

Translation of Acronyms, Initialisms and Abbreviations (AIA) in Persian Political and Sport Journalistic Texts

Mina Zandrahimi¹, Hossein Afzoon²

¹A faculty member of Shahid Bahonar University of Kerman, Kerman, Iran;
Mina_zandrahimi@uk.ac.ir

²M.A student of Shahid Bahonar University of Kerman, Kerman, Iran;
afzoon.hessein@yahoo.com

Abstract

The different writing systems of English and Persian makes translation of acronyms, initialisms and abbreviations challenging. This study aimed at finding which strategies were applied most frequently in translating acronyms, initialisms and abbreviations from English to Persian especially in journalistic texts. The study was done based on Descriptive Translation Study of Toury and strategies proposed by Kuzmina et al (2015) for translation of abbreviation. To this sense, 50 cases in the translation of acronyms, initialisms and abbreviations were extracted. They were compared with their translation to see which strategies were applied most. The result of the study revealed that the translators preferred to keep the same English letters in Persian so most cases were transcribed.

Keywords: Abbreviation, Translation, Initialism, Acronyms, Political and Sport News

1. Introduction

Translation is the change of meaning and form in two different systems and definitely in two different systems there are many cases which do not correspond to each other. The rush to translate journalistic text brings with it the challenging issue of how to introduce foreign abbreviations and acronyms, especially when the writing systems of two languages were totally different. The use of abbreviation, acronyms and all other shortened form of the nouns are an active way of word formation which penetrate into all kinds of texts specially political and journalistic texts.

At the present time, there are quite few researches on the problems of acronyms, initialisms and abbreviations (AIA) in translation studies. Translation of shortened lexical units is in many ways problematic. It seems the problem and the complexity is mostly due to the inconsistency in the approach to their translation as there is no fixed rule for them. However, there are some processes of word shortening in languages which are not necessarily alike in all languages.

In this paper, the researcher analyzed the English sport and journalistic texts and their Persian translations and then extracted the acronyms, initialisms and abbreviations from them to see how they were translated. Also, it was tried to find out the most common ways of translating abbreviations, initialisms and acronyms in Persian language by going through the actual cases gathered from some eligible news sites.

The main problem the researchers faced during the research was the lack of exact translation of the original journalistic texts and they were mostly paraphrased version.

1.1 AIA Definitions

Acronyms are new words which are created by the first letter of some other word (Yule, 2010). Abbreviations will be understood as shortened forms of words, spelled variously (in most cases in small letters) according to the rules of a particular language; acronyms by contrast, are word created from a string of one to several capitalized initial letters or syllables (Kasprowicz, 2010). Moreover, Newmark (1988) named abbreviation as 'Pseudo-neologism'. Oxford dictionary defines initialism as abbreviations which consist of the initial (i.e. first) letters of words and which are pronounced as separate letters when they are spoken.

2. Method

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Being proposed by Toury, descriptive translations studies (DTS) have said that translation occupies a position in social and literary system of target language and this position determines the translation strategy of translation (Munday, 2012). Hence, this study fell under the category of Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS) which was developed by Toury (1995), taking advantage of bilingual parallel corpus. A parallel corpus which is widely used in translation studies, as Saldanha&O'Brien (2013, p.68) mentioned, is typically made up of ST in language A and their translations in Language B. Moreover the strategies proposed by Kuzmina et al (2015) for translation of abbreviation were the base to analyze the strategies applied in journalistic texts.

2.1.1. Translation of Abbreviation

As Kuzmina et al (2015, pp.552-553) mentioned the main methods to convey foreign abbreviations were as follows:

1. Transference of foreign abbreviation with the equivalent abbreviation. It assumes the presence of such abbreviation in a target language and is used most often in the translation of scientific and technical texts, especially for transference of abbreviations defining various physical quantities, units of measurement etc;
2. Borrowing of a foreign abbreviation, mostly words with Latin roots. This method is relatively rare, and is mainly used to transfer abbreviations included in any system of symbols;
3. Transliteration, mainly used for giving proper names;
4. Transcription, to give abbreviations without correlative form in the target language;
5. Descriptive translation, when the target language does not have equivalent abbreviation. (pp. 253-253)

2.2. Data Gathering Procedures

At first the English sport and political journalistic texts from online news sites were read. The sites were as follows:

<http://www.farsnews.com/>

<http://www.varzesh3.com/>

<https://telegram.me/irankhabar>

1. Secondly, they were compared to their paraphrased Persian versions.
2. After that the AIA cases were extracted and compared.
3. Then their full forms were found through different political dictionaries and internet.
4. Finally, 50 cases with their translations and their full forms were mentioned in the following table.

AIA translation in Persian	English Abbreviation	Full form
بی بی سی	BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
کی ال ام	KLM	Koninklijke Luchtvaart Maatschappij
PSG	PSG	Paris Saint-Germain
CL	CL	Champions League
MSN	MSN	Messi Suarez Neymar
جام حذفی انگلیس	FA cup	Football Association
لوییس فنخال	LVG	Louis van Gaal
NBA	NBA	National Basketball Association
MLS	MLS	Major League Soccer
ATM	ATM	<i>Automated teller machine</i>
ADSL	ADSL	<i>Asymmetric digital subscriber line</i>
DOE	DOE	Department of Energy
SBS	SBS	<i>Special Broadcasting Service</i>
Km	Km	Kilometer
پ ک ک	PKK	Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê
شبکه تلوزیونی سی ان ان	CNN	Cable News Network
SLAC	SLAC	<i>Stanford Linear Accelerator Cente</i>
ICU	ICU	Intensive care unit
AFC	AFC	<i>Asian Football Confederation</i>
VIP	VIP	Very important person
خاورمیانه	MENA	The Middle East and North Africa
BRT	BRT	<i>Bus rapid transit</i>
CD	CD	Compact disk
MRI	MRI	Magnetic resonance imaging
MBA	MBA	Master of Business

فرانکفورت FSV	FSV Frankfurt	Fußballsportverein Frankfurt
موتور F14	F14	--
IT	IT	Information Technology
موتو جی پی	MotoGP	Grand Prix
خبرگزاری رسمی کره شمالی KCNA	KCNA	Korean Central News Agency
سامانه موشکی سامانه S300 موشکی	S-300	--
سامانه موشکی سامانه موشکی اس ۳۰۰	S-300	--
AV-8B جت	AV-8B	--
ای-وی-۸-بی	AV-8B	--
FILA	FILA	--
ان پی ار	NPR	National Public Radio
ای اس ای	ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence
FBI	FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FIVB	FIVB	Fédération Internationale de Volleyball
LRT	LRT	light rail transit
PSV	PSV	The Philips Sport Vereniging
MSNBC	MSNBC	National Broadcasting Company
ESPN	ESPN	--
MMA	MMA	Mixed martial arts
Ms	Ms	Multiple sclerosis
اف بی ای	FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
f12	F-12	--
پی اس جی	PSG	Paris Saint-Germain
واحد اطلاعات اکونومیست EIU	EIU	Economist Intelligence Unit
ام اس	Ms	Multiple sclerosis

2.3 Data Analysis Procedures

1. The data were analyzed according to the 5 strategies proposed by Kuzmina et al (2015).
2. Then they were classified according to these 5 strategies.
3. The results were shown in different tables.

3. Results

1. Transcription

AIA translation in Persian	English Abbreviation	Full form
PSG	PSG	Paris Saint-Germain
CL	CL	Champions League
MSN	MSN	Messi Suarez Neymar
NBA	NBA	National Basketball association
MLS	MLS	Major League Soccer
ATM	ATM	<i>Automated teller machine</i>
ADSL	ADSL	<i>Asymmetric digital subscriber line</i>
DOE	DOE	Department of Energy
SBS	SBS	<i>Special Broadcasting Service</i>
Km	Km	Kilometer
SLAC	SLAC	<i>Stanford Linear Accelerator Cente</i>
ICU	ICU	Intensive care unit
AFC	AFC	<i>Asian Football Confederation</i>
VIP	VIP	Very important person
BRT	BRT	<i>Bus rapid transit</i>
CD	CD	Compact disk
MRI	MRI	Magnetic resonance imaging
MBA	MBA	Master of Business
فرانکفورت FSV	FSV Frankfurt	Fußballsportverein Frankfurt
موتور F14	F14	--
IT	IT	Information Technology
خبرگزاری رسمی کره شمالی KCNA	KCNA	<i>Korean Central News Agency</i>
S300 سامانه موشکی	S300	--
PSV	PSV	The Philips Sport Vereniging
جت AV-8B	AV-8B	--
FILA	FILA	--
FBI	FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
LRT	LRT	<i>light rail transit</i>
FIVB	FIVB	<i>Fédération Internationale de Volleyball</i>
MSNBC	MSNBC	<i>National Broadcasting Company</i>
ESPN	ESPN	--
MMA	MMA	<i>Mixed martial arts</i>
Ms	Ms	Multiple sclerosis

ف12	F-12	--
واحد اطلاعات اکونومیست EIU	EIU	Economist Intelligence Unit

2. Borrowing

AIA translation in Persian	English Abbreviation	Full form
بی بی سی	BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
کی ال ام	KLM	Koninklijke Luchtvaart Maatschapij
پ ک ک	PKK	Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê
شبکه تلویزیونی سی ان ان	CNN	Cable News Network
موتو جی بی	MotoGP	Grand Prix
سامانه موشکی سامانه موشکی اس ۳۰۰	S-300	--
ای-وی-۸-بی	AV-8B	--
ان پی ار	NPR	National Public Radio
ای اس ای	ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence
اف بی ای	FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
پی اس جی	PSG	Paris Saint-Germain
ام اس	Ms	Multiple sclerosis

3- Descriptive Translation

AIA translation in Persian	English Abbreviation	Full form
جام حذفی انگلیس	FA cup	Football Association
لوئیس فنخال	LVG	Louis van Gaal
خاورمیانه	MENA	The Middle East and North Africa

The final results were mentioned in the following table:

Transcription	Borrowing	Descriptive translation(translating into a full form)
35 cases =70 %	12 =24 %	3 =6 %

4. Discussion

By looking at the above tables, it was possible to figure it out which strategies were more common in translating AIA in Persian journalistic sport and political news. It was quite obvious that there were no fixed rules in translation of AIA. Out of 50 cases observed in Persian texts, 35 cases of AIA were transcribed which was about 70 % of the whole data. It was revealed that the translators preferred to keep the same letters in Persian language. Due to the fact that nowadays many of the literate news readers know alphabet of English, it seems reasonable to do so; however, this strategy challenged the text harmony. The second most common way of translating AIA was borrowing. This strategy apparently was better for the text harmony. The result revealed that 12 cases were found in this way which was about 24 % of the data. The third strategy which was applied in AIA translation was descriptive translation which was about 6 % of the whole data. The researchers could not find the other two strategies.

5. Conclusion

This study revealed some difficulties awaiting the translators when dealing with acronyms and abbreviations of foreign sources especially journalistic texts. Based on what was observed in the article, the most frequent strategies applied in AIA translations from English to Persian was Transcription which might cause misunderstanding for the readers if they were not familiar with the source language and also it challenged the text harmony. However the translators preferred to use the Latin characters of the original. Perhaps they wanted to ensure accurate pronunciation and keep the capitalization rule which was not possible in Persian alphabets. In addition, by keeping the same form, the translators might prevent from confusing the AIA with common words. Borrowing was the second most frequent strategy applied in their translation and the least was descriptive translation which was translating the full form of the source AIA. It seemed that the choice of how to translate AIA was on the translators and there were some examples which two strategies were applied for one single word. Also, It could be concluded that inconsistency and lack of fixed rules and strategies were the be biggest problems in rendering abbreviations and acronyms.

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