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Error Analysis of English Translation of Persian Public Signs in the Light of Liao's Model (2010)

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ABSTRACT

Considering the undeniably important role of public sign, it is evident that the quality of their translation into English can affect tourists more than local people. The low quality of English translation of Persian public signs can cause many problems for tourists including stress and discomfort. Besides, errors in bilingual public signs make it harder for tourists to meet their public needs. The present study aimed at investigating the existing errors in the English translation of Persian public signs based on Liao's Model (2010). The corpus used in this descriptive, analytic, comparative qualitative research included 308 bilingual public signs erected in Mashhad City in Iran, photographed by the researcher. There were 198 cases of errors on bilingual public signs. The results showed that *Rendition Errors*, *Language Errors*, and *Miscellaneous Errors* were the common types of errors in the English translation of Persian public signs. It was also found that, *Language Errors* (74.74%) had the highest frequency and *Miscellaneous Errors* (2.02%) had the lowest frequency. Thus, it appears that translators in charge of translating Persian public signs were not adequately familiar with the target culture. They were not aware of the sensitivity of translating these signs. The findings of the present study can have implications for urban studies, Municipality Office and the Public Traffic Office in Iran. It has practical implications for tourism especially in Iran as a tourist attraction.

Keywords: *Public Signs, Translation, Translator, Translation Error, Error Analysis*

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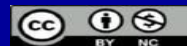
1. Introduction

Public signs, which consist of words with or without picture, aim at directing, prompting, restricting, and compelling (Guo, 2012 a). Tourists appeal to public signs as well as local people for help. It is sometimes complicated for tourists to understand public signs when they travel to different places (Yang, Gao, Zhang & Waibel, 2001). Sign translation seems a realistic solution to make a city more comfortable and less stressful for tourists. In fact, there is no doubt that translating public signs is an inseparable part of communication material (Yang, 2009). As English is the first international language worldwide, translating public signs for those who visit or study in a foreign country grows extremely eminent (Guo, 2012 b). It is

crucial to work more on the English translation of public signs and try to improve the quality of bilingual signs. This paper deals with the different dimensions of public signs and their translation. It also focuses on the prevalent errors in the English translation of Persian public signs based on Liao's Model (2010).

2. Literature Review

Public signs, in written mode, are considered as the most prevalent helpful language in public life (He, 2019). Different aspects of public signs and their translation have been addressed so far. For example, Shi (2014) focused on the strategies in public sign translation, introduced the term equivalence as a central and controversial issue and provided expert definitions of this keyword. He believes that functional



equivalence brings the target text into focus but applying a functional equivalence for all public signs into English is deemed impossible.

In another work of research, He (2019) discussed the different aspects of public signs, the definition, characteristics, functions of public signs, common errors in translating public signs and some strategies in translation. This researcher pinpointed that cultural connotations and fully understanding of the text are vital in translating public signs. In translating public signs, the purposes are both providing necessary information for foreign tourists and letting foreign people understand the culture of the visited country. She also emphasized the need for coherence in the target translation.

In another study, Ko (2015) focused on different dimensions of public signs and their translation. He suggested literal translation, semi-literal translation, semi-adaptive translation, and free adaptation as practical strategies in public signs translation.

As for the errors in translating public signs, Kang and Zhang (2008) concentrated on the classification of public signs. They categorized public signs into four groups: indicative public signs, suggestive public signs, limitative public signs and imperative public signs. Li (2013) introduced improper diction, redundant words, spelling mistakes word-for-word translation, part of speech misuse, and cultural misunderstanding as the common errors in public sign translation. He also believed that translators' low linguistic competence, lack of knowledge of public signs, failure to consider cultural differences and low responsibilities as sources of errors in public signs translation.

Yuan (2018) introduced linguistic landscape as a relevant term. Linguistic landscape, which refers to the language of public signs, has two functions, informational and symbolic. Informational function aims at informing people of the linguistic characteristics, territorial limits and language boundaries of a specific area. Besides, symbolic function acts as an indicator of the status, power relations, and cultural identity of residents and affects how people feel about their community (Landry & Bourhis, 1997 as cited in Yuan, 2018). In her academic paper, she provided several examples of public signs, introduced some translation strategies and concluded that

there is a tendency to submit to the cultural and economic power by English translation and an effort to resist English hegemony.

More recently, Liang (2019) analyzed the current situation of translating public signs in China and analyzed the causes of mistranslations. This researcher made suggestions to eliminate problems and create a good language environment. In the same country, one of the most recent works of research was conducted by Zhang and Guo (2020) as a detailed analysis of the English translations of public signs in Chinese destinations. These researchers discussed the definition of public tourism signs and categorized these signs based on the functions. They explored the causes of English translation errors on public tourism. Eventually, they made suggestions to three groups (translators, sign-makers, managers and administrators) to solve the errors in English translation and to improve the translation quality of public signs in Chinese context.

However, there is a dearth of research with this respect in the Iranian context which further motivated us to explore this topic. The existing body of research all show that public signs and the quality of their translation have occupied many expert minds. As evidently there is a wide gap in studying public signs and the relevant topics in Iran including the errors in translating them, the conduction of the present research is further justified.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The present research was descriptive, analytic, comparative and qualitative in type. It focused on public signs and aimed at exploring the existing errors in the English translation of Persian public signs, and categorizing these errors in the light of Liao's Model (2010). The focus of this study is on *Rendition Errors*, *Language Errors*, and *Miscellaneous Errors*.

3.2 Materials

The materials for this study, selected randomly, were 308 Persian public signs that had been translated into English. Mashhad was the case study in the present research because it is considered a tourist attraction. The researcher photographed places the most frequently visited places including the Holy Shrine, Hospitals, Airport, Big shopping malls, Railway, Streets and International Exhibition since these places are most often visited by tourists. Public signs in these places direct

people to different destinations, advertise something, or show different rooms in an organization.

3.3 Theoretical Framework

To conduct the present study, Liao's Model (2010) was employed. This model comprises *Rendition Error*, *Language Error*, and *Miscellaneous Error*. Each type includes several subcategories. Errors and their subcategories are introduced below:

Rendition Errors: occur when the meaning of the source text has not been translated explicitly. These are due to the misinterpretation of source text, insufficient rendering, which differentiates the translation from the original text, excessive rendering, which differentiates the translation from the original text, subtle differences of meaning between the source and target texts, misinterpretation due to unawareness of terms.

Language Errors: occur when there are some problematic expressions in the target text. These include grammatical mistake, an awkward expression including ambiguous meaning, mismatch, redundant words and unnecessary repetition, inappropriate register, excessive literal translation, which leads to ambiguous translation, excessive free translation, which differentiate the translation from the original text and incorrect character, improper punctuation marks or inconsistency in translation.

Miscellaneous Errors: occur when some parts of the source text have been deleted in translation (Jahanshahi & Kafipour, 2015).

3.4 Data Collection and Analysis

In the first phase of the study, the researcher photographed some real materials of Persian public signs, which had been translated to English from different public places such as the Holy Shrine, hospitals, airport, railway station, international exhibition and so on. In the second phase, the researcher compared the Persian public signs and their translation to detect the existing errors based on Liao's Model (2010). In the third phase, the errors were categorized based on the model and their frequency was shown in charts and figures.

For data analysis, Liao's model (2010) was used. The frequency and percentage of errors of the three taxonomies in the model were calculated and reported in tables and charts. They were compared and examples were provided too.

4. Results

4.1 Rendition Errors

Rendition errors occur when the meaning of the source text is translated to

the target text inaccurately. This type of error has a number of subcategories (Jahanshahi & Kafipour, 2015): misinterpreting the source text, insufficient rendering, excessive rendering, subtle differences of meaning between the source and target text, misinterpretation due to unawareness of the term. Here is the distribution of this type of error in the corpus:

Table 1: Distribution of Rendition Errors in the Light of Liao's Model (2010)

Rendition Errors	Frequency	Percentage
1. Misinterpreting the source text	20	44.44
2. Insufficient Rendering	6	13.33
3. Excessive Rendering	3	6.66
4. Subtle Differences of meaning between the ST/TT	2	4.44
5. Misinterpretation due to unawareness of terms	14	31.11
Total	45	

As it can be observed, the highest frequency of the sub-categories of rendition errors belonged to the misinterpretation of the source text (44.4%). Next, misinterpretation due to the unawareness of terms was the most frequent (31.11%). The least frequency was that of the subtle differences of meaning between ST and TT (4.44%). A better comparison can be made in Figure 1.

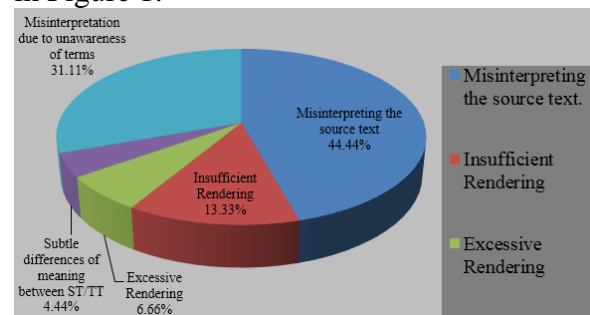


Figure 1: Comparative analysis of the sub-categories of rendition errors

As it can be observed, the distribution of rendition errors in the light of Liao's Model follows from:

Misinterpreting the source text (44.44%) > *Misinterpretation due to unawareness of terms* (31.11%) > *Insufficient Rendering* (13.33%) > *Excessive Rendering* (6.66%) > *Subtle difference of meaning between the ST/TT* (4.44%).

In the following, instances of each sub-category of rendition errors are provided based on the analysis of corpus.

4.1.1 Misinterpreting the source text

As mentioned before, this type of error occurs when there are mistakes in the translation, when the wrong equivalents have been chosen and misinterpretation occurs. Figure 2 indicates an example from the corpus.



Figure 2: An example of misinterpreting the source text from the corpus

In the above figure, misinterpretation happened as using the equivalent "input" does not fit here. The word "input" collocates with words like data, user, keyboard, video, and audio but not "entrance". "Emergency input" is vague. Instead of "emergency input", the suggested translation is "Emergency entrance" as all foreigners are familiar with this expression, and this expression is widely used as a standard international equivalent. The following figure is found in the World Wide Web as an international standard for this purpose.



Figure 3: An example of the preferred translation

Next, we will move on to the second sub-category of rendering errors and an instance from the actual data collected and analyzed.

4.1.2 Insufficient rendering

As formerly described, this type of error occurs when the translation does not cover the whole meaning of the source text. It means that the source text and the translation are different. Here is an instance from the data collected in the city and more specifically from Hasheminejad International Airport.

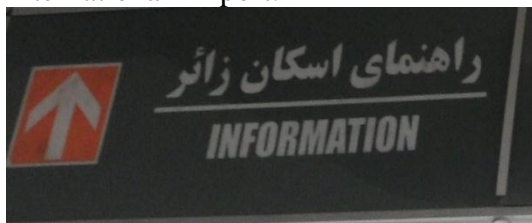


Figure 4. An example of insufficient rendering from the corpus

As it can be observed in the above example, insufficient rendering happened. The above sign is for specific people and aims at giving them information of how they can find accommodation in city. In fact, the whole information in the source text is not reflected in the translation. A similar example is also provided below. It was photographed from Ferdowsi Tomb near in the suburbs of Mashhad, which has been a tourist attraction around for decades.



Figure 5: An example of insufficient rendering from the corpus

In the above example, the whole information in the source text has not been rendered into the target text. The above sign talks about battles between Iranian and Taranian heroes, but the translation does not convey it. In fact, the English translation has been reflected in a way as if the battles were between Iranian and Taranian civilians.

Next we move to the third sub-category of rendition errors.

4.1.3 Excessive Rendering

This type of error is actually the antithesis of insufficient rendering errors. It means that the source and target texts are different because the translation includes some extra information which is absent in the source text. What follows is an example from a recreational area in Mashhad, the greatest park in the Middle East (i.e. Mellat Park).



Figure 6: An example of excessive rendering from the corpus

In the above example, a case of excessive rendering occurred. The word "artificial" is absent in the source text but is observed in the target text. In other words, the translation includes the information which has not been absent in the source text. Another example is adopted from the airport.



Figure 7: An example of excessive rendering from the corpus

In the above example, "... Unloading of Goods" is present in the translation, although this content has not been mentioned in the source text. In other words, the translation includes some information that is absent in the source text. Next, we move to the fourth sub-category of rendering errors.

4.1.4 Subtle differences of meaning between the source and target texts

Occasionally, there are minor differences between the source text and translation. This would lead to the fourth sub-category of rendering errors. The following example was photographed from Hasheminejad Airport.



Figure 8: An example of subtle differences of meaning between the source and target texts

The above example represents subtle difference of meaning between the source and target texts. The word "inspection" refers to the careful examination of a place or something and it is different from frisking people. The following photo is a familiar translation when people are frisked. This instance has been taken from a security checkpoint and the source is the internet.



Figure 9: An example of subtle differences of meaning between the source and target texts

The fifth sub-category of rendering errors within the model is misinterpretation due to unawareness of terms. It will be presented below.

4.1.5 Misinterpretation due to unawareness of terms

As already described, this type of error occurs when some expressions in the

source text, which are usually current or unfamiliar in the target text, are transferred inaccurately. A lack of attention to these expressions makes the translation ambiguous and confusing. Here is an instance photographed from the international airport in the target city.



Figure 10: An example of misinterpretation due to unawareness of terms

The above photograph is an example of misinterpreting due to unawareness of terms. The translation "Mothers Room" is not comprehensible in the way it is presented. In fact, the translation does not signify a place where mothers can feed babies or change them. The translation is just an incomplete word combination for the translation of the source content. The "Baby Care Room" is a better equivalent that is used worldwide. It implies what content needs to be conveyed. The following example is adopted from the World Wide Web.



Figure 11: An example of the preferred translation

Here is another instance photographed from Ferdowsi Tomb in Toos city around Mashhad.



Figure 12: An example of misinterpretation due to unawareness of terms

The above figure is another example of misinterpretation due to unawareness of term. The translation "Café Shop" does not refer to a place which people can drink exclusively tea. However, the translation only signifies a place where people can drink tea. That is to say that, the Persian compound word used as the translation of coffee shop actually means a "tea-room". The following examples taken from the internet testify to this point.



Figure 13: An evidence for the misinterpretation of 'coffee-shop' and 'tea-room'

The aforementioned issues were all subsumed under the first category of translation errors in the model (i.e. rendering errors). Now, we move on to the second category of translation errors in the target model. This is called the language errors, which has several sub-categories.

4.2 Language Errors

The second category of translation errors in Liao's model is language errors. These errors occur when there are some challenging and problematic expressions in the target text. The sub-categories of language errors include grammatical mistakes, awkward expressions, inappropriate register, excessive literal translation, excessive free translation and incorrect character (Kafipour & Jahanshahi, 2015). The frequency and percentage of the errors of this type are presented in Table 2:

Table 2: Distribution of Language Errors in the Translation of the Corpus

Language Errors	Frequency	Percentage
1. Grammatical mistake and ungrammatical syntax of the target language	24	16.21
2. Awkward expression, including ambiguous meaning, mismatch, redundant words and unnecessary repetition, etc.	25	16.89
3. Inappropriate Register	12	8.10
4. Excessive literal translation	3	2.02
5. Excessive free translation	3	2.02
6. Incorrect character, improper punctuation marks or inconsistency in term translation.	81	54.72
Total	148	

As it can be observed, the most prevalent sub-category of language errors in English translation of public signs was incorrect character, improper punctuation marks or inconsistency in term translation (54.7%) while the least frequent errors of this type was in excessive free and literal translation (2.02%). A better comparison can be made in Figure 14.

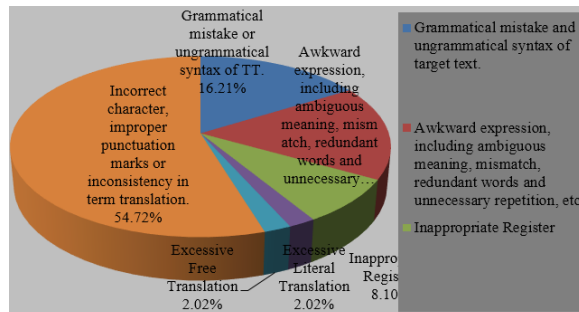


Figure 14: Distribution of language errors in the translation of the corpus

As it can be seen in the figure, the comparative prevalence of the sub-categories of language errors in the translation of Persian to English public signs follows from:

Incorrect character (54.72%) > Awkward expression (16.89%) > Grammatical mistake (16.21%) > Inappropriate Register (8.10%) > Excessive Literal Translation (2.02%), Excessive Free Translation (2.02%).

Now, each sub-category is analyzed and instantiated below.

4.2.1 Grammatical mistake or ungrammatical syntax of target language

This type of error happens when the grammatical points or the word orders have been ignored. The following instance shows a photo taken from the sub-way station.



Figure 15: An example of grammatical mistake

The above example represents a grammatical mistake as it misplaced the part of speech. "Enter" is an English verb that has replaced the noun form in the source language. Thus, a noun is required in the translation, which seems to be missing. Thus, the word "Entry" is suitable here, though it has been ignored. There are two ways to correct the above translation. You should either write "Do not Enter" or "No Entry". The following figure shows the correct translation that is suggested. The source has been the internet.



Figure 16: The suggested translation of the term



Figure 17. An example of grammatical mistake

The photo indicated above is another example of grammatical mistake. "Woman" is a singular word. The plural form of this word is considered irregular. "Woman" does not need -s or -es to be plural. The plural of "woman" is "Women". There is another justification for the above translation. It is possible that the ending s refers to the possession. In this case, an apostrophe is needed which appears to be absent in the translation. Therefore, the translation is wrong and the correct form is "Women's Park".

4.2.2 Awkward expression, including ambiguous meaning, mismatch, and redundant words and unnecessary repetition

The second sub-category of language errors happens when there are some expressions in the target text which are totally meaningless. Sometimes, the source text and the target text do not match and there are certain unnecessary repetitions that make the translation intangible.

Here is an example of awkward expression translated on a public sign erected in Koohsangi Park in Mashhad.



Figure 18: An example of awkward expression

The above translation is very confusing and does not convey the meaning of the source text. Based on the following picture, "Supervise Your Children" is meaningful here. A similar case has been found in the original context (English) with the same meaning which can be seen below.



Figure 19: The suggested translation of the term

The following photo was taken from a public sign erected in Ferdowsi Tomb in Toos, Mashhad. It is another example of awkward expression. In this public sign, the word "Tourist" is redundant and should be omitted. This word is absent in the source text and its existence in the target text does not make any sense. Based on the following evidence, "Security" is the best alternative.

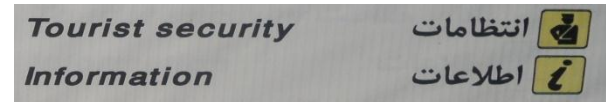


Figure 20: An example of awkward expression



Figure 21: The suggested translation of the term

4.2.3 Inappropriate register

The third sub-category of language errors in Liao's model (2010) happens when a wrong register is chosen in translation. That is to say that, in a number of texts, a specific register is required but this point has been neglected in translating certain texts. Here is an instance of a public sign put up in Mashhad Railway station.



Figure 22: An example of inappropriate register



Figure 23: The suggested translation of the term

In the above example, a wrong register has been selected. Public signs are for public use and the formality and informality of the terms used make a difference and is interpreted differently. The word "Gents" which is the short form of "Gentleman" is an informal word and is not suitable here. The translation "Male Toilet" is the best alternative in on the above example.

4.2.4 Excessive Literal Translation

The fourth sub-category of language errors in translation happens when the translation has been done based on the structure and rules of the source text and not those of the target text. Here is an example photographed from Shandiz a recreational area in Mashhad.



Figure 24: An example of literal translation

In this example, excessive literal translation has made the translation inaccurate. This public sign includes a cultural point about Muslims. The cultural point has been ignored and the translation has been carried out word-by-word, which led to an ambiguous translation. That is to say that the translation has been done based on the structure of the source text and the structure of the target text and its cultural points have been completely neglected. Here is another example taken from a public sign in an international university.



Figure 25: An example of literal translation

The second line reads “Door meeting” while the source text did not imply this and rather signified the place where the visitors could be met. An international English equivalent for this is presented below in the photo. Thus, the correct translation of the word combination is “Visitors’ entrance”.



Figure 26: The suggested translation of the term

Next, we move to the fifth sub-category of language errors, excessive free translation, which is exemplified below.

4.2.5 Excessive Free Translation

This type of error happens when the source text has been ignored completely and as a result, the translation and the source text are deemed different and mismatched. Here is an example of excessive free translation from a sign post put up in the largest park in the Middle East, Mellat Park, located in Mashhad.



Figure 27: An example of excessive free translation

In the above example, excessive free translation has made an unintelligible translation. A number of words have been used in the translation, which are non-existing in the source text. Words such as “Outdoor” and “Facilities”, do not transfer any specific information in the target text, and are entirely absent in the source language too. This example includes grammatical mistake and a wrong register too which leads to mistranslation and ambiguity for readers.

4.2.6 Incorrect character, improper punctuation marks or inconsistency in term translation

The sixth sub-category of language errors happens when there are spelling errors in the translation or punctuation rules have been violated. If an expression has been translated into different terms, an inconsistency error has occurred. Here is a photo taken from Ferdowsi Tomb, a historical monument in Mashhad.



Figure 28: An example of incorrect punctuation marks in translation

In this example, punctuation has been neglected. Actually, an apostrophe is required in the translation but a comma is wrongly used. Here is another example of error in translation, now representing the use of an incorrect character. This photo has been taken from the largest and most frequently visited hospital in Mashhad.



Figure 29: An example of incorrect spelling in translation

In this example, the word “Quaem”, which is the name of the hospital has been misspelled. Another example is provided here which represents inconsistency in term translation. This photo has been taken from the Holy Shrine of Imam Reza.



Figure 30: An example of incorrect term translation

The word combination “Lavatory Men Only” needed to be substituted by “Mal lavatory” as already addressed in the previous examples. Now we move on to the third category of errors in Liao’s model (2010).

4.2.3 Miscellaneous Errors

Miscellaneous errors occur when some parts of the source text have not been translated to the target text (Jahanshahi & Kafipour, 2015). Here is the frequency and percentage of this category of errors in the corpus.

Table 3: Distribution of Miscellaneous Errors in the Light of Liao’s Model (2010)

Miscellaneous Errors	Frequency	Percentage
1. Missing parts of the target text; omission.	4	100
Total	4	

As it can be observed in the table, there were 4 instances of this type of error in the whole corpus. It lacks any sub-category. Here is an example, a photo taken from the Railway station.

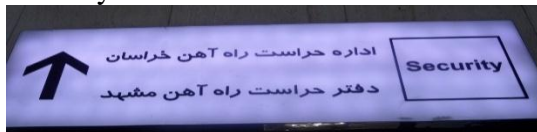


Figure 31: An example of miscellaneous error in translation

In this example, some parts of the source text have not been translated. The source text includes specific information, which is completely absent in the target text. The expression "Security" is a general expression and does not cover the specific information in the source text. Here is another example, a photo taken from the same place.



Figure 32: An example of miscellaneous error

The above photo shows that the source text includes some information that has not been fully translated into the target

text. The expression "Travel Assistance" which appears to be the translation on the public sign is a general expression and does not cover the specific information in the source text.

Now that the three categories of errors and instances have been presented, a comparison among them in terms of the frequency of occurrence and percentages is provided in the following table and figure.

Table 4: Distribution of Error Taxonomies in the Light of Liao’s Model (2010)

	Frequency	Percentage
1. Rendition Errors	45	22.72%
2. Language Errors	148	74.74%
3. Miscellaneous Errors	4	2.02%

As it can be observed, the most prevalent category of errors found in the translation of public posts in the target touristy city in Iran is language errors. This type of errors comprises more than 74% of the errors in translation. Next was the rendition errors that accounted for 22.7% of the total number of errors. Miscellaneous errors only comprised 2% of the whole errors. This can be better viewed in the following pie-chart.

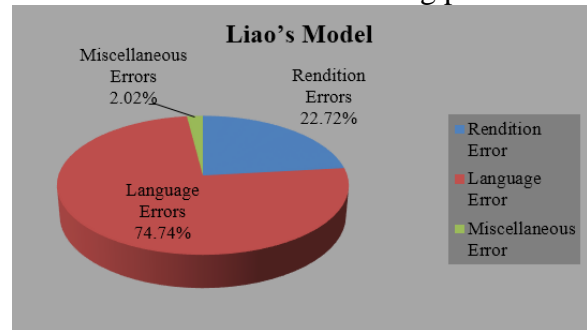


Figure 33: Distribution of error taxonomies in the light of Liao’s model (2010)

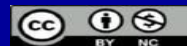
As it can be observed, the distribution of errors based on Liao’s Model (2010) followed the following pattern:

Language Errors (74.74%) > Rendition Errors (22.72%) > Miscellaneous Errors (2.02%).

It can be seen that in the translation of public signs erected in the second metropolis of Iran, the most frequent errors have been of language type, and the least frequent have been of miscellaneous type.

5. Discussions

The present study focused on the existing errors in the English translation of a sample of Persian public signs in the second largest metropolis in Iran, which is also the spiritual capital of the country and a main tourist attraction due to its religious environment. In other words, many



international visitors come to this city during the year and visit different public places. They are guided by the public signs erected in different locations and, thus, any case of mistranslation or maltranslation can mislead them.

The findings revealed that *Rendition Errors*, *Language Errors*, and *Miscellaneous Errors* are common errors in the English translation of Persian public signs in the corpus analyzed. The findings also showed that *Language Errors* (74.74%) were the most prevalent while *Miscellaneous Errors* (2.02%) had the lowest frequency. These results show that the translators were not adequately familiar with the culture of the target text. The distribution of errors in the present study showed that many errors occurred in the English translation of Persian public signs because the translators were not able to go for the right equivalence in the target text especially when the signs included a cultural element. Culture is considered an important factor in translation and sometimes acts as a barrier. Therefore, it is a translator's job to break this barrier through a suitable solution. In the same vein, Qiannan (2012) believes that, translators need to improve their awareness of cultural conventions and the mannerism in English-speaking countries. Yet it seems that the same need exists in non-English-speaking countries including Iran which is a touristy country and also a destination for pilgrims. Many cultures and languages come to meet in this country and part of this communication is availed through the public signs.

Ma (2014) emphasized the importance of the source text and the target text cultures and maintained that translation is not only the matter of changes between two languages but also the communication between two cultures. Though the present research did not aim to explore the role of multiculturalism in the understanding of public signs, it agrees with Ma (2014) and suggests further research into the reflection of cultural values in the translation of public signs. These cultural values can be partly religious, especially in the context of Iran which is an Islamic country and is the destination of pilgrims for the three cities of Mashhad, Qom and Rey.

Translators of the public signs put up in the spiritual capital of Iran, a major tourist attraction in the Middle East, seem to have not considered the cultural issues and language subtleties in rendering the content

of the signs. As the results showed, a number of egregious grammatical errors occurred in the English translation of Persian public signs. It is part of a translator's job to recheck the translation because many trivial errors can be corrected through revision. In a similar vein, Li (2013) states that, the translator's carelessness and irresponsible attitudes cause grammar and spelling mistakes. Such errors in translation can end it tourists' and pilgrims' confusion and misunderstanding. The informative function of the language used on the public sign is questioned, accordingly. This can be why according to Li (2013), translation is both a science and an art. It is considered a process which involves linguistic and cultural factors to which translators need to be more sensitive. This point is also acknowledged in the present research, yet needs further investigation especially in terms of cultural values and how they are reflected in public signs in the source text and translated text.

6. Conclusion

Translation of public signs is a vital duty and affects tourists and pilgrims to a great extent. It becomes a more serious issue in metropolitan urban space. Translation of public signs serves a public purpose and, thus, requires much closer attention and care. It requires a sound knowledge of cultural similarities and differences between the source and target languages. Public signs play a key role in the urban design of a metropolis with the highest population of tourists and visitors from all over the world. The brief information content of a public sign, if translated erroneously, can block communication and mislead tourists. The present study showed a high frequency of errors in the translation of public signs in the second metropolis in Iran, which is also the spiritual capital of the country and a major tourist and pilgrim destination. Most of these errors were of language type, which are unforgivingly troublesome and truly in need of a second thought. The misleading quality of these translations throughout the city can adversely affect the urban design and the convenience considerations for visitors. Translators of urban public signs should be made aware of their huge responsibility towards guiding visitors and communicating the right information they need at the right place. The quality of their translation has significant implications for cultural, social and urban domains. The Municipal office is

suggested to replace the existing erroneous public signs, as they are likely to confuse or mislead tourists.

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