

*In the Name of God  
The Compassionate  
The Merciful*



**University of Isfahan  
Faculty of Foreign Language  
Department of English**

**M.A. Thesis**

**A Study of the Adequacy and Effectiveness of Persian  
Translations of Drug Leaflets**

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**September 2008**

۱۳۸۷ / ۹ / ۲۳

تایبه سادات حسینی  
استاد راهنما  
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۱۰۶۰۵۲

۲۰۰۸

۸۷/۱/۱۰۱۲۷۵  
۸۷/۱۰/۱۹



دانشگاه اصفهان  
دانشکده زبان های خارجی  
گروه زبان انگلیسی

پایان نامه کارشناسی ارشد رشته ی زبان انگلیسی گرایش مترجمی

بررسی ترجمه ی دستورالعمل های دارویی و میزان مفید بودن آن ها  
(کاربردشان) برای بیماران

کتابخانه تخصصی زبان های خارجی  
گروه زبان انگلیسی  
شماره ثبت کتاب: ۱۳۸۷/۹/۲۲

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دکتر طاهره چنگیز

پژوهشگر:  
طیبه سادات حسینی

مهرماه ۱۳۸۷

۱۰۶۰۵۲

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## **List of Abbreviations**

SL: Source Language

ST: Source Text

S: Source

TL: Target Language

TT: Target Text

T: target

## **Acknowledgement**

First and foremost, I wish to express my deepest gratitude to Merciful God without whose help the accomplishment of the present project with its ups and downs would have been unfeasible.

I would like to express my profound gratitude and appreciation to Mrs. Ouliae- Nia, the effective and benevolent supervisor of this thesis, and Dr. Changiz, my efficient and cooperative advisor for their tireless and scrupulous reading of this paper.

I would like to thank Dr. Pirnajmuddin for his kindness and friendly cooperation during this study. I also appreciate all physicians, patients, pharmacists, my friends and classmates for their help now and again.

Last, but not the least, I would like to express my special warm thanks to my family especially my parents for their support, patience and understanding.

## **Abstract**

*In this research, an attempt is made to analyze the adequacy and effectiveness of Persian translation of the drug leaflets. By translating some of these drug leaflets and making a comparison between these translated brochures and leaflets which are published in Iran, we can gain some information about the translatability of these texts, in general, and the translatability of their medical terms, in particular. A case study was carried out with a group of physicians and a group of patients in order to find out the effectiveness of drug leaflets and to examine to what extent they are comprehensible to the patients. There were some questionnaires filled by a group of patients and physicians and interviews done with some patients to gain information about the consequences for patients if these texts are translated; also to what extent the patients can be informed of the side effects of the consumed drugs by reading the leaflets translations; and what their reaction will be after reading the translations. Then the percentage of the pros and cons among physicians as well as patients is statistically examined. The strategies which are used by the translators in translating medical texts especially drug leaflets are also studied in this research. Based on the findings of this research, it is vital to translate the drug leaflets for the patients to gain vital information about the drugs. The medical texts of the drug leaflets are translatable except for the medical and chemical terms and expressions of these texts that can be replaced or accompanied by a description or an explanation in parentheses to become more understandable for the drug consumers, i.e., the patients.*

**Key words:** Anemia, drug leaflets, instructions, medical terms, side-effect, translatability.

## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

#### **1.1. Overview**

As in the today world all sciences and technologies are interrelated and supplement each other, the relationship between translation and specialized and technical terms of medicine is going to be studied in this research. An attempt is made to examine the translatability of drug leaflets as well as its effectiveness for patients while many drugs imported into Iran are left untranslated by companies. It will be worthy to know that to what extent the translation of these drug leaflets is necessary in order to inform the patients about the side - effects of drugs and also to figure out their reaction after getting some information about the drugs.

## 1.2. statement of the problem

The consumption of the prescribed drugs may cause some problems for the consumer and patients due to the side effects of the drugs. Thus, it is quite vital for the patients to be notified of the side-effects of the drugs they take.

However, not all the leaflets are translated. Some companies do not translate the leaflets at all, because it costs them too much, or they assume that if the side-effects are translated, the patients do not take the medicine due to their fear of consequences. However, if they translate the leaflets, some terms are not translated and the readers do not get the complete meaning. This can be highly hazardous to their health. Hence a study of issues related to the translation of such leaflets (adequacy as well as possible consequences) could be both revealing and useful.

As this seems to be the first time that such a research is being done in Iran, there is no data available in this regard. Collecting the data is essential for making a comparison between the original texts of the leaflets with their Persian translations.

These texts are informative and should be analyzed within the format of such texts. Moreover, the effect of proper translation of the drug leaflets for the consumers will be studied, a point which has been neglected so far.

According to Peter Newmark (1988a: 40-41), the core of the informative function of language is external situation, the facts of topic, reality outside language, reported ideas or theories. For the purposes of translation, typical 'informative' texts are concerned with any topic of knowledge. A high proportion of informative texts are poorly written and some times inaccurate; and it is usually the translator's job to correct their factual details and their style.

Peter Newmark (1988a: p.151) believes that technical translation is distinguished from other forms of translation by terminology. Its characteristics, its grammatical features merge with other varieties of language. In a technical translation, a translator can be free in recasting grammar, i.e. , cutting up sentences, transposing clauses, converting verbs to nouns, etc. , as in any other type of informative texts, provided the original is defective. A translator should produce a better text than the writer of the original.

### **1.3. Significance of the study**

The information is gathered about the technical terms used in drug leaflets, translatability of these terms, and the effectiveness of their translations. Generally, this study will aim at shedding some light on the translatability and the importance of translating these leaflets as well as the effectiveness of such translations for the readers (consumers of medicine) and their possible effects on them. Therefore, there are two concerns: whether it is possible to translate these leaflets (linguistically) and what are the effects of their translation on the consumers (medically).

The result of the study could also be of some practical use, especially for the pharmaceutical companies in Iran. We could also find whether the translations of leaflets influence the patients' attitudes towards taking the drugs; for example, if a drug causes diarrhea, will the patient continue consuming the drug after being informed of its side effect through translation or will s/he quit it and consult the physician?

To receive some information in this regard , it is possible to translate some of these leaflets (about 30 or 40) and then compare these translations with the leaflets provided for the drugs made in the country. In this case, some information can be gained about the translatability of these texts, in

general, and the translatability of their medical terms, in particular. An attempt is made to carry out a case study with a group of about 40 to 50 physicians and a group of about 40 to 50 patients in order to find out the effectiveness of drug leaflets and to study their translatability; and to examine to what extent they are comprehensible to the patients.

There must be some questionnaires or interviews made with some physicians and patients to gain information about how this would be healthy for the patients if these texts are translated and also to what extent the patients can be informed of the side effects of consuming drugs by reading the leaflets translations; and what their reaction will be after reading the translations. Then, the percentage of the pros and cons among physicians as well as patients can be examined.

#### **1.4. Research questions**

1. To what extent is the translation of drug leaflets (into Persian) possible?
2. How effective and understandable are such translations for the target audience ( here the consumers of medicine, e.g. pertaining to anemia, especially educated patients above the level of secondary school in Iran at the age of 20 to 40) and what are the possible consequences of these translations for them?
3. What kind of strategies are used by the translators in translating medical texts especially drug leaflets?

## 1.5. Definition of key terms

**Anemia:** "A condition of the blood caused by a lack of red cells. Peoples with anemia look pale and feel weak" (Dorland's Medical Dictionary; 1956).

**Drug leaflets:** Instructions and brochures used inside the drugs (American Heritage Dictionary; 1986).

**Instructions:** statements informing the consumers of the chemical composition of the drugs, of their side- effects and of the instructions of proper usage

and dosage (Drug leaflets; Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary;2007 ).

**Medical terms:** specialized words and expressions used in medicine (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary; 2007 ).

**Side-effect:** The possible consequences of taking the drug: threats and dangers of the drugs which may lead to the consumer's physical reaction or health problems (Dorland's Medical Dictionary;1956 ).

**Translatability:** "This is the capacity for some kind of meaning to transferred from one language to another without undergoing radical changes" (by Anthony Pym and Horst Turk;1984).



## **Chapter Two**

### **Literature Review**

#### **2.1. Introduction**

Translation acts as a bridge to join different peoples with different cultures and languages. Without translation, peoples of countries cannot communicate with each other and be familiar with their cultures, advances, and technologies. Chute (1978) states that, "Without translation, our world would narrow mercilessly" (Cited by Miremadi; 1991).

Nations are interested in being aware of each other's cultural, sociological, political and emotional outlooks and thoughts; this cannot be achieved except through translation. Raffel (1973: 6; Cited by Miremadi; 1991) asserts, "The more one knows of other cultures, the more one knows of one's self." He (1973: 2) also adds "As long as the need to know (other cultures) is great, the need for translation will be great."

## 2.2. The nature of translation

Foster (1958:1) considers translation as the act of transferring through which the content of a text is transferred from SL into TL. Catford points out that, "translation is the replacement of textual material in one language by equivalent textual material in another language"(1965:20). For Levy, "Translation is a process of communication whose objective is to import the knowledge of the original to the foreign reader" (1967:148). Echoing the similar viewpoint, Savory (1969: 37) believes that translation is made possible by an equivalent of thought that lies behind its different verbal expressions. Moreover, Wilss (1982: 3) points out: "Translation is a transfer which aims at the transformation of a written SL text into an optimally equivalent TL text, and which requires the syntactic, the semantic and the pragmatic understanding and analytical processing of the SL."

Frawly specifies that "translation means recodification... translation is nothing short of an essential problem of semiosis: it is the problem of transfer of codes" (1984: 251). In addition, Nida( 1984 : 83 ) maintains: "translation consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style". Likewise, translation, as Bell (1991: 8) asserts, involves the transfer of meaning from a text in one language into a text in another language.

Hatim and Mason (1997: 1) consider translation as "an act of communication which attempts to relay, across cultural and linguistic boundaries, another act of communication." Moreover, Hatim and Mason (1990:1) affirm that, 'translation is a useful case for examining the whole issue of the role of language in social life.'

Larson (1984: 3) suggests that “in translation, the form of the source language is replaced by the form of the receptor (target) language.”

### **2.3. Translatability and untranslatability**

Anthony Pym and Horst Turk (1984) point out that, “translatability is the capacity for some kind of meaning to be transferred from one language to another without undergoing radical changes.”

Benjamin (1923:16) holds that, “translatability is an essential quality certain works, which is not to say that it is essential that they be translated; it means rather that a specific significance inherent in the original manifests itself in its translatability.”

Newmark (1988b: 17) believes that the “untranslatable” can be translated indirectly by transferring the source item and explaining it if no parallel item can be found in the TL. As a result, any message can be indirectly or directly translated from a SL to TL and, therefore, every thing is translatable (ibid, p.17).

Regarding the linguistic restricts, Bassnett – MC Guire( 1988 : 80 ) points out that, “the degree to which the translator reproduces the form, meter, rhythm, tone, register, etc. of the SL text, will be as much determined by the TL system as by the SL system and will also depend on the function of the translation.”

Taking deconstruction school into consideration, Gentzler (1993: 147) asserts that, “in translation, what is visible is language not referring to things, but to language itself.” Derrida seems to be conscious of the losses that are bound to take place when offering the ST in the TT. Therefore, as Gentzler maintains, “with each meaning gesture, Derrida suggests a footnote, a note in

the margin, or a preface also is in order to retrieve those subtle differing supplementary meanings and tangential notes lost in the process of transcription" (1993: 146).

Catford (1965: 32) distinguishes two kinds of untranslatability, that is: linguistic untranslatability and cultural untranslatability.

- **Linguistic untranslatability:** It occurs when there is no lexical or syntactical substitute in the TL for a SL item.
- **Cultural untranslatability:** It is due to the absence in the TL culture of a relevant situational feature for the source text.

It seems that untranslatability as a phenomenon arises some drastic difficulties in the process of translation. This is the translator's responsibility to find some solutions for it including a footnote, a supplementary explanation in parentheses to solve the problem of untranslatability.

## 2.4. Translation and equivalence

"Equivalence in translation should not be approached as a search for sameness, since sameness cannot even exist between two TL versions of the same text, let alone between the SL and TL version" (Bassnett, 1994: 29).

According to Catford, "the SL and TL items rarely have 'the same meaning' in the linguistic sense; but they can function in the same situation. In total translation, SL and TL texts or items are translation equivalents when they are interchangeable in a given situation" (1965: 49).