

Please cite this paper as follows:

Mohseni, M. (2021). The Role of the Shifts in Translation from a Source Language into a Target Language: A case English Language vs. Persian Language. *International Journal of Foreign Language Teaching and Research*, 9 (37), 215-221.

DOI: [10.52547/IJFL.9.37.225](https://doi.org/10.52547/IJFL.9.37.225)

Research Paper

## The Role of the Shifts in Translation from a Source Language into a Target Language: A case English Language vs. Persian Language

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Received: June 04, 2021

Accepted: July 15, 2022

### Abstract

The aim of this paper was to investigate the application of different types of shifts and their influence in translation in various languages, especially English and Persian Languages. To this purpose, the researcher attempted to benefit from various approaches of shift analysis such as grammar, style, and pragmatics relevant to the proposed study, based on the translation strategies proposed by Vinay and Darbelnet (1995), that is, direct translation, oblique translation strategies and their subgroups at the three levels of lexicon, structure, and message. The researcher also conducted a detailed linguistic analysis of the structure in both English and Persian Languages commonly referred to as the analysis of micro-structure and the analysis of macro-structure. The obtained results revealed that the occurrence of shifts in translation reflects the translator's awareness of the linguistic and the non-linguistic discrepancies between SL and TL. In fact, shifts turn out to be as problem-solving strategies to minimize the inevitable loss of meaning when rendering a text from one language into another, and preference between different types of shifts at different levels requires various types of equivalence in translation.

**Keywords:** *Lexicon, shifts, linguistic analysis, micro structure, macro Structure*

نقش انتقال یا جابجائی در ترجمه از زبان مبدا به زبان مقصد : مورد پژوهی زبان انگلیسی در مقابل زبان فارسی  
هدف این مقاله عبارت است از مطالعه بکارگیری انواع گوناگونی جابجائی ها و تاثیر و ماهیت آنها در ترجمه انگلیسی زبانهای مختلف، به عنوان مثال، زبان انگلیسی و فارسی. بر مبنای این نظر، پژوهشگر تلاش کرده تا از رویکردهای گوناگون تجزیه و تحلیل جابجائی ها (شیفت ها) بهره بگیرد. همانند گرامر (دستور زبان) سبک و منظورشناختی که در این مطالعه ارائه شده است. بال تردید، و تحت تاثیر استراتژی ترجمه مستقیم و ناموازی و نیز گروههای فرعی آنها در سه سطح واژگانی، ساختاری، و پیامی قرار گرفته است که توسط وینی و داربلنه 1995 ارائه شده است. پژوهشگر هم چنین تجزیه و تحلیل جزئیات ساختار زبانشناسی در هر دو زبان فارسی و انگلیسی را مورد توجه قرار داده است که معمولاً به آنها تجزیه و تحلیل ساختارهای میکرو و مکرو گفته میشود  
**واژگان کلیدی:** واژگان، شیفت ها (جابجائی ها)، تجزیه و تحلیل زبانشناسی، ساختار میکرو و ساختار مکرو

## Introduction

The lack of a fully acceptable theory of translation should not come as a surprise, since translating is essentially a very complex decision-making process and insights concerning this inter-lingual activity are derived from a number of different disciplines, e.g., Linguistics, Psychology, Sociology, Anthropology Cultural, Communication theory. Literary Criticism, Aesthetics, and Semiotics. Hatim and Mason (1990, p.15) believe that “translation involves the negotiation of meaning between the producer of Source- language text (ST) and the reader of the target-language text (TT)”.

In this study, an acting model was constructed for the purpose of shift analysis. It is attempted to deal with and overcome systematic differences existing between two languages need to make some small linguistic changes both in the grammatical structures and the lexicon between ST and TT which are called shifts in translation (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1995).

Moreover, the researcher held the view that translation is a highly complex phenomenon, which involves a large number of variables other than the linguistic ones. In this regard, shifts are defined as follows:

different kinds of shifts almost distinctively. It means that classification and typology of shifts suggested by different scholars have different bases. As a matter of fact, the notion of some sort of translational “change” has long been a central issue in translation studies. Therefore, some studies (e.g. Catford, 1965; Van Leuven-Zwart, 1989, 1990) have resulted in different frameworks for translation shifts that have subsequently been used in empirical studies, but it should be mentioned that the present paper is mainly based on the model of h

This is because although there are different approaches to analyze the translating process. But the most comprehensive and practical one according to Munday (2001, p.56) is the one presented by Vinay and Darbelnet which comes from a comparative stylistic analysis French and English on “...three aspects of the written language: Lexicon, the syntactic structure and the message (1995, pp.11-12)”. It should also be added that although their study was based on a comparison and contrast of shifts between French and English, but it can be applied to other languages as well, for example, Arabic and English, or Persian and English (which is applied in this study).

### Catford’s Approach to Translation Shift

In his well-known book, *A Linguistic Theory of Translation*, Catford as the first scholar, defines translation shifts as “departure from formal correspondence in the process of going from the SL to the TL” (1974, p. 73). He explains that shifts are due to the structural differences between two languages involved. By formal correspondence he means any TL, category (unit, class, structure, element structure, etc.) which can be said to occupy as nearly as possible the same plane in the economy of the TL as the given SL category occupies in the SL (as cited in Baker & Jones, 1998) Catford classifies shifts into two groups:

#### Level Shift

##### Category Shift

In the first one a SL item at one level has a TL translation equivalent at a different level. By the category shift he means changes of structure, class, unit and intra-system shift. The followings are kinds of shifts represented by Catford which involve mostly shift in grammatical structure (structural shift), shift from one part of speech to another (class shift), shifts at a different rank, e.g. translating a clause into phrase (unit or rank shift), and shifts occurring between languages having almost corresponding systems but involving non-corresponding terms in the TT.

However, according to Cyrus (2006, p. 1181) Catford's" account remains theories and...is never by himself". Catford had a preference for a more linguistic-based approach to translation and this approach is based on the linguistic work of Halliday and Firth (1957). He analyzed the notion of translation shifts based on the distinction between formal correspondence and textual equivalence translation. For example, Snell-Hornby (1988) argued that the translation process cannot simply be reduced to a linguistic exercise since there are also to her factors, which should be taken into consideration when translating. In addition, translating involves different cultures and different situations at the same time and therefore these characteristics do not always match from one language to another.

### Method

Translating is a communicative activity attempting to rely, across the socio-cultural and linguistic boundaries of two languages and a translator at the center of this dynamic process is a decision maker who has constantly to make decisions in bridging the gap between the two languages. This act of mediation taken or imposed on the translator necessarily entails certain patterns of changes. Such changes on the part of the translated text are known as "translation shifts" in contemporary translation descriptive studies.

Shifts on the part of a translation can occur at any level, can take various forms, and can have different effects. According to Hatim (2001) shifts in translation are considered as positive consequences that are not regarded as "errors" but they are obligatory and needless to say as might be expected, they are rooted in two distinct text worlds intellectually, aesthetically and widely culturally.

According to the above mentioned, different studies deal with the notion of translation shifts by presenting different models from particular points of view. For example, Catford's linguistic based model (1965) is the first one to correspondence in the process of going from SL to TL "(1965, p.73). He identifies two major types of shifts. "level shift" and "Category shift.

Van Leuven-Zwart's complex and difficult model (1989) proposes a model for classifying and distinguishing shifts by making reference to levels of. Her model comprises two complementary models: a comparative and a descriptive model. However, for the purpose of the present study the model provided by Vinay and Darbelnet was adapted, because it is the most feasible and practical model of shifts available to date.

### Structure versus the System

The grammatical patterns of a language which are the descriptive units. A unit can be a single instance of the grammatical patterns which is called "structure". The grammatical patterns of language have considerable number of differences as well as similar structures existing in them. According to Ager (2008) "the distinction between deep representation of linguistic relations and their surface realizations constitutes an important phase for the analysis of structural shift".

Moreover, the two kinds of choices which are implied within each of the elements of a structure ought to be distinguished. Muir (1992, p. 4) distinguisher between optional and obligatory elements entering in the realization of a structure. For example, in English Language the "root word" is an obligatory element in the structure of any word while affixes – prefixes, suffixes- are optional ones. When we consider them interlingually, the distinctions lead to other potential areas of shifts. For example, Persian Language exhibits more variations than English Language with regard to optional and obligatory elements in the structure of the unit "sentence". Indeed, interlingual micro structural shifts might occur within each unit that exhibits a structure. However, by a system, a closed number of elements in which a choice must be made, for example, the system of numbers in English and Persian Languages.

Indeed, the phrases available in each system in one language can show fundamental differences from the phrases of the same system in another languages. This can be regarded as a main source of obligatory Micro-shift of this level of language. Therefore, the translator is restricted by a source language (SL) writer's choice. In some instances, the compatible phases in the source language system are occurring in target language (TL). So, the translator attempts to bridge the gap by using a lexical marker of number "two" in order to express the duality when translating from Persian Language into English Language.

Berry (1999) stated that the occurrence of shift can be accounted by means of terms existing he within the system of any languages. He also believes that such occurrence is the fact that all the descriptive units required for the description of a language are systemic in nature. Actually, there are three criteria which govern the language – specific and their applicability. The first one is the rank of unit. The second is specified in terms of part that the unit is playing in the structure of higher unit, and the third is specified in terms of other options which must be chosen before the options of the given system become available.

### Results and Discussion

The results obtained from the analysis of shifts showed that there are two types of structural source relations; namely, paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations that can be observed within the mutual integration of the individual categories. Inter-lingually, different dependency relations are realized by different syntactic means. An important example is the word order in terms of the unilateral dependency relation between the subject and adjective in English nominal groups. The order of these elements is adjectives+ subject (Head) while the same relation is realized by the reverse order in the Persian Language, i.e. subject (Head) + adjective. The same is true for unilateral dependency relation of possession in both Languages.

**Figure 1**

English	Persian
John's book	Ketabe John
<b>John's= Possessor</b> <b>Book = possessed</b>	<b>Ketabe = Possessed</b> <b>John = Possessor</b>

In this structure, one element is typically obligatory while other elements are optional, as agreement between the subject (Head) and its adjective is usually observed in some languages, e.g., number and gender agreement between noun and adjective in the Persian nominal group, for example, this agreement is observed between "nouns" and "adjectives". By contrast, Persian Language seeks such agreement in both cases. This is actually another potential area of obligatory structural shifts in translation.

Based on bilateral dependent structures, the distribution of either constituent elements is different from that of structure as a whole, in the prepositional groups in English and Persian Languages. According to Brown and Miller (1980, p.255), majority of the syntactic relations in all Languages are of this type. The importance of bilateral dependency relations to the analysis of structural shifts in translations can be clear by analyzing the following sentences:

- Ali beats the dog.
- Ali went home.

One single string of elements can be applied to the above sentences, such as NP+ V + NP, however the relation of “V” with the “NP” following it in each sentence is different and various functional labels are used, for example, “predicate”, “complement”, “Object”, and etc.

Many bi- directional relations presume that one constituent element require other constituent to be in particular case, for instance, in a prepositional group with a personal pronoun as a realization of the NP, the preposition requires an implicit case in English, and an accusative case in Persian. So, it reveals that languages use different ways for implementing these relations, which adds to the structural shift occurrences in this area. The degree of which may increase with the fact that none of the constituent elements in the structures is optional.

In the third type of dependency relation, which is the co-ordinate dependency, neither constituent depends syntactically on the other and the distribution of each constituent is the same as of the structure as a whole. The last type of dependency relations is that of the exclusion relation which is useful for defining some grammatical classes such as the verbs of state in English which do not agree with auxiliaries for the progressive aspect, and proper nouns which do not take the definite article “the”. However, Brown and Miller (1980) stated the “dependency relations cannot always be captured in straightforward fashion in constituent grammar”.

### **Macro- level vs. Micro- level**

The aforementioned samples indicated a considerable amount of obligatory and optional shifts which take place more than what occurs in the micro-level. In order to consider an independent broad level of analysis called the macro-level of analysis. Actually, the difference between these two levels is that the micro-level is the direction of analysis which moves within the domain of the sentence as the maximum unit of the syntactic description. The macro-level, on the other hand, moves within the domain of the text.

### **Semantic Relations between ST and TT**

Based on translation process, the translator is responsible to attempt carefully in transferring as much as possible the original meaning into the TL. As far as we know the process of meaning transfer is not a straightforward process. In this study, the semantic adjustment is analyzed as semantic shifts, which is either obligatory or optional. The obligatory shift is said to be by the unavoidable semantic gaps between Source Language and Target Language. On the other hand, the optional shift arises when the translator tries to preserve the gist of the original meaning by practicing some means of semantic polishing. Actually, these processes are related to what the Cyrus (2006) stated that “the meaning should be the main preoccupation of all translation”.

### **The Significance of Synonymy and Semantic Fields**

According to Baldinger (1980) “translation is nothing than a problem of synonymy “. It is clear that Baldinger states that synonymy in its widest sense to mean, in translation, the search for equivalent meaning on all linguistic levels. So, translation is not a simple task that haphazardly to match SL lexical items with their TL counterparts. It is not the matter of relying on a bilingual Dictionary. Contrastly, the translator should analyze the meaning of the SL lexical items before trying to find TL equivalents for these items. He or she must realize the areas of cultural overlap and linguistic interferences between the two languages.

Besides from the problem of denotation in the study of synonymy, Nida (1984) believes that the structural specification of words as another source of semantic shifts in this area. Based on this regard, he states: “the areas of cultural specifications, however, is likely to provide the greatest difficulties for the translator. In translating a text which represents an area of cultural specification in the source language but not in the receptor language, the translator must

frequently construct all sorts of descriptive equivalents so as to make intelligible something, which is quite foreign to the receptor.

### **Translator's Role**

Translating is a communicative activity attempting to rely, across the socio-cultural and linguistic boundaries of two languages and a translator at the center of this dynamic process is a decision maker who has constantly to make decisions in bridging the gap between the two languages. This act of mediation taken or imposed on the translator necessary entails certain patterns of changes. Such changes on the part of the translated text are known as "translation shifts" in contemporary translation descriptive studies.

Shifts on the part of a translation can occur at any level, can take various forms, and can have different effects. According to Hatim (2001) shifts in translation are considered as positive consequences that are not regarded as "errors" but they are obligatory, and needless to say might be expected, they are rooted in two distinct text worlds intellectually, aesthetically, and widely culturally.

According to the above mentioned, different studies deal with the notion of translation shifts by presenting different models from particular points of view. For example, Catford's linguistic-based model (1965) is the first one to introduce the term "translation shifts" to refer to the "departure from formal correspondence in the process of going from SL to TL" (1965, p.73). It is crystal clear that among all factors affecting the occurrence of stylistic shifts, the translator's role is the most recognizable factor. The majority of optional shifts taking place in translation can be attributed to the differences between the original writer and the translator as two text producers. However, the impact of these differences is usually suppressed by the literary norms of the target language (TL) and the norms of translation activity itself.

More important is the translator's relation to the text given. According to Popović (1980) "it is not the translator's only to identify himself with the original; that would merely result in transparent translation. The translator also has the right to differ originally, to be independent, as long as independence is pursued for the sake of original, a technique applied in order to produce it as a living work. Thus, this shift does not occur because the translator wishes to change a work, but because he strives to produce it as faithfully as possible and to grasp it in its totality (p. 80). Popovic's statements remind us of many factors, which affect the translator's adoption of a particular style in rendering a part in rendering a particular text into, that he or she has dual roles. On the other hand, he or she has to grasp as much as he or she tries to reflect his or her identity and wants to produce a natural text which might be achieved by means of a set of stylistic shifts.

### **Conclusion**

This paper set out to investigate the application of different types of shifts accompanied by their influence and necessity in translation activities. Since translation proper is utterly concerned with the transfer of meaning not merely words, in the analysis of shifts, non-linguistic factors in addition to linguistic ones were taken into account to achieve a comprehensive analysis of these shifts which are partly due to the grammatical rules, such as the one shown in the figure above between English and Persian Languages. Particularly, in the current study, the phenomenon of shift is redefined positively as the consequence of the translator's effort to establish translation equivalence between two different language systems, i.e. the source language (SL) and the target language (TL).

Based on the psychologists' points of view, the occurrence of these shifts reflects the translator's awareness of the linguistic and the non-linguistic discrepancies between SL and TL. So, in this case, the shifts turn to be as problem-solving strategies to minimize the inevitable loss

of meaning when transferring from one language into another one. The preference between different types of shifts at different levels requires various types of equivalence in translation; for example, functional, textual, collocational, and rhetorical. Discrimination between macro-level and micro-level shifts contributes to the discrimination between various types of translation, i.e. literal, free, etc. Thus, the syllogism of the terms “optional” and “obligatory” shifts convinces the need to account for linguistic and non-linguistic differences between the languages involved in this work.

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