

Translation of “Bad” in *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling*

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Abstract

Following Newmark (1988, p.5), “often, though not by any means always, translation is rendering the meaning of a text into another language in the way that the author intended the text”. To accomplish this, finding appropriate and natural equivalents is of prime importance for the translator; collocation is the most important contextual factor which usually affects translation. So recognizing whether or not a collocation is familiar or natural is one of the important problems in translation. The Word *bad*, because of its broad collocational range, may have different equivalents in different contexts. This paper investigated the different equivalents of this word in the Persian translation of the English novel *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling*. In order to fulfill the research purpose, all the instances of “bad”, by means of AntConc concordancer and their Persian equivalents were extracted. After collecting data, they were classified and analyzed. Analysis of the data showed that the translator nearly in most cases aimed at using established and typical equivalents. The study finally comes up with the conclusion that accuracy is no doubt an important aim in translation, but it is also to bear in mind that the use of common receptor-language patterns which are familiar to the target readers plays an important role in keeping open the lines of communication, as it seems that the translator of the text under investigation has done so.

Keywords: translation, collocation, *The History of Tom Jones*, translation of “Bad” in *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling*

1. Introduction

By dictionary definition, translation consists of changing from one state or form to another, to turn into one’s own language (Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary, 2006). In Peter Newmark’s words, “often, though not by any means always, translation is rendering the meaning of a text into another language in the way that the author intended the text” (Newmark, 1988, p.5). We may think that this rendering ought to be simple, as one ought to be able to substitute a word in the source language with another one in the receptor language. But, translation is not simply substitution of lexical items in the two languages.

The translator, in the process of translation, is constantly looking for the most appropriate and natural lexical equivalents between the source and the receptor language. Following Nida, “naturalness” is a key requirement of a translation. Indeed, he defines the goal of dynamic equivalence as aiming at “the closest natural equivalent to the source language message” (Nida, 1964a, p.166; Nida & Taber, 1969, p.12). The source language text may use a generic word, but the receptor language may have more specific words in that semantic area, as well as a generic word. Use of the more generic word might not be appropriate for that context; on the other hand, a translator would need to evaluate each context to decide which term would be the best choice in the receptor language, for “a word ‘acquires’ meaning through its context” (Munday, 2001, p.38); furthermore, the choice will depend on the collocational range of each of the equivalents. According to Newmark, “translation is sometimes a continual struggle to find appropriate collocations, a process of connecting up appropriate nouns with verbs and verbs with nouns, collocating appropriate adjectives to the nouns and adverbial groups or adverbs to verbs” (Newmark, 1988, p. 213).

As an example “bad” is a generic English word. Suppose Persian as the receptor language, it is not always correct to use generic equivalent “بد” for this English generic word. Concerning the context and the collocational

range of this generic word, a translator should choose the best lexical equivalents and does not confine himself to referential meaning.

As lexical equivalent for generic words is concerned, it is a problematic issue in the field of translation and finding the closest natural equivalent is of prime importance. Recognizing whether a collocation is familiar, natural, or just acceptable, is one of the most important problems in translation.

In what follows I will aim at identifying and categorizing the different equivalents of the English word “bad” in the Persian translation of the English novel *The history of Tom Jones, a Foundling*. Hopefully, the findings of this research have an influential role in lifting translators’ problems. Also, its results can be fruitful for translation students, teachers, classes and anybody who deals with translation. It is hoped that it creates sensitivity toward looking for the suitable equivalent to express the meaning in the receptor language and translating as naturally, accurately and with maximum effectiveness as possible.

2. Method

As it was mentioned previously, an English novel by Henry Fielding, entitled *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling* (1749), has been selected as the literary source text. It is one of the great masterpieces of English literature and a major force in the development of the novel form. This novel has been selected from among seventeen English literary works. The e-books of these literary works were loaded in AntConc software, which is a freeware concordance program, and the freeware processed them. The results of the texts processed showed that the number of the English word “bad” in the above said novel were more than in the other novels. It is worth mentioning that there are some limiting conditions which restrict generalization of the results; because of time limitation only one literary work of eighteenth century has been selected and in fact there has been no randomization in the selection of the research’s sample. It is likely that the results of this research on other different samples go through changes.

3. Results

The data then were analyzed to accomplish the purpose of the study. The following classification summarizes the results of the study on the different equivalents of the English word “bad”. Data containing the word *bad* are classified into four categories.

1. This category deals with the classification of those data in which *bad* serves as an adjective (in 62.71% of all data *bad* is an adjective). Here 10 subcategories are defined.

1) Of persons (29.73% adjectives “bad” refer to persons). For example:

E: silly and bad persons (p.404)

P: (مورد ستم افراد بد و ناشایست قرار گرفته‌اند (ص.354)

2) Of act, circumstances, impression, luck, news, opinion, reputation and scent. For example:

E: heaven knows my circumstances are bad enough (p.336)

P: خدا می‌دونه که وضع من چقدر افتضاحه (ص.405)

3) Of disposition, heart and state of mind. For example:

E: it always proceeds from a bad heart (p.381)

P: تیزبینی و بدگمانی همیشه از دلی شریر بر می‌خیزد (ص.464)

E: fortune may tempt men of no very bad disposition in injustice (p.610)

P: فکر تصاحب ثروت ممکنه انسانی رو که ذاتاً چندان هم بد نیست به بی عدالتی وسوسه کند (ص.756)

E: a bad mind (p.164)

P: انقباض رذیله (ص.187)

4) Of omens, matters and politics. For example:

E: the hero of this great history appears with very bad omens (p.3)

P: قهرمان این سرگذشت با نشانه‌های بسیار بدشگونی قدم به عرصه می‌گذارند. (ص.67)

E: it would be bad politics, indeed (p.177)

P: واقعاً از دیدگاه سیاسی خطا خواهد بود (ص.203)

E: to have made the best of a bad matter (p.485)

P: تا حتي الامكان اين موضوع ناخوشايند را به بهترين صورت ممكن در بيارم (ص.597)

5) Of cause and use. For example:

E: and a hundred other bad causes (p.51)

P: و صدها دليل مغشوش و پراشوب ديگر (ص.44)

E: very bad and ungrateful use (p.80)

P: سوءاستفاده (ص.79)

6) Of a profession. For example:

E: the bad trade of writing (p.461)

P: حرفه پندام نويسندگي (ص.567)

7) Of an animal. For example:

E: now it happens to this sort of men, as to bad hounds (p.33.8)

P: باري، بلابي كه بر سر اينگونه آدمها مي آيد همان است كه بر سر سگان شكارى كندهن مي آيد (ص.407)

8) Of health. For example:

E: Mr. Allworthy's situation had never been so bad as the great caution of the doctor had presented (p.152)

P: حال آقاي آلودني هرگز به حدي كه احتياط بيش از اندازه طبيب آنرا جلوه داده وخيم نبود (ص.171)

9) Of bank note. For example:

E: sold a blind horse, and received a bad note in payment (p.487)

P: اسبي كور را در برابر اسكناس تقليبي به حريفى قالب كرد (صص.599-600)

10) Of wound. For example:

E: can a man therefore, with so bad a wound as this said to be out of danger (p.234)

P: مگر مي توان گفت بيماري كه چنين زخمي كاري بر او وارد شده است در خطر نبوده باشد (ص.276)

2. This category involves those data in which the word *bad* serves as a noun. For example:

E: involve me in another equally bad (p.559)

P: باز منوباهمون رنج ومحنت دست به گريبان كنند (ص.691)

3. Idiomatic phrases containing the word *bad*. For example:

E: you will make a very bad examiner (p.334)

P: اين كه نشد باز پيرسي (ص.403)

4. Data in which the word *bad* has not translated. For example:

E: to the very moment he was bad to tell (p.409)

P: تا دمي كه بيان سرگذشتش را از او خواسته بودند (ص.501)

The word "bad" in more than half of the instances (62.71%) is an adjective and almost in more than half of the cases (54.05%) which *bad* is an adjective, it has been translated into Persian adjective "بد". In cases which *bad* serves as a noun, 40% has been translated into "بدى".

Generally we can say that the translator may be according to context and collocational range, aimed at using established and typical equivalents. The word *bad* is a general word and the more general a word is, the broader its collocational range. As we know words rarely occur on their own; they almost occur in the company of other words. In a given language certain words tend to co-occur regularly and as a result there are differences in collocational patterning both within and across languages. The important thing is the naturalness or the typicality of the resulting combinations. Differences in the collocational patterning of the source and receptor language can pose various problems in translation. So translators should bear in mind that what a word means often depends on its association with certain collocates in different contexts. As far as translation is concerned, taking account of collocational meaning rather than substituting individual words with their dictionary equivalents is crucial. In fact a translator would be aiming at finding a collocation in the receptor language which conveys the same or similar meaning to that of the source collocation. In rendering unmarked source language collocation into the receptor language, a translator ideally aims at producing a collocation which is typical and natural in the target language while, at the same time preserving the meaning and effect associated with the source collocation; for

example a “good/ bad law” is typically a “just/unjust law” in Persian. It is important to keep in consideration that the use of common target-language patterns which are familiar to the target readers plays an important role in readability of translation and keeping the communication channels open, as the translator of *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling* has done so.

4. Discussion

This research was an attempt to identify and classify the different equivalents of the English word in the Persian translation of the English novel *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling*. To accomplish the purpose of the study, the data were collected and then were analyzed. Analysis of the data showed that nearly in most cases that *bad* served as an adjective or a noun, the translator has used typical, familiar, natural and acceptable equivalents in Persian. As far as we know the word *bad* is a general word both in Persian and English. Given the fact that general words have a broader collocation range than other words, this word collocates with many words and according to the context in which they are, they may have different equivalents. Also we should take in consideration that collocations of lexical items will differ from language to language; In fact, in two languages the meaning is the same but different words are combined to indicate the meaning. Based on what is said above, it seems that the translator according to the context and collocational range of the words which collocate with *bad* has used common patterns of collocation in Persian. Indeed, it is worth mentioning that our sample was very small and the results of this study are confined to the aforesaid English novel, which is a literary work of eighteenth century, and its Persian translation. The same research on other works may produce different results and for generalization from the results more studies will be needed.

Although our sample was very small, it is hoped that its interesting findings produce practical assistance for translators, students of translation and anybody who is interested in translation studies; furthermore, they are of major importance for pedagogical purposes in translation classes. These findings are:

- 1) Collocation is the most contextual factor for the translator.
- 2) As far as translation is concerned, translators should recognize the familiarity, naturalness and acceptability of a collocation and consider the acceptable collocational range of any lexical words.
- 3) Context and collocational range play a significant role in finding natural and common collocational patterning of the receptor language.
- 4) English-Persian dictionaries themselves are translations and their capability in term of presenting equivalents is subject to restrictions.
- 5) Translators should not entirely rely on dictionary equivalents.
- 6) Translators should not always translate “bad” in “بد”. In different contexts they should use suitable equivalents for it
- 7) In the process of translation, translators should make use of the receptor language potentials and translation strategies.

5. Conclusion

Finding proper equivalents has been the main issue in translation since very early times and there is an abundant literature on this aspect. To be specific, here we attempted to investigate the notion of collocation and its importance in finding proper and natural equivalents; to this end, we focused on translating the English generic word “Bad” in *The History of Tome Jones, a Foundling* into Persian. The results showed that in most cases the translator rendered the word “Bad” into the natural equivalents regarding the context and the collocation range and recreated the beauty of the ST in the TL as a main principle in translating literary texts.

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