces involved in political discourse translation.

Complementing these approaches, Newmark's (1988) model serves as a useful taxonomy of direct translation strategies employed in this research. His system involves literal translation, modulation, adaptation, and transference—each as a step in a strategy towards overcoming the challenge of cultural and ideological equivalence in translation. Literal translation highlights formal correspondence; modulation entails a switch in point of view or structure; adaptation entails contextual or cultural replacement; and transference entails the adoption of source terms, particularly proper nouns or institutional expressions. These types present a structured mechanism for the analysis of translators' choices on the translation of ideologically loaded UN documents from English to Persian.

2.2. Translation Strategies in Political Texts

Translation of political texts is not just a matter of linguistic transfer, but rather a strategic choice based on the purpose of the text and the intended audience. Venuti's (2017) foreignization versus domestication dichotomy remains a fundamental conceptual tool for discussing such strategies. While domestication makes the target text more friendly to the local audience at the expense of ideological distortion, foreignization preserves the source culture at the expense of alienating the audience. In diplomatic translations between countries, techniques such as modulation, transposition, equivalence, and explicitation are applied as a matter of course to translate political subtleties (Loescher, 2020). The primary objective may be to preserve the false neutrality of the source while making the message conform to the conventions of the target language. Applying such techniques to politically sensitive United Nations documents significantly raise the stakes, given the risk of misunderstanding or diplomatic conflict.

2.3. Challenges in Translating UN Documents into Persian

The Persian rendering of UN resolutions is preceded by certain linguistic and cultural complications. Being a syntactically multifaceted, figure-ridden, and ideologically characterized language, Persian has certain sets of challenges for the translators. The employment of passive voice, abstract nominalization, and complicated legal terminology in English UN texts does not always have direct equivalents in Persian (Yarmohammadi & Shokrpour, 2022). Additionally, considering Iranian political sensitivities as well as Persian sensitivity to classical hyperbole internally, diplomatic neutrality in the target language is especially challenging. This is complicated when addressing topics such as sanctions, nuclear matters, or humanitarian intervention which involve an extremely high degree of ideologically and geopolitically loaded content. These require emphasis on caution in strategy choice and contextual insensitivity by the translator.

2.4. Role of Ideology in Translation

Ideology within translation is unavoidable and powerful. As Hatim and Mason (1997) rightly pointed out, translators are far from being neutral middlemen; they will necessarily pass on information through their own interpretation frames. This can be particularly noticeable in the translation of political and institutional texts, where omissions, substitutions, or modal shifts have the ability to significantly alter the message. Recent research has confirmed that even institutional

translators in so-called "neutral" regimes can bring ideological bias, either consciously or unconsciously (Schäffner & Bassnett, 2019; Tymoczko, 2018). Official political positions or conformity of national discourse in authoritarian or semi-authoritarian regimes can be captured by such ideological filtering. This can be a phenomenon that is under-examined in Persian translations of UN documents, but it is bound to exist and become relevant.

2.5. Empirical Studies

Several empirical works have explored translation approaches in the case of political or institutional texts using corpus-based approaches. For example, Calzada Pérez (2021) investigated changes in translation in European Union (EU) institutional discourse and established that ideological positioning is likely to guide lexical and syntactic decisions in target texts. Likewise, Munday (2017) employed corpus-based software to trace evaluative language in political speeches and their translations, and reasoned that evaluative meaning is likely to be calibrated in an attempt to achieve ideological or rhetorical purposes. House (2015) emphasized the importance of quality evaluation of translation and noted that institutional texts, with their pragmatic purposes, are subject to alterations which must be assessed thoroughly, not only for fidelity but also for functional completeness. These works note that corpus-based analysis lends empirical evidence to the identification of trends in the application of translation strategies, especially in politically sensitive or diplomatically sensitive texts.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Design of the Study

This research applies document/content analysis design to examine translation strategies employed in Persian translations of United Nations General Assembly resolutions. Content analysis is used because it allows for systematic, objective, and interpretive analysis of political texts in source and target languages (Schreier, 2012). By doing so, this study aims to identify patterns, classify translation strategies, and understand the transmission or delivery of political meaning in Persian translations.

3.2. Corpus of the Study

The database for this research includes a purposively chosen sample of ten UN General Assembly resolutions that are politically sensitive in nature, like human rights, international peace and security, and disarmament. The original English versions and their officially certified Persian translations accessed from the United Nations official documents center and corresponding websites form the main data. The selection criteria are the availability of the Persian translations and political theme importance within each resolution.

3.3. Data Collection and Analysis Procedure

Data collection was conducted by searching for and gathering English resolutions and their Persian counterparts from official sources, e.g., the UN Digital Library and Iran's official missions to the UN. The resolutions in both languages were downloaded and saved for manual analysis. The documents were arranged and put in chronological as well as thematic order so that comparisons could be made. Data were qualitatively analyzed employing content analysis methods. The analytical framework is taken from Newmark's (1988) translation strategy categorization, i.e., literal translation, transference, modulation, and adaptation. All source-target text pairs were line by line analyzed in order to select translation strategies used by translators. Political implication of each translation strategy was interpreted based on theories of critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995). Thematic coding was employed to code instances and to look for repeated patterns in handling politically sensitive terms and phrases.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1. Result of the First Research Question

The initial research question aimed to specify the translation strategies employed in the Persian versions of UN General Assembly resolutions based on Newmark's (1988) model. During manual analysis of ten politically sensitive resolutions line by line, the following strategies were recognized: literal translation, modulation, transference, and adaptation. All four strategies were found in the corpus. Literal translation was the preferred choice for structurally non-contentious or neutral text. Modulation was applied most often in the translation of politically charged words, especially those employed in sanctions or intervention. Adaptation was applied where cultural or ideological concord was required. Transference, though less common, was found in proper nouns and institutional language.

4.2. Result of the Second Research Question

The second question compared the most common translation strategies used within the corpus. The findings showed that literal translation was used most often in all documents. It was applied in over 40% of the cases, reflecting an effort to preserve formal equivalence.

Table 1

Frequency Distribution of the Identified Strategies

Translation Strategy	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Literal Translation	198	41.2
Modulation	145	30.2
Adaptation	91	18.9
Transference	47	9.7

As can be seen in Table 1, literal translation prevailed throughout the corpus, particularly in international law clauses, the structure of resolutions, and procedural phrases. Modulation came in second, typically used to manage delicate ideological vocabulary.
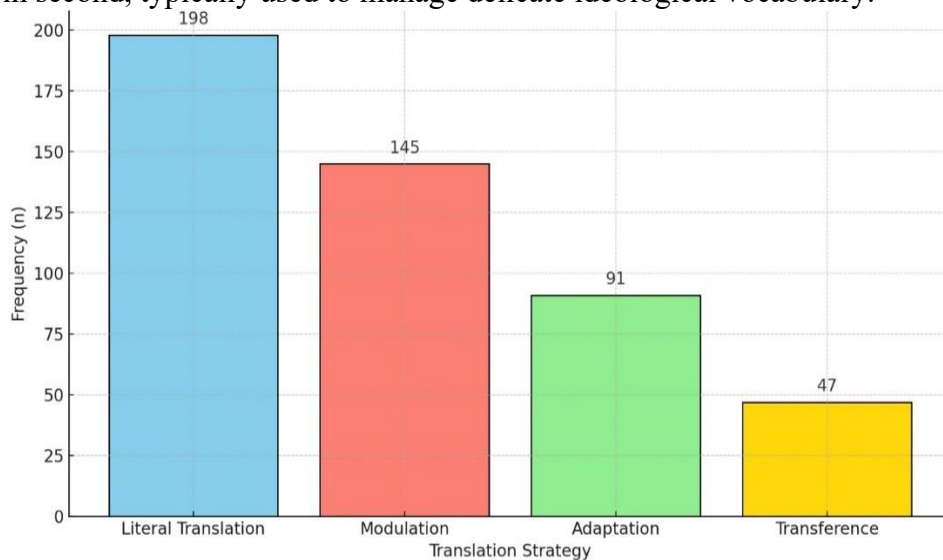

Figure 1

Distribution of Translation Strategies Identified in the Persian Translations of UNGA Resolutions

4.3. Result of the Third Research Question

The third research question focused on the strategies of translation that were least frequently used. Based on the findings, transference was the least employed strategy with only 9.7% of total occurrences. Such low usage is likely due to the fact that translators seem to prefer target language equivalents rather than directly translating the terms from the source language. In addition, adaptation, although more frequent than transference, was still less frequent than literal translation and modulation. This may indicate institutional restrictions on the unconstrained localization of politically sensitive material.

The study identified translation strategies applied in Persian translations of UNGA resolutions by analyzing Newmark's (1988) framework. The research discovered four translation strategies including literal translation, modulation, adaptation, and transference. Transference occurred the least frequently while literal translation appeared most frequently in the analyzed translations. The translation patterns in high-stakes document translations reflect both institutional decisions and linguistic-political influences. Literal translation, which covers more than 40%, has a focus on formality equivalence and compliance with findings that indicate admiration for textual invariability and diplomatic neutrality in political texts (Olohan, 2021; Schäffner & Bassnett, 2019). This conservatism would be anticipated with regard to the sensitive subject of issues such as human rights and sanctions.

The high rate of modulation at 30.2% demonstrates how translators modify language to either match ideological conformity or achieve greater intelligibility according to EU text analysis (Calzada Pérez, 2021). Translation modulation functions as a tool to harmonize diplomatic objectives with the recipient country's linguistic customs in Persian language texts. The two strategies of transference and adaptation appeared less frequently at 9.7% and 18.9% respectively because of cultural independence and nationalistic language practices. Organizations tend not to use adaptation in their work mainly because they must maintain uniform text appearance in critical situations according to experts Tymoczko in 2018 and Loescher in 2020. The findings confirm the prevalence of conservative approaches in political translation because they help reduce the risk of exposing ideological positions (House, 2015; Munday, 2017). The Persian context receives new empirical support in this analysis because translators base their approach on linguistic and political considerations.

5. CONCLUSION

This research analyzed translation techniques used in Persian translations of United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolutions, utilizing Newmark's (1988) strategy classification and drawing upon theoretical frameworks of Descriptive Translation Studies (Toury, 2012) and Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough-based CDA). In the analysis of ten politically sensitive resolutions, the researcher identified literal translation, modulation, adaptation, and transference as the four common techniques used. Literal translation was found to be the most frequent strategy, with more than 40% frequency. This is evidence for textual fidelity preference by translators, particularly institutional and legal environments. Modulation was the second most frequent, demonstrating an effort at preserving clarity or ideological balance where sheer literalism will not do. The least used were adaptation and transference, and these demonstrated cultural and institutional constraint in dealing with foreignness or context-based rewording. The research focuses on political sensitivity, institutional norms, and cultural expectations as drivers of the translation strategy choice. It also validates existing studies on institutional translation's conservative and stable practice orientation (House, 2015; Munday, 2017). Even more importantly, the role of ideology—as revealed by the CDA—appears as a subtle but pervasive factor in selecting strategies.

The conclusions of this study have highly significant theoretical and practical implications for political and institutional translation practice. On one hand, the prevalence of literal translation implies a high institutional demand for form and fidelity, but it also raises the question of whether such a method is appropriately suited for use in the purpose of communication and diplomacy in Persian. As such, translation specialists in high-stakes settings can benefit from more in-depth training in strategic modulation and adaptation to ensure not only accuracy but also political neutrality and cultural congruence. Second, the research demonstrates that institutions like the United Nations and Iran's Permanent Mission to the UN should have more explicit, regular, and theoretically grounded translation policies. Corpus data, such as the data employed here, can serve as the basis for institutional protocols to guarantee both terminological consistency and ideological resonance sensitivity. Third, by concentrating on Persian—a language that is often underrepresented in corpus-based translation studies—a more detailed understanding of Persian translation practice is built upon. This opens the door to further comparative studies across languages and political systems, especially in the official diplomatic discourse environment. Lastly, the research calls for interdisciplinary discussion among political linguists, discourse analysts, and translation scholars. The intertwined interaction between translator agency, institutional normativity, and ideologically motivated pressures is a rich area for continued research—particularly through larger multilingual corpora and semi-automatic text analysis software

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