

Is Changing the Voice of English Sentences Accompanied with any Changes in Their Tenses?

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Abstract

Languages provide their speakers with a variety of constructions that help them communicate effectively and efficiently. Two out of these constructions are active and passive forms. Some languages as Persian believe that an active sentence is usually preferable to a passive sentence because an active one is shorter, stronger and more direct. While some other languages as English believe that passive voice is used more frequently because it is a regular feature in formal especially scientific written texts. Based on what was mentioned above it is concluded that in order to have a fluent text, changing the voices in the process of translation is a must.

The purposes of this study were to: a) study the change of voice in the process of translating from English to Persian, and b) see whether or not the change of voice was accompanied by a change in tense.

To achieve these goals, 309 passive clauses and sentences from the book “**Pride and Prejudice**” by Jane Austen in (2012) and their Persian translations produced by Rezaye in (2012) entitled: “**Ghoror va Ta'asob**” were selected.

The analysis of the collected data indicated that 94% percent of English passive sentences were translated into active voices in Persian language. The results also showed that change of voice is accompanied by change of tense.

Keywords: translation, active voice, passive voice, tense

1. Introduction

The Translation is an activity comprising the interpretation of the meaning of a text in one language-the source text-and the production, in another language, of a new, equivalent text-the target text (Munday, 2004).

The goal of translation is to establish a relation of equivalence of intent between the source and target texts (that is to say, to ensure that both texts communicate the same message), while taking into account a number of constraints including context, the rules of grammar of languages, their writing conventions, their idioms, and the like (Ariana, 2011). Studying change of voice in translation is very important because sometimes it is a must to change the voice of expressions in the process of translating to have a fluent text. According to Nakhallah (2010), a translated text is judged successfully by most readers when it is read fluently and a translator is judged perfect in the process of translating when he/ she produces the appearance that is translated, that it is the original.

Methvenin (2006) believed that the majority of cases, syntactic passives in English should be translated into active Chinese sentences. The frequency of passive use in English is far higher, and many writers agree that English has a tendency to overuse passives, whereas Chinese tends to avoid them. In a parallel corpus analyzed by Methven only 20% of the English passives were translated into Chinese passives and the rest of passive sentences were translated into Chinese actives.

We simply consider tense as a factor which relates the time of the situation referred to some other time usually to the moment of speaking. The most common tenses found in the most of world languages are present, past and future.

According to Mace (2003) tense is defined as that form of the verb which indicates the time or the context in which the action or situation denoted by the verb occurs. To clarify the above definition, he means that, in fact, tense is the relationship between the form of the verb and the time of the occurrence of the situation.

Some Persian linguists mentioned that there are three categories of tense; present tense, past tense and future tense in Persian language. Some others argue that in Persian there is only a distinction of past and non-past, that is, future tense is not present in this language. Traditional Persian linguists believed that tense are a form of the verb used to indicate the time and sometimes the continuation or completeness of an action in relation to the time of speaking.

The present study helps the translators to translate a text as natural as possible because if they know under what conditions it is mandatory to change the voice in the process of translation, consequently they will produce the appearance that seems original. Therefore the following hypotheses are formulated:

1- There will be no significant change of voice in translating from English to Persian, or from Persian to English.

2- Changing the voice of English or Persian sentences is not accompanied by any change in tense of sentences.

2. Methodology

2.1. Materials

A number of English passive sentences and clauses from the book **Pride and Prejudice** by Austen in 2012 and their Persian equivalents in book **GhororvaTa'asob** by Rezay in 2012 were used to study the hypothesis mentioned above.

2.2. Procedures

The afore-mentioned books were studied clause by clause to identify those clauses or sentences which showed a change in their or a change in their tenses voice in the process of translation from English to Persian. This analysis led to 309 clauses and sentences.

Making sure that all selected sentences and clauses are passive, the current researchers decided to determine the tense of each sentence to see whether or not the change of voice is accompanied by a change in the tenses of sentences.

Then the process of comparing, analyzing, identifying all these sentences continued to determine the case where a particular tense will change in the process of translating from English into Persian.

3. Result and discussion

As mentioned above, this paper was an attempt to study the change of voice in translation from English into Persian. As table 1 indicates 307 passive sentences and clauses were elicited from the mentioned English novel. To do so, the researchers divided the English novel into three parts,

and then 20 pages out of each part were studied. Totally 60 pages as a good sample have been carefully analyzed. Firstly the passive sentences of these 60 pages were identified to be compared with their equivalence in the target language, Persian. Therefore, 23 sentences out of the 307 passive sentences were translated into passive form the target language and the rest were translated into active ones. The present research shows that 94 percent of English passive sentences were translated into Persian as active ones.

Table 1. Changes of voice and tense in the process of translation from English into Persian.

Tense	Passive Infinitive	Translated Into Persian as	Tense	Voice	
				active frequency	assive frequency
			future	1	————
			infinitive	3	————
			simple present	6	————
			Present continuous	5	————
			Simple past	6	————
			Past continuous	1	1
			Past perfect	1	————
			The other	22	————
Total	$\frac{46}{307}$				

Table 2. Changes of voice and tense in the process of translation from English into Persian.

Tense	Simple Future	Translated Into Persian as	Tense	Voice	
				active frequency	passive frequency
			Present continuous	3	————
			future	1	————
Total	$\frac{4}{307}$				

Not only the voice of sentences but also their tenses have changed in the process of translation from English into Persian.

Table 1 indicates that 93.4% of infinitive sentences have changed into other tenses as shown in table 1 and just 6.6% of infinitive sentences were translated as they were.

According to table 2, 75% of English sentences with simple future tense have changed into other tenses in the process of translation from English into Persian.

Table 3. Changes of voice and tense in the process of translation from English into Persian.

Tense	Future in past	Translated	Tense	Voice	
				active frequency	passive frequency
		Into Persian as	infinitive	4	—
			future	5	—
Voice	Passive		Present continuous	6	—
			Simple past	6	—
			Past continuous	4	1
Total	$\frac{39}{307}$		The other	13	

Table 4. Changes of voice and tense in the process of translation from English into Persian.

Tense	Simple present	Translated	Tense	Voice	
				active frequency	passive frequency
		Into Persian as	infinitive	2	—
			simple present	7	—
Voice	Passive		Present continuous	5	1
			Present perfect	8	1
			Past continuous	1	—
Total	$\frac{33}{307}$		The other	6	2

As table 3 shows, the tense of 39 out of 307 passive sentences were in future in past that according to data analysis all of these sentences changed into other tenses in the process of translation from English into Persian.

Table 5. Changes of voice and tense in the process of translation from English into Persian.

Tense	simple present perfect	Translated	Tense	Voice	
				active frequency	passive frequency
		Into Persian as	simple present	1	—
			Present perfect	3	—
			Present perfect continuous	—	—
			Past continuous	5	—
			The other	—	1
Voice	Passive				
Total	$\frac{10}{307}$				

Table 6. Changes of voice and tense in the process of translation from English into Persian.

Tense	Simple past	Translated	Tense	Voice	
				active frequency	passive frequency
		Into Persian as	future	3	—
			infinitive	3	—
			Simple present	6	—
			Present continuous	2	—
			Present perfect	6	—
			Simple past	59	10
			Past continuous	25	—
			Past perfect	16	4
			The other	11	—
Voice	Passive				
Total	$\frac{145}{307}$				

Results of data analysis indicated that 79% of simple present tenses in English change into others tenses in the process of translation from English into Persian (see table 4).

According to table 5, ten passive sentences out of the total number were simple present perfect tense which have changed into other tenses in 70 percent conditions.

Table 6 shows that in 60 percent of conditions the simple past tense change into other tenses in the process of translation from English into Persian.

Table 7. Changes of voice and tense in the process of translation from English into Persian.

Tense	Past continuous	Translated	Tense	Voice	
				active frequency	passive frequency
Voice	passive	Into Persian as	Past continuous	1	_____
Total	$\frac{1}{307}$				

Table 8. Changes of voice and tense in the process of translation from English into Persian.

Tense	Past perfect	Translated	Tense	Voice	
				active frequency	passive frequency
Voice	Passive	Into Persian as	infinitive	1	_____
			Present perfect	10	_____
			Present continuous	1	_____
			Simple past	4	_____
			Past continuous	5	_____
			Past perfect	6	1
Total	$\frac{29}{307}$		The other	_____	1

As table 7 indicates, just one out of 307 passive sentences in English was past continuous that in the process of translating into Persian the same tense was utilized.

According to table 8, the past perfect tenses in English usually change into other tenses in Persian as shown in table 8.

As it was obvious in tables, the Persian translator was more concerned with the meaning and appropriateness than form of the sentences in the process of translation from English into Persian. That is, he preferred the naturalness of the language over accuracy. In other words, the form was sacrificed for naturalness and clarity. This conclusion can be arrived at that the change of voice is an unavoidable point in translation process. Based on what we shared in this section, it is inferred that there was a significant change of voice in translating from English into Persian; therefore, the formulated hypothesis which stated that there will be no significant change of voice in the process of translation from English into Persian, was rejected.

Under the following conditions the change of voice seems to be obligatory in the translation process:

- meaning-orientation
- form orientation
- fluency

4. Conclusion

It was mentioned earlier that 309 passive sentences and clauses from the English novel, **Pride and Prejudice** by Austen in 2012 and their Persian translation, **GhororvaTa'asob** by Rezaei in 2012, were elicited. 18 out of 309 passive sentences were untouched from the voice point of view but 291 out of 309 passive sentences were changed into active ones in the translation process.

One of the essential findings of the present study worth highlighting was that, although equivalence is the central issue in translation, today it is undoubtedly one of the most problematic and controversial areas in the field of translation theory because, as it was seen earlier in the current study, the translator of the book *Pride and Prejudice* has usually tried to find some relative equivalents for the source language in the receptor one by changing the voice of some sentences in the process of translation. It is clear that from the grammatical point of view languages may differ from one another to a greater degree or lesser degree, therefore, the translators may face the problem of not finding a translation equivalent.

Another interesting finding was that change of voice is sometimes accompanied by change of tense in the process of translation in order to make the text look natural. Therefore, these changes of structures are done to render the message in the source language as naturally as possible.

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