IN THE NAME OF GOD

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PROBLEMS WITH ENGLISH AND PERSIAN TRANSLATIONS OF DRUG LEAFLETS

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN TRANSLATION STUDIES

By

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Dedicated to

My Dear Patient Mother,

My Wonderful Brother,

and

My Lovely Sister

Those who are my life, love, energy and I will never be so happy to thank

Them...

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Abstract

The objective of the present study was to identify and categorize the translation problems of Persian and English translations of drug leaflets. To achieve this purpose, the Persian translations of thirty four English drug leaflets and the English translations of ninety Persian drug leaflets were analyzed, based on Miremadi's (1991) and Naznean's (2009)models, to detect any problems in the translations. The findings of the study indicated that translation problems include addition, omission, mis-lexical formation, mis-grammatical formation and mistranslation. Furthermore, it was found that the most frequent problem type in Persian translations of English drug leaflets was "omission", whereas English translations of Persian drug leaflets suffered more from mis-grammatical formation. Therefore, there seems to exist an unfulfilled need for providing accurate and error-free drug leaflet translations to patients. Pharmacists and the translators of pharmaceutical companies can meet this need to ensure safe drug usage and consequently reduce calamitous effects on the patients' health.

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Preliminaries

Translation is a challenging business that requires deep knowledge of the related subject which is going to be translated. Texts in translation involve a wide variety of subjects which, among these subjects, technical texts have a special topic based on applied knowledge from natural sciences (Byrne, 2006); like political, financial, and medical and so on. According to Newmark (1988), translation of technical texts is recognized by their terminologies which cause special problems in translating these kinds of texts. One of the main problems that translators may face is how to transfer terms in an understandable way.

The difference between technical translation and any other types of translations may be due to the fact that it goes beyond delivering words from source to target language. Since it has a vital role in expanding public knowledge, the translator should translate technical texts by rendering related knowledge accurately. In this regard, medical texts are a type of technical texts that consist of medical and chemical terms accompanied by extra information to be comprehensible for patients.

Generally, people face different genres of medical texts including medical journals, medical advertisements, patient charts and questionnaires, drug labels and leaflets. Drug leaflets are part of medical texts the translation of which has much importance. It is this form of translation, the translating of drug leaflets, which is the subject of this study.

Drug labels and leaflets are distributed in two groups: Prescription Drugs' and Over-the Counter (OTC) Drugs'. The drug labels consist of enough information for their uses, including indication, effects, dosages, routes, methods, frequency, duration of using, side effects and so on (Srivastava et al., 2010).

As the world involves different interconnected communities with different languages and cultures, appropriate translations of drug leaflets are increasingly valuable for the development of this connection. Due to the existence of unclear translated parts in leaflets, problems with translation of drug leaflets are commonly observable. In translating drug leaflets, even the smallest ambiguity is very grave to patients. Schwartzberg (as cited in Reinberg, 2012) points out that some of the drug translations are not clear to patients and may confuse them. For example: "Take two pills twice daily" is not clear because many patients mean it as "take two pills a day" while it should be intended "take a daily total of four pills". Another case was reported from France (Lorraine) where a mistake in translating English instructions for the use of software made 3 patients die because of an overdose of x-ray radiation (as cited in Berghammer, 2009). It seems that these errors are main causes of patient bodily injury or death and may endanger the patients' life.

In particular, drug leaflets are required to be translated in a clear way. Although several studies have been carried out to analyze translation problems of drug leaflets (Jensen, 2011 and Pedersen & Halliday, 2009), there are few studies on problems with Persian translations of English drug leaflets and English translations of Persian drug leaflets.

In addition, each translation has certain style which to some extent depends on the characteristics of the specific target audience it addresses. The receivers are sometimes

lay people. This target group with few or no special knowledge needs a translation that contains common terms. But, if it is for experts, it should be written in a professional way with terminologies.

Due to the limited works done in Persian translations and English translations of English and Persian drug leaflets and the problems they suffer from in Iran, this study aims to identify problems with Persian and English translations of drug leaflets. Having done this, the researcher seeks to examine and categorize these translation problems.

1.2. Statement of the problem

Translation of drug leaflets has been exercised since many years ago in various countries, including Iran. Unfortunately, it seems that there are few studies which have investigated the appropriacy of Persian and English translations of English and Persian drug leaflets in Iran. There are serious problems with Persian translations of English drug leaflets imported into and English translations of Persian drug leaflets exported from Iran. On the basis of Regenstein et al. (2012), medication errors endanger patient safety and lead to poor health consequences, hospitalizations and even deaths. Unclear translations sometimes involve long complex sentences with too many opinions and facts to take in. So, people have to read them several times to understand and that's boring for them.

As Berghammer (2009) states, label translation of drug, medical stuff, or software seems to be a responsibility that should be fulfilled before the product is introduced to a particular market. Also, Lundquist (2005) believes that in the process of translation, the receivers' situation should be considered (as cited in Pederson & Halliday, 2009, p. 13). Besides, expression of the true meaning to consumers is an important part in drug leaflet

translation and unclear translations make receivers (patients) confused. So, drug leaflets translations influence the quality of the products.

By using appropriate method of delivering the real meaning to intended audience and having related knowledge, the mentioned problems with translations of drug leaflets can be solved.

Some misunderstandings in translation of drug instructions in leaflets, especially in some parts of text with terminologies or dosage administration part, can be found. Since medical translation concerns the health of human beings, it seems that having adequate knowledge in this regard can be a complementary skill in drug translation in order to, for example, transfer long sentences full of terms into clear and short ones.

1.3. Research question

Based on the above mentioned problems, this study addresses the following research question

- What are the translation problems with translations of English and Persian drug leaflets?

1.4. Significance of the study

Translation problem with medical texts is a universal problem in the field of medicine. This research reveals translation problems in Persian and English translations of drug leaflets.

Having considered these points, the role of translator in informing the public about medical stuff is to be salient. The obtained results will help translators to minimize translation errors in translation of drug leaflets.

Here, these analyses can be of different applications. By analyzing a set of translated leaflets and making a comparison between original leaflets and their translations, we can get information about the problems of these translations. Since the machine translations are not always understandable, it makes pharmaceutical companies be aware of these problems in translations which, based on a report in National Post Newspaper (Harding, 2010), most of them are machine translations.

The drug companies are expected to use adequate strategies in translation of drug leaflets imported to or exported from Iran. Incorrect translations affect the health and lives of drug consumers.

In addition, the present study identifies problems in translation of drug documents due to malpraxis and negligence of companies in translating them. Even these measures may lead to reduction of medico-legal problems.

1.5. Definitions of Key Terms

- **Drug leaflet**

Drug leaflet is "a document enclosed in the outer sales package of a medicinal product and is written in the national language(s) of the country where it is sold" (Bongaarts, 2009, p. 5).

- **Mistranslation**

Mistranslation happens when "the meaning of a segment of the original text is not conveyed properly in the target language" (American Translators Association, 2013)

- **Translation Problem**

Translation problem refers to "any source language word or expression which presents a difficulty for human translator (not machine) during the process of translation" (Desilets et al., 2009, p. 3) which can be categorized as: addition, omission, mis-lexical formation, mis- grammatical formation, and mis-translation.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1. Overview

This chapter is concerned with the literature pertaining to the study of medical translation, especially translation of drug leaflets. Since translators are in charge of producing error-free texts, the chapter reviews some characteristics of a good medical translator. Then, it reviews several studies on translation problems and lists the observed translation problems in translated drug leaflets. Finally, the concluding remarks summarize what exists in the literature and comes up with the research gap identified in this study.

2.2. Different steps in translation

The aim of a document is to render information of source language in a way which target receivers can understand. According to Catford (1965), translation is replacement of textual material in source language by equivalent textual material in target language.

All human beings use various languages for their communications. Ever since human beings were divided as groups/tribes, communication among these groups needed to be in different kinds. Translation is one form of communication which has various types. Translation as a worldwide phenomenon and as a means of international communication has an overriding importance as contended by Hatim and Munday (2004)

who believe that translation has a massive influence on our life. Every kind of difficulty in translation leads to problems in understanding the passage.

Lundquist (2005) considers translation as a secondary form of communication from source language to target language. In her opinion, in order to produce a good translation, it is better to consider receiver and communication situation. Besides actual translation, Lundquist (2005) believes in two other translation phases:

1. Analysis of ST

2. Translation of ST into TT

3. Revision of TT (as cited in Pedersen and Halliday, 2009, p. 13)

As we know, there is no completely good translation from source language (SL) to target language (TL) because there might be no equivalent of SL in TL. The main concern of translation is to prefer a useful method for translation which depends on the aim of translation and the field is going to be translated. According to Aykol (2011), both meaning and wording of medical terms are of vital importance. He prefers Vinay and Darbelnet's translation methods and as they regard, their methods are equivalence-oriented which keep source situation and stylistic impact as situation and stylistic impact of target.

On the other hand, it is important to consider what is involved in the translation process. According to Txabarriaga (2009), some points have main roles in translation, especially medical translation. The first point is that a competent translator can provide accurate and correct translation in which register and style of the source text are preserved.

The second point is that the text should be adapted which in this regard, translator can validate the text by the end user whether the user can comprehend the translated text.

Translating and, then, writing in an advanced style is not enough for a translation task. Therefore, the text is better to be written in accordance with public literacy and knowledge not with a special group.

The third step in the process is editing the text by a more qualified professional. Here, editing includes punctuation, capitalization rules and formatting. Next, final proofing or inspection is needed which is performed not by editor or source translator but also by a third person. By following these steps, there will be fewer errors.

2.3. Translation of Technical Texts

As stated above, there are several methods to use when translating, but they depend on the kind of text to be translated. Technical texts are a kind of text the translation of which should not have unfamiliar style and unreadable writing for readers. Newmark (1988) points out that technical style does not include emotive language, connotations, sound-effect and original metaphor. In his opinion, technical translation is different from other kinds of translation by its new terminology. Based on medical vocabulary, he suggests that various levels of technical style are: academic, professional, popular.

Soualmia (2009-2010) conducted a research in terms of translating computing terms from English into Arabic. She believed that by acquiring mastery of two languages and achieving background knowledge, translators can more easily solve barriers in translating scientific terminology. She mentioned that appropriate translation strategy helps translators transfer English terms accurately.

Indeed, technical translation refers to a specific field that has its own language and style. According to Kirkman (2001), the best style for technical writing is direct, active,

and personalized writing. He also believes that translated texts should not contain complex sentences which have too much information in themselves (as cited in Pedersen & Halliday, 2009, p. 17). Complex sentences may make readers bored and reluctant to follow the text.

All technical terms, especially medical terms, are in some way translatable. Some of them can be Persianized and some of them are common in Persian. Sometimes, descriptions are needed to make terms comprehensible for patients. But there are terms which are untranslatable and there have not been found suitable Persian equivalences for them. Therefore, the exact terms should have been written (Ouliaei Nia, Changiz, & Hosseini, 2008).

Catford (1965) in his definition of untranslatability distinguishes two types of untranslatability as presented follow:

- Linguistic untranslatability: When there is not any lexical or grammatical substitute in the TL for a single SL item.

- Cultural untranslatability: It occurs when there is not a relevant situational feature in TT for ST.

In addition, Fishbach (as cited in Byrne, 2006, p. 4) maintains that more important than terminology is to know how to write the texts. A translator should produce texts in a way which is identical to that of writers of target texts. Likewise, essential areas expertise for technical translators, as Byrne (2006) asserts, involves subject knowledge, writing skills, research skills, knowledge of genres and text types, pedagogical skills.

2.4. Drug Leaflets

Medical texts are a kind of informative texts that aim to provide users with information about health matters and expand their knowledge in this regard. The various types of informative texts are scientific brochures and articles, texts about tourism, newspaper texts, and scientific guidelines. Reiss (1977/89) declares that the function of informative texts is to transfer the information, therefore, their language should be referential or logical, because their core focus is topic or content (as cited in Munday, 2001, p. 72).

The most important source of information about a medication for the patient is drug leaflet. When drug leaflets are discussed in the framework of medical texts, the way of their information delivery is important. This fact is reflected in some definitions of drug in medical texts. For instance, Zargarzadeh and Law (2010) define prescription container label as available source of information if it is readable and understandable for patients. They studied verbal translation services of multilingual prescription labels in California. One of their conclusions is that nearly one-third of sampled pharmacies and specifically urban areas do not supply these services for Limited English proficient (LEP) patients, and these pharmacies supplied verbal translation services of multilingual prescription labels only when patients request.

2.5. General characteristics of a Medical Translator

Based on Foreign Exchange Translations (2010), due to lack of fluent translators in both SL and TL, errors in translation are common. It also proposes the following classification of characteristics of a translator to minimize translation errors in health matters:

1. Understand the usage of words in the source language: It depends on the context that the words are used, for example the word "left" has many meanings in English.

2. Know the syntactic differences between languages: It's not enough to be familiar with meanings. Most people are fluent in this task but have problems with writing in a right syntax.

3. Read the source text carefully: Many translators read the ST in a hurry, so they cannot see some words or read them in a wrong way, like friend as fried or vice versa.

4. Understand the source text completely before attempting to translate: Most texts must be translated paragraph by paragraph not sentence by sentence, so ST sentences may be different from sentences of TT.

Indeed, as the above pertinent properties show, the understanding of source context is one of the important features of a suitable translator to translate the text well and it seems that the reason for the most incorrect translations is applying incompetent translators.

According to Resurreccio (2007), a translator during translating medical texts should consider educational and professional background, levels of knowledge and experience, purposes and applications of information, linguistic abilities, familiarity with specialized terminologies, reading contexts, broader cultural context (as cited in Pedersen & Halliday, 2009, p. 29)