



Analysis of Shifts in Translating English Modal Auxiliaries into Persian: A Corpus-based Study

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ABSTRACT

Both English and Persian languages represent modality through auxiliary verbs, besides other means. The grammar systems of both languages include epistemic and root modality with some sort of similarities; however, they do not possess a one-to-one correspondence of modal auxiliaries, as a mean of conveying modality. Thus, translational shift is applied in many cases during the process of translating. This study is an analysis of such shifts in a parallel text, which consists of *Jane Eyre*, a novel by Charlotte Bronte (1955), and its Persian translation by Bahrami-harran (1998). The English and Persian modal auxiliaries are described and classified based on Palmer's (2001) model. The aim of this study is to detect different types of shifts based on Catford's classification in the translated text. To do so, one hundred and fifty sentences with modal auxiliaries were randomly selected from the source text and compared with the equivalents provided by the translator. Then, different types of shifts, based on Catford's, were identified and classified. The findings, descriptively suggesting how to translate modal auxiliaries from English into Persian, may have implications for linguists, translation researchers, and especially students of translation studies.

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Introduction

The term 'modality' is a cover term for a range of semantic notions such as ability, possibility, obligation, and imperative meaning. Modality may be coded in various ways, including verbal inflections, auxiliary verbs, adverbs, and particles. However, as Depraetere & Reed (2006, p. 270) pointed out, the principal means of expressing modality in English, is the set of modal auxiliary verbs. The English system includes a set of nine modal auxiliaries (can, could, may, might, shall, should, will, would, must), while in Persian there are only four modal auxiliaries, *bâyad*, *shâyad*, *tavânestan*, and *khâstan* (must, may, can, and will/want), as listed by Taleghani (2008, p. 104). Other means of modality, adverbs and periphrastic modals, exist in both languages. Therefore, Persian translator employ shift as a strategy in translating English modals. This study focuses on how these modal auxiliaries are rendered into Persian, and what types of shifts occur in translation process.

Background

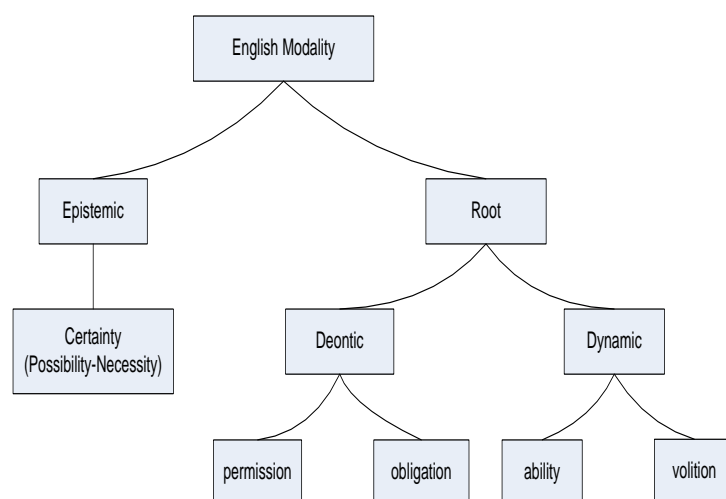
This study deals with modals in English and Persian, and translational shifts which occur in the process of translating from English into Persian. Thus, it is necessary to have a brief look at each of these concepts.

Modality in English

Modality in English is expressed by a variety of elements, including adverbials like perhaps, in all probability etc., and 'hedges' like I would think (that) (cf. e.g. Hoyer 1997; Krug 2000; Huddleston and Pullum et al. 2002: 173-5). As Rahimian & Vahedi (2010) stated, linguists have provided different classifications of modals, based on three different approaches; ambiguity-based, polysemy-based, and monosemy-based approach. In this study, Palmer's model is adopted since it gives a clear and tangible classification of the English modal auxiliaries, which are of main focus in this study. Palmer (2001) distinguishes between epistemic and root modality. Epistemic modality refers to the speaker's judgments about the factual

status of the proposition (Palmer 2001: 8). Within root modality, Palmer distinguishes between dynamic modality, which covers ability and volition, and deontic modality, which, as usual, accounts for permission and obligation. Dynamic modality 'comes from the individual concerned,' whilst deontic modality comes 'from an external source' (2001: 10). This classification is shown in figure (1).

Figure 1. Classifications of English modals, adapted from Palmer (2001, p. 8-10)



Traditionally, a distinction is made between central modals (can, could, may, might, shall, should, will, would, must) and peripheral or marginal modals (dare, need, ought). In addition, we find a group of verbs referred to as semi-modals or periphrastic modals. This somewhat open-ended category includes have to, be able to, be going to, but can also include a variety of other verbs such as be supposed to, be about to and be bound to. The scope of this study, however, is limited to the

central modals. Palmer (2001) listed such English modals and meanings related to each one as follows:

- may/ might: possibility, permission
- can/ could: ability, permission, possibility
- must: necessity, obligation
- should: obligation, possibility
- will/ would: possibility, volition
- shall: volition

It should be pointed out that there is debate if will and shall (and would and should) used for prediction can be classified as modals. Pointing out this, Depraetere & Reed (2006, p. 276-7) giving examples of prediction meaning of these auxiliaries, argued that such a usage of these cannot be classified since “they do not fit as comfortably in the paradigm of either possibility or necessity of the truth of a proposition.”

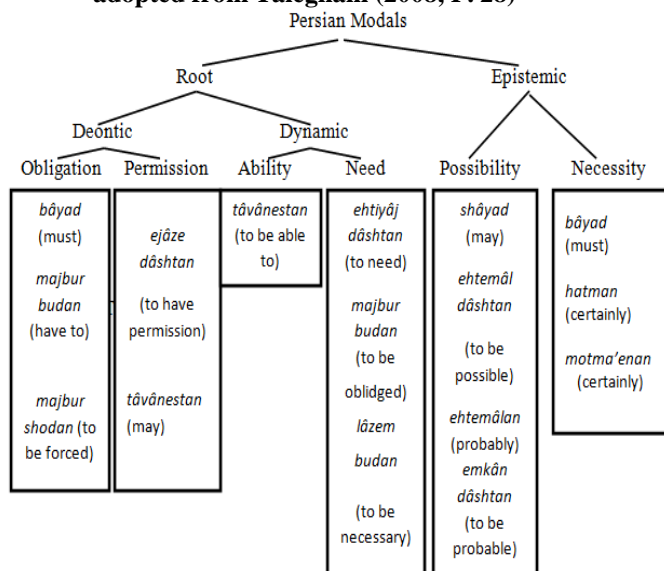
Modality in Persian

Almost all literature concerning modality in Persian agrees that modal concepts are expressed either by verbs or by adverbs (see Taleghani, 2008; Anvari & Givi 2010; Meshkato-Dini 2011). Taleghani, subdividing the verbal modals into two groups, classified Persian Modals in three categories: adverbs, auxiliary verbs, and complex predicates. She listed fourteen modals under the three categories as shown in the following table.

Table 1. Persian modals classification, adapted from Taleghani (2008, p.104)

Taleghani classifies Persian modals into root and epistemic categories. Within root modals she distinguishes deontic and dynamic categories. This semantic categorization of Persian is shown in figure (2) below.

Figure 2. The semantic categorization of Persian modals adopted from Taleghani (2008, P. 28)



Catford's Translational Shift

Catford defines translation shifts as “departures from formal correspondence in the process of going from the ST to the TT” (Catford, 1965/2000: 141). He divides shifts into two major types: (i) shift of level, which is confined to grammar-to-lexis and vice versa, and (ii) shift of category, which is subdivided into structure-shifts, class-shifts, unit-shifts (rank-changes), intra-system-shifts. Each subdivision of category shift is briefly explained based on Catford (1965/2000), and an example for each case is provided by the present writer.

Structure shifts may occur when the source text contains a certain structure which is not common in the target language. An example of this is a sentence like “It is easy for him to do the

job,” which is normally translated into Persian as “Doing the job is easy for him.”

Class shifts occurs when the translation equivalent of a SL item is a member of a different class from the original item. For instance, the English sentence “He must be 8 years old”, may be translated as “hatman 8 sâl sen dêrad” (certainly 8 years old he is) into Persian, in which the auxiliary verb ‘must’ is changed to an adverb.

Unit shift refers to changes of rank—that is, a unit in the ST is rendered to a unit of a different rank in the TT. A phrase, for instance, may be translated into a clause in a context like: “Not having studied hard enough, John could not do well in the exam,” which may be translated into Persian as “John, who had not studied hard enough, could not do well in the exam.”

Intra-system shift is used for those cases where the shift occurs within a system; that is, for the cases where SL and TL possess that certain constitution with approximate formal correspondence, but in translation a non-corresponding term in the TL system is selected. The underlined part of the sentence “I cannot remember detecting gratitude in his face” (Bronte, 1955, p.202) includes a modal auxiliary, while it has been translated by Bahrami-harran (1998, p.284) into Persian as [yâdam ne-mi-âyad...] which can be back translated as “I don’t remember”, without the modal element. This shift happens even though the Persian system contains a formal equivalent for the modal verb ‘can’, i.e. ‘tavânestan.’

Methodology

The objective of this study is to investigate the translational shifts occurred in rendering English modal auxiliaries into Persian in a selected text. Thus, the samples, consisting of one hundred and fifty English sentences with modal auxiliaries, are compared with the equivalents given by the translator. The samples are randomly collected from the source text, Jane Eyre a novel by Charlotte Bronte (1955), and the equivalents are collected from the translation by Bahrami-harran (1998). Then, shifts are detected and classified based on Catford’s (1965) classification. The scope of this study is limited to the English Modal Auxiliaries, thus, other form of modality like adverbs or periphrastic modals are not concerned. Palmer’s (2001) classification is adopted as the framework of this study. In the target text, all different types of modals or any other equivalents provided by the translators are collected and analyzed. Taleghani’s (2008) classification, which is based on Palmer’s model, is the source for the Persian modals analysis.

Data Analysis

Comparing 150 English sentences, containing modal auxiliaries, with their equivalents in the Persian text, the following results were found:

a) In more than half cases, a Persian modal auxiliary (*bâyad*, *shâyad*, *tavânestan*, and *khâstan*) was used as an equivalent.

Example 1): I must pay a visit to the second story. (ST, p. 152)

Translation: *bâyad sari be tabaghe-ye sevvom bezanam*. (TT, p. 214)

Example 2): When she first came here, she could speak no English. (ST, p. 102)

Translation: ..., *aslan ne-mi-tavânest englisi harf bezanad*. (TT, p. 141)

b) In some cases the modal auxiliary is shifted to a complex predicate with modal meaning, like *emkân dâshtan* (to be possible).

Example 3): She could neither clean her nails, nor wash her face. (ST, p. 53)

Translation: na emkân dâsht nâkhonha-yash râ pâk konad, na...(TT, p. 214)

c) Sometimes, a modal auxiliary is shifted to an adverb with a similar meaning. Adverbs like hatman and ehtemâlan (certainly and probably), or their synonyms are used in such cases.

Example 4): You must wish to leave Lowwood. (ST, p. 55)

Translation: hatman ârezu mikoni ke Lowwood râ tark koni. (TT, p. 75)

d) Some sentences are lexically changed in translation so that the modal auxiliary will not need to be rendered. This may be due to idiomatic translation of the phrase containing the modal, like example (5), or just as a result of translator's choice, like example (6) below.

Example 5): ...a price I cannot afford to give. (ST, p. 203)

Translation: ...ke az ohdeye pardâkhte bahâye ân bar-na-yâyam. (TT, p. 287)

Back translation:which is not possible for me to pay for it.

Example 6): Some days since: nay, I can number them-four;.... (ST, p. 453)

Persian: chand ruz ghabl, yâ daghightar beguyam châr ruz ghabl,... (ST, p. 446).Back translation: some days ago, or let me say more precisely four days ago...

e) In some clauses the modal is simply omitted in translation. In this study, such cases are classified under a group called 'modal omission.'

Example 7): I cannot remember detecting gratitude in his face. (ST, p. 202)

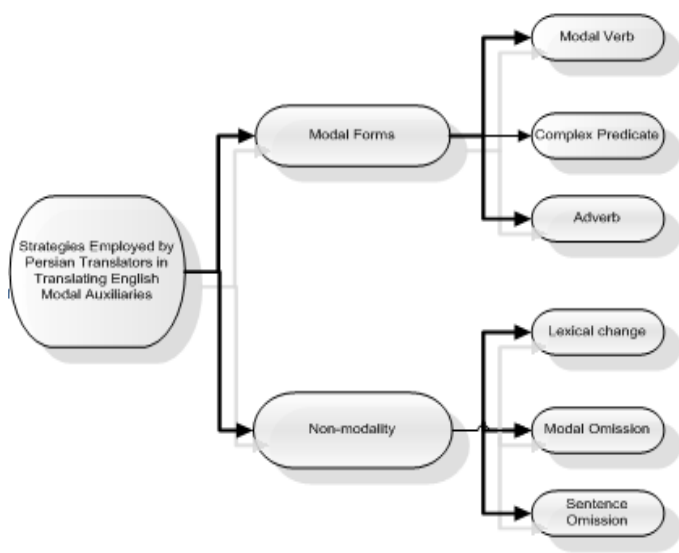
Persian: yâdam ne-mi-âyad ke dar ghiyafe-ash haghshenâsi dide bâsham. (TT, p. 284).

Back translation: I don't remember seeing gratitude in his face.

f) Sometimes the entire sentence or clause is omitted in translation. While this may not be considered a strategy, such cases are counted here simply as sentence omission.

Different strategies employed by the translator in rendering English modal auxiliaries are shown in figure 3 below.

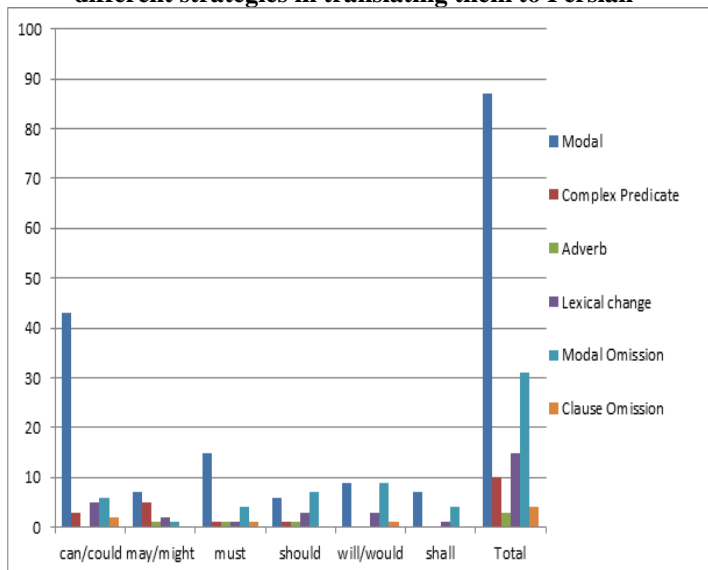
Figure 3. Strategies employed in rendering English modal auxiliaries into Persian



The frequency of each strategy employed in rendering each modal in the selected text is shown in table (1). Since rendering a present form into past and vice versa is common in translation, the equivalents for pairs of modals, like can and could, are listed in one group.

This data is demonstrated in chart (1) below.

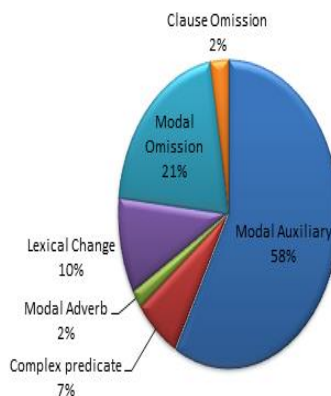
Chart 1. The frequency of English modal auxiliaries and different strategies in translating them to Persian



The strategies in translating English modal auxiliaries into Persian have been used with different frequencies. These frequencies are shown in table (2).

This frequency data is demonstrated also in chart (2) below.

Chart 2. The Frequency of each Strategy in rendering the English Modal Auxiliaries into Persian in the Selected Text



Conclusion

Based on the data analysis, the following conclusions can be made:

- Six different strategies are employed in translating the English central modals into Persian including; using modal auxiliaries, shifting to complex predicates, shifting to adverbials, lexical change, omission of modal, and omission of the entire sentence or clause.
 - More than half of the English Modal Auxiliaries are rendered into central modals, or modal verbs. This is especially true in case of 'can/could' translated into tavânestan.
 - Modal omission is the second mostly used strategy, which is more common in case of 'will/would' rendering.
 - Shift to modal adverbs is not very common in Persian translation, as it has the lowest frequency among the strategies.
- It should be mentioned that as this study is limited to only one English text and one translation, the results cannot be generalized to all other cases. Much more studies are required for such a generalized conclusion.

Table 1. The frequency of English modal auxiliaries and different strategies in translating them to Persian

Translation English Modals	Modal Auxiliary	Complex Predicate	Modal Adverb	Modal Omission	Lexical change	Clause Omission	Total
can/ could	43	3	0	6	5	2	59
may/ might	7	5	1	1	2	0	16
must	15	1	1	4	1	1	23
should	6	1	1	7	3	0	18
will/ would	9	0	0	9	3	1	22
shall	7	0	0	4	1	0	12
total	87	10	3	31	15	4	150

Table 2. The frequency of each strategy in rendering the English modal auxiliaries into Persian

Strategies	Total Number	Percentage
Modal Auxiliary	87	58 %
Complex Predicate	10	6.5%
Modal Adverb	3	2%
Lexical Change	15	10%
Modal Omission	31	21%
Clause Omission	4	2.5%
Total	150	100

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