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Assessing Translation of Advertising Text (English-Persian) Based on House's Functional-Pragmatic Model of TQA

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Abstract

This study aimed at assessing Persian translations of English advertising texts of cosmetic products based on House's functional-pragmatic model of TQA. Several advertising catalogues were collected by three translators who were all university instructors. Profiles of both source texts and target texts were recognized and their overtly erroneous errors, covertly erroneous errors and translation type (overt vs. covert) were identified. Collected data indicated that overtly erroneous errors outnumbered covertly erroneous errors. Results of chi-square test showed that the existing difference was statistically significant. So it was concluded that House's functional-pragmatic model of TQA were not applied when translating English advertising texts into Persian.

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1. Introduction

Evaluating the quality of a translated work has been one of the main concerns of translation studies. Despite the drastic progress in and evolution of translation studies, developing a good set of criteria; in order to various problems regarding the quality of translation; has not yet been achieved or at least there is no or little consensus about it. This led us to investigate the problem which has been elaborated on in this paper.

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One of the problematic areas of translation quality assessment is assessment of advertising text translations which are so important due to the increasing importance of advertisement in world-wide trade in modern societies. Thus, evaluation of advertisement text translations can be a significant matter which should be dealt with. Besides, in spite of the fact that advertising text translation plays an important role in world-wide trade scene, there are many poor advertising text translations the negative effect of which on world trade can't be ignored. Thus, such a study and similar ones may contribute to improve the level of world-wide trade, expand trade operations internationally and fulfil consumers' needs more efficiently.

House (1977) has developed a comprehensive linguistic model of translation quality assessment, which utilizes register variables, i.e. *field*, *tenor*, and *mode*, for translation quality assessment. In her model, Julian House divides theories toward meaning into three categories, namely, *mentalist view*, *response-based view* and *discourse and text-based view* (House, 1977). According to House (1997), the essence of translation is the preservation of "meaning" in three levels: semantic, pragmatic and textual across two languages. According to her, functional equivalence is important and to get the functional equivalence, situational dimensions and linguistic materials should be defined. She concluded that in translation assessment, two kinds of mismatches between the two texts should be identified: *overtly erroneous error* and *covertly erroneous error*. Based on this notion, she introduced two kinds of translation: *Overt* vs. *Covert* Translations. Rodriguez (1996) has "tested House's model on ideational and interpersonal English source-texts translated into Portuguese from a wide range of provinces." She, also, "selected *The Me Decade and the Third Great awakening*," one of the essays in Tom Wolf's *The Purple Decades*.; published in the United States in 1982, as the ST. As far as the TT is concerned, she chose Brandao's version, published by LPM, Brazil, in 1989." to verify the "practical value of House's translation typology." According to the results of the thesis done by Karen Smith (2002) advertisement translation should be considered in terms of power, culture and history. A parallel corpus of contemporary English advertisements, their translated Russian pairs, and a control corpus of native Russian advertisements provide the research data. The results show that contemporary Russian advertising is a mixture of 'foreign' and 'native'; and shows the necessity of giving translators the power their expert status deserves if translated advertisements are to persuade the target audience.

Mathieu Guidere (2001) in an article on "Translation Practices in International Advertising" argued that various parameters such as economic, cultural and ideological, ethical and linguistic ones influence advertising texts translations. In other words, He believes that advertising text translation is intermingled with a set of linguistic and pragmatic parameters, thus translator of these texts must have some knowledge about a real communicative interdisciplinary skill named advertising translation. To accomplish his task successfully, the translator is required to think and to integrate a certain amount of data, not only about marketing and basic communication, but also about geopolitics and ethnology.

2. Method

In this study, the quality of several samples of current Persian translations of English advertising text translations of cosmetic products were assessed based on House's functional-pragmatic model of TQA. Following House's model. profiles of both source texts and target texts were recognized, their overtly and covertly erroneous errors were identified and subcategorized and then the frequency distribution of their occurrences were compared through chi-square analysis. Finally, the type of translations (overt or covert) was recognized to see whether they match House's functional-pragmatic model of TQA. The text translations were analyzed by three translators who reviewed their analysis after a two-week time interval. They then discussed about their error categorizations to come to agreement about them. Then, the difference between the frequency distributions of both error types (overtly erroneous errors & covertly erroneous errors) was examined to see whether the difference is significant. Finally, to investigate the application of House's functional-pragmatic model of TQA when translating the texts, text translation types were identified based on text analyzers' opinion.

3. Data Analysis and Results

The following steps have been done on the collected data:

- Doing a register analysis to get the source text profile.
- Describing source text genre realized in register.
- Identifying the function of source text.
- Doing the same steps with the target text.
- Comparing the profiles of the two texts to recognize in-equivalences.
- Categorizing the errors into two kinds of covertly and overtly erroneous errors.
- Categorizing the translations into two kinds of overt and covert translations.

Analysing the translation of cosmetic products based on House's model and following the above mentioned steps, these results are achieved:

Source text register:

- field:
Subject matter: advertisement Social action: general
- Tenor:
Author's provenance and stance: advertiser
Social role relationship: asymmetrical
Social attitude: formal
- Mode
Medium: written Participation: complex
- Source text genre: commercial
- Source text function: ideational

Target text profile:

Target text register:

- Field:
Subject matter: advertisement Social action: general
- Tenor:
Translator's provenance and stance: university instructor,
translator, student
Social role relationship: asymmetrical

Social attitude: formal
- Mode:
Medium: Written participation: complex
- Target text genre: commercial
- Target text function: ideational

Comparing the profiles of source and target texts, some cases of mismatches were found which are presented. Besides, many cases of overtly erroneous errors including mismatches of denotative meanings and breaches of target

language (Persian) system were also identified and subcategorized.

3.1. *Covertly Erroneous Errors*

Covertly erroneous errors are typically caused by the dimensional mismatches, i.e. the failure to take parameters such as field, mode and tenor into consideration when translating.

3.1.1. *Tenor Mismatch*

This error type is seen in the mismatch between the author's provenance and that of the translator:

- Author's provenance: advertisers, producers of cosmetic products
- Translator's provenance: university instructors, students, translators.

3.1.2. *Use of Colloquial Words*

As is crystal clear, because commercial texts are supposed to use written formal standard varieties of language, using informal colloquial Persian expressions or regional dialects is unacceptable. But the data collected revealed that there are some cases of this error type in the text translations.

3.2. *Overtly erroneous errors*

By overtly erroneous errors House (1977) means the mismatches of denotative meanings of the source text and target text and breaches of target language system. The overtly erroneous errors found in the surveyed text translations were of five types.

3.2.1. *Transliteration*

As defined in Longman dictionary, transliteration means representing an alphabet with another one. In the collected data there are some cases in which English words are represented in Persian alphabet and this is considered a subcategory of overtly erroneous errors.

3.2.2. *Literal Translation*

Literal translation or as it is termed by Newmark (1988), "translations" is a word-for-word translation of a text which "does not produce the appropriate sense." (p.285).

3.2.3. *Mistranslation*

Due to polysemic nature of English language, most English words have more than one meaning. Translations surveyed show that there are many cases in which the inadequate Persian equivalences have been selected for English words and are considered a kind of overtly erroneous error due to distortion of meaning.

3.2.4. *Untranslation*

This error type occurs when translator omits some words of the source text or leave them untranslated intentionally or unintentionally. Here again due to meaning distortion this is considered a subcategory of overtly erroneous error.

3.2.5. *Breach of Target Language System*

House (1977) indicated that overtly erroneous errors mean the non-dimensional mismatches which include "both mismatches of the denotative meanings of the source text and target text elements and breaches of the target

language system” (p.245). Having covered the mismatches of the denotative meanings of the surveyed texts, it is time to move on to the breaches of the target (Persian) language system. Included in this error category is wrong usage of Persian verbs or prepositions.

4. Findings of the Study

Main findings of the study are as follows:

The first finding of the study is that the investigated Persian translations of English cosmetic advertising texts are overt because according to three text analyzers and some experts, they don't read like Persian and seem translation-like. The second finding is that the investigated Persian translations of English cosmetic advertising texts don't conform to House's functional-pragmatic model of TQA, in that she believes that advertising text translations should be covert. The third finding is that in the investigated Persian translations of English cosmetic advertising text translations, overtly erroneous errors outnumber covertly erroneous errors and this means that the translators have made more overtly erroneous errors than covertly erroneous errors when translating the texts

Concluding Remarks

Analyzing Persian translations of English cosmetic advertising texts, several cases of overtly erroneous errors and covertly erroneous errors were identified. There were five subcategories in the category of overtly erroneous errors namely mistranslation, transliteration, literal translation, untranslation and breach of target language system and two in the covertly erroneous errors category, namely tenor mismatch and use of colloquial words or phrases. And it's worth mentioning that there was a significant difference between the frequency of the two error types. Besides, according to three text analyzers and some experts, the investigated Persian translations of English cosmetic advertising texts are overt and don't read like Persian, indicating that these texts don't conform to House's functional-pragmatic model of TQA, because according to her, advertising text translations should be covert

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