

# Applying Catford's Shifts to the Farsi Translation of Psychology Texts

**Hossein Vossoughi**

Professor of Applied Linguistics, Teacher Education University, Tehran, Iran

**Farhad Pourebrahim**

MA in Translation Studies, Islamic Azad University Science and Research Branch, Tehran, Iran

## Abstract

*This study was an attempt to investigate the realization of Catford's shifts in the Farsi translation of English psychology texts, from a product-oriented point of view, shedding light on the areas where Farsi is different from English. Inspired by a study conducted by Khorshidi (2010), the two questions raised in the study sought to detect the kinds of shifts applied in the translation of English psychology texts according to Catford's theory, and to explore the most frequently used shifts in those texts which include the normal aspects of Farsi psychology texts. To this end, five books on psychology (originally written in English) and their Farsi translations were chosen and a total of six chapters were selected randomly for the analysis. Through a contrastive analysis, 307 coupled pairs of source text and target text segments were detected and extracted from these six chapters and thence tabulated and analyzed, being observed as instances of the realization of Catford's model of shifts. The obtained results of the corpora demonstrated that all types of shifts were used in the translation of psychology texts from English into Farsi according to Catford's theory. Furthermore, the results proved that structural shifts were the most frequently employed kinds of shifts.*

**Keywords:** descriptive translation studies, formal correspondence, semantic and communicative translation, Catford's translation shifts

## Introduction

The term *translation* can inspire different meanings and connotations. It can refer to the translation of general or technical texts with various themes and genres. It can also refer to the product of the process which is a text or it can be regarded as a term describing a process in a translator's mind that leads

to producing a text on paper (Gentzler, 1993; Hatim & Munday, 2004; Munday 2001). In the words of Shuttleworth and Cowie (1997),

*Translation is an incredibly broad notion which can be understood in many different ways. For example, one may talk of translation as a process or a product, and identify such sub-types as literary translation, technical translation, and subtitling; moreover, while more typically it just refers to the transfer of written texts, the term sometimes also includes interpreting.* (p. 181)

In spite of the existing discrepancies, there seems to be little doubt that the main reference of the word translation is the interlingual practice which necessitates moving from the form of the source language (SL) to another form in the target language (TL). In other words, "Translation is a change of form and this formal change takes place at different levels within a text" (Larson, 1984, p. 2).

## **Theoretical Framework**

In the following section, the theoretical framework for descriptive translation studies and semantic and communicative translation will be discussed in order to better locate the concept of translation shifts within the views and approaches towards translation.

### ***Descriptive Translation Studies***

Descriptive translation studies is a branch of translation studies developed in detail by Toury (1995) that involves the empirical and non-prescriptive analysis of source texts (STs) and target texts (TTs) with the aim of identifying the general characteristics and laws of translation. According to Munday (2001, pp. 10-11), descriptive translation studies is "a branch of pure research in Holmes's map of translation studies and has three possible foci: examination of the product, the function, and the process".

In terms of the focus on the product, Baker (1999, p. 286) defines the term *unit of translation* considered from a product-oriented approach as "the TT unit that can be mapped onto an ST unit". From a process-oriented approach, she defines equivalence as the relationship between an ST and a TT that allows the TT to be considered as a translation of the ST in the first place (1992, p. 77). In the same line, Vinay and Darbelnet view equivalence-

oriented translation as a procedure which “replicates the same situation as in the original, while using completely different wording” (cited in Shuttleworth & Cowie, 1995, p. 51). From a functional perspective, Nida (cited in Bassnett, 1980, p. 33) defines functional equivalence as “the closest natural equivalent to the SL message and attempts to convey the thought expressed in an ST”.

### ***Newmark’s Semantic and Communicative Translation***

Newmark (1981, 1988), who combines a wealth of practical examples of linguistic theories of meaning with practical applications for translation, departs from Nida’s receptor-oriented line, feeling that the success of equivalent effect is ‘illusory’ and that “the conflict of loyalties and the gap between emphasis on source and target language will always remain as the overriding problem in translation theory and practice” (Newmark, 1981, p. 38). He thus suggests narrowing the gap by replacing the old terms with those of *semantic* and *communicative* translation.

To this end, Newmark states that, “Communicative translation attempts to produce on its readers an effect as close as possible to that obtained on the readers of the original. Semantic translation attempts to render, as closely as the semantic and syntactic structure of the second language allow, the exact contextual meaning of the original” (1981, p. 39).

The above description of communicative translation resembles Nida’s dynamic equivalence in the effect it is trying to create on the TT reader, while semantic translation has similarities to Nida’s formal equivalence. However, Newmark distances himself from the full principle of equivalent effect, since that effect “is in operant if the text is out of TL space and time” (1981, p. 69). Newmark’s definition (1981, pp. 39-69) of his own terms reveal other differences. He indicates that semantic translation differs from literal translation in that it respects context, interprets, and even explains (metaphors, for instance). Literal translation, on the other hand, means word-for-word in its extreme version and, even in its weaker form, sticks very closely to ST lexis and syntax.

### ***Catford’s Shifts***

Over the last few decades, shifts of SL to TL translation have been discussed extensively in the field of translation studies with the term itself originating in Catford’s (1965) work in which he devoted a specific chapter to the subject

based on the notion that shifts are deviations from formal correspondence of the two texts involved in translation. The same notion of shift is discussed by Vinay and Darbelnet (cited in Shuttleworth & Cowie, 1995, p. 346) albeit under a different label, i.e. transposition; "Transposition is occasioned by the translation process and can be specified in terms of changes with respect to the original changes". This is a change of one part of speech for another without changing the sense.

This study focused on Catford's shifts because they provide an organized and systematic classification of changes with respect to the original changes. Catford considers two kinds of shifts: (1) shifts of level and (2) shifts of category. This study has focused on both of them which are defined as follows:

- (a) A level shift (Catford, 2000, pp. 141-3) is a shift when a concept which is expressed by grammar in one language is expressed by lexis in another.
- (b) Category shifts (2000, 143-7) are subdivided accordingly:
  - (i) Structural shifts: These are said by Catford to be the most common form of shifts and to involve mostly a shift in grammatical structure. For example, the *subject + verb + direct object* structure of *He turned off the TV* in English is translated by an *object + verb + subject* structure in Farsi (تلویزیون را خاموش کرد).
  - (ii) Class shifts: These comprise shifts from one part of speech to another. An example is *carelessly at first* where the English verb changed into a noun in Farsi (ابتدا به آن توجهی نداشت).
  - (iii) Unit shifts or rank shifts: These are shifts when the translation equivalent in the TL is at a different rank compared to the SL. *Rank* here refers to the hierarchical linguistic units of sentence, clause, group, word, and morpheme. An example is the English *hence* where the Farsi translation is (به همین دلیل).
  - (iv) Intra-system shifts: These are shifts that take place when the SL and TL possess approximately corresponding systems but where "the translation involves selection of a non-corresponding term in the TL system" (Catford, 2000, p. 146). An example is the English *histories* where the Farsi translation is (سابقه).

Catford (1965, p. 20) defines translation as "the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language (TL)".

- A formal correspondent is "any TL category (unit, class, element of structure, etc.) which can be said to occupy, as nearly as possible,

the same place in the *economy* of the TL as the given SL category occupies in the SL” (Catford, 1965, p. 27). Formal correspondence attempts to render the text word-for-word (at the expense of natural expression in the target language, if necessary).

- A textual equivalent is “any TL text or portion of text which is observed on a particular occasion... to be the equivalent of a given SL text or portion of text” (Catford, 1965, p. 27).

Textual equivalence is thus tied to a particular ST-TT pair, while formal equivalence is a more general system-based concept between a pair of languages. When the two concepts diverge, a translation shift is deemed to have occurred.

Based on the above theoretical framework and in line with the overall goal of this study, the following two research questions were raised in this study:

1. *What kinds of shifts are applied in the translation of psychology texts from English into Farsi according to Catford's theory?*
2. *What are the most frequent shifts in the translation of English psychology texts which consider the normal aspects of Farsi psychology texts?*

## Method

### Design

The design applied in this study was a corpus-based comparative descriptive approach. The comparative approach was designed for the identification of shifts that occurred through translation. The descriptive approach was adopted for the explanation of the occurrence of the shifts in translation in which the researchers tried to elaborate on the relationship between English-Farsi language pairs in translation. As a consequence, this research is placed within the framework of pure translation studies in Holmes' map of translation studies (cited in Toury, 1995, p. 10) which actually includes descriptive translation studies as one of its major branches. As described above, descriptive translation studies embark upon examination of the product, the function, and the process as three focal points among which the first one is highlighted in course of this research. Alongside the aforementioned corpus-based comparative descriptive approach adopted in this study, a qualitative

focus was also employed in the process of identifying the kinds of shifts used by translators of psychology texts.

## Corpus

In order to collect samples suitable for this research to provide the necessary data and to find out what kinds of shifts would be applied in the translation of psychology texts from English to Farsi, the researchers selected samples based on a simple random sampling. In this research, five English books on psychology and their Farsi translations which were rendered by different professional translators were selected. Indeed, the corpus used in this research was a parallel corpus, that is, original English source texts and their translations in Farsi.

The reason why the researchers chose psychology texts was that these texts are generally translated with little filtering in terms of content as they are not in sheer violation of the sociocultural norms of the TL community, i.e. Iran. Hence, the texts and their translations are closely related to each other in terms of genre.

In addition, the translations chosen by the researchers were among best-selling nonfiction books indicating that they are, to a large extent, meeting the expectations of the target community and are thus as representative as possible of the governing linguistic norms of the TL. These books are introduced in Table 1 and Table 2 below.

**Table 1 – English corpus used in this research**

No.	Author	Title	Chapter No.
1	Irwin G. Sarason & Barbara R. Sarason	Abnormal psychology: The problem of maladaptive behavior (Vol. 1)	Chapter 1
2	Irwin G. Sarason & Barbara R. Sarason	Abnormal psychology: The problem of maladaptive behavior (Vol. 2)	Chapter 11
3	Laura E. Berk	Development through the lifespan (Vol. 1)	Chapter 4
4	M. R. Perron	Clinical Psychology	Chapter 8
5	Benjamin A. Sadock & Virginia A. Sadock	Synopsis of psychiatry: Behavioral sciences clinical psychiatry	Chapter 12
6	E Jerry Phares	Clinical psychology: Concepts, methods, and profession	Chapter 5

Table 2 – Farsi corpus used in this research

شماره فصل	مترجم	عنوان	شماره متن
فصل اول	دکتر بهمن نجاریان- محمد علی اصغری مقدم- محسن دهقانی	روانشناسی مرضی (جلد اول)	۱
فصل یازدهم	دکتر بهمن نجاریان- محمد علی اصغری مقدم- محسن دهقانی	روانشناسی مرضی (جلد دوم)	۲
فصل چهارم	یحیی سید محمدی	روان شناسی رشد (از لقاح تا کودکی) جلد اول	۳
فصل هشتم	دکتر محمود منصور و دکتر پریخ دادستان	روان شناسی بالینی،	۴
فصل دوازدهم	نصرت الله پور افکاری	خلاصه روانپزشکی، علوم رفتاری- روانپزشکی	۵
فصل پنجم	مهرداد فیروز بخت با همکاری دکتر سیف اله بهاری	روان شناسی بالینی، مفاهیم، روشها و حرفه ها	۶

## Data Collection

The main type of information used in this research was secondary data. Such data consists of information that has previously been constructed. Secondary data may come in many different forms, some of which may include books, articles, reports, organizational records, electronic databases, and the internet. In order to manage the process of data collection, six chapters from five books on psychology and their Farsi translations were randomly selected. From these six chapters, data were collected upon the scope of the research that is the types of shifts in Catford's model and were compiled in six tables. The extracted sentences of each chapter were then compared with their Farsi translations. About 307 examples were collected from these six chapters. They were 62 cases in the first text, 61 in the second text, 40 in the third text, 49 in the fourth text, 50 in the fifth text, and 45 in the sixth text.

As stated already, this study was based on Catford's model of shifts; therefore, the researchers chose the units of translation based on the product-oriented point of view (i.e. the unit of translation is the target text unit that can be mapped onto the source text unit). "The mapping of a translation onto its assumed source is impractical unless both texts are broken down, often drastically" (Toury, 1995, p. 87). Newmark (1988, pp. 66–7) makes the crucial point that, "All lengths of language can, at different moments and also simultaneously, be used as units of translation in the course of the translation activity". Likewise, all lengths of language were used as units of translation in the course of the analysis.

The six chapters had clauses, phrases, and even whole sentences as units of translation. For illustrative purposes, some parts of these texts were broken into smaller segments in order to identify all that took place in the process of translation.

The data thus collected from these six chapters were analyzed and their translation shifts were detected and tabulated. For example, in English, the word *poems* was changed into شعر which was an *intra-system shift* because the plural noun in the ST changed into a singular one in the TT.

A second example was *to focus* in English which became *تمايز قائل شويم* in Farsi which was a *unit shift* because the ST phrase changed into a TT clause.

Another example was *have convinced* in English which was changed into *درك* in Farsi: a *class shift* because the verb in the ST changed into a noun in the TT.

The verb *had resulted* in English was changed into *منجر شد* in Farsi which was a *structural shift* because the past perfect tense changed into the simple past.

A fifth example *find boring* in English was changed into *جذاب نباشد* in Farsi which was a *level shift* because the grammar in the ST changed into lexis in the TT.

A final example was *who always gets lost* in English which was omitted in Farsi: an omission shift.

## Results and Discussion

Once the data was collected, the first task was to organize and present the results in a clear way. The main purpose of this study, as noted earlier, was first to identify and introduce the types of shifts that are used in the Farsi translation of English psychology texts according to Catford's model and to discover which of them were used most frequently in such translations.

In order to categorize the data, the first step was to organize them in a systematic form, that is, those six chapters of the psychology texts were selected and tabulated alongside their Farsi counterparts. Table 3 below demonstrates the frequency of translation shifts used in the corpus of this



stud. As Table 3 shows, the total number of examples in this research was 307 items drawn from the six chapters.

**Table 3 – Frequency of the translation shifts used in the corpus**

Text No.	No. of examples	Level shifts	Structural shifts	Class shifts	Unit shifts	Intra-system shifts	Omission Shifts
1	62	0	14	10	17	17	4
2	61	1	20	8	21	5	6
3	40	0	12	9	9	8	2
4	49	2	16	12	6	9	4
5	50	0	16	19	3	11	1
6	45	0	23	8	7	6	1
Total	307	3	101	66	63	56	18

According to table 3, *structural shifts* enjoyed the highest frequency with 101 cases and level shifts the lowest with only three incidences. In the next step, the researchers calculated the relative frequency and percentage of the occurrence of the above variables which is demonstrated in Table 4 below.

**Table 4 – Relative frequencies and percentage of translation shifts**

List of Variables	Relative Frequency	Percentage of Occurrences
Structural Shifts	32	32.8
Class Shifts	21	21.4
Unit Shifts	20	20.5
Intra-system Shifts	18	18.2
Omission Shifts	0.5	5.8
Level shifts	0.09	0.97

Tables 3 and 4 show that the second most frequent case was *class shifts* with the frequency of 66 and percentage of 21.4. Next was *unit shifts* with the frequency of 63 and percentage of 20.5 followed by *intra-system shifts* at 56 18.2, respectively. The second least frequent case was *omission shifts* with the frequency of 18 and percentage of 5.8 with the least frequent being *level shifts* with the frequency of 3 and the percentage of 0.97.

The above data is displayed in Figure 1 below for easier reference. Figure 1 displays the percentage of use of each of the translation shifts in a pie chart.

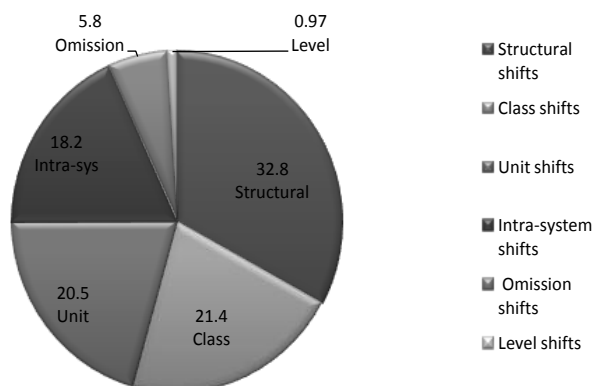


Figure 1 – Percentage of translation shift

The researchers' interpretation of the obtained results of this study is that in the translation of English psychology texts, Iranian translators demonstrate a considerably higher tendency toward category shifts compared to level shifts as only three out of the 307 examples were level shifts and the rest were category shifts. Moreover, among the category shifts, higher tendency was demonstrated for structural shifts. This may be due to the structural differences between Farsi and English, the illumination of which requires further research study to see whether the same findings will be obtained when translation of other types of texts are taken into account. However, the other possible reason for this tendency might be the translators' struggle to meet the expectations of the target community, that is, Iranian readers of psychology texts.

Moreover, the translators demonstrated almost equal tendency for class, unit, and intra-system shifts. But, omission was the least frequently employed shift. The reason for the latter might be the scientific nature of the texts under investigation which entail a heavy load of information which the translators do now wish to lose.

## Conclusion

The findings of this research can provide guidelines for novice translators who need to gain the initial knowledge to take the preliminary steps. The

results may introduce some usable hints on the application of the most frequent kinds of shifts in translation from English to Farsi for university students majoring in translation studies. Since the most frequently applied kinds of shifts in translation of psychology texts from English to Farsi proved to be *structural shifts*, awareness of such shifts may be set as part of the agenda of translation classes and workshops.

To this end, shifts which can be constructed or established during translation and are norm-governed phenomena and conform to universals of translation could be redefined positively as the consequence of the translator's effort to establish translation equivalence between two different language systems. Indeed, shifts are required and are indispensable changes in translation.

Recent years have seen the beginning of a reappraisal of the role of translation in language learning/teaching. A good practice of translation is an end in itself for many students rather than simply a means to greater proficiency in the TL. Moreover, translation is often the quickest and most efficient way to explain the meaning of a new word. Taking into account the above note, translation trainers are the first group to take advantage of this study as it may help them to discover translation strategies to find out what happens on the mind of translators when they are translating from one language to another. They will also establish norms in the translated texts in the TL.

Translation trainees as well as novice translators can also benefit from this study to analyze source language sentences better and find their TL equivalents correctly. This study also improves the progression of trainees to be able to solve the future problems they face in translation. They can also benefit from this study to be more autonomous in their own tasks.

To conclude, given the importance of applying the most frequent shifts in psychology texts, the researcher recommend the following two issues which were beyond the scope of this study on translation shifts:

- Further research can be performed to investigate structural shifts in the case of literary translation where stylistic changes tend to result in deviations from normal structure.
- Another study can also be done to investigate structural shifts via the realization of the passive structure within the translating process.

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## The Authors

**Hossein Vossoughi** is Professor of Applied Linguistics, Teacher Education University. He also instructs graduate courses at Islamic Azad University North Tehran Branch, Islamic Azad University South Tehran Branch, and Islamic Azad University Science and Research Branch. He has many publications to his credit and is the Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of TEFL, Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Language and Translation, and Director of the Journal of English Studies.

[h\\_vossoughi@iau-tnb.ac.ir](mailto:h_vossoughi@iau-tnb.ac.ir)

**Farhad Pourebrahim** holds an MA in Translation Studies from Islamic Azad University Science and Research Branch. He teaches general English and translation courses at the university and occasionally works as a translator too. His research interests include evaluation of translation, cultural studies in translation, and machine translation alongside critical discourse analysis.

[farhadpourebrahim@live.com](mailto:farhadpourebrahim@live.com)

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