

## A Cross-Linguistic Analysis of English-Persian Commissives and Directives in *Of Mice and Men*

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**Abstract:** A review of the literature on translation of speech acts indicates a dearth of empirical research on this area. In order to contribute to this relatively neglected area of translation, the present study targeted at exploration of translation equivalences (formal vs. dynamic), directness shifts (between vs. within) and their justifiability. To this end, three research questions were addressed with respect to the aforementioned translation equivalents and directness shifts, on the one hand, and the justifiability of these phenomena, on the other hand. Furthermore, Steinbeck's (1937) "Of Mice and Men" was selected as the material of the study. For the sake of manageability, the scope of the study was limited to two categories of commissives and directives. Employing Searle's (1975) speech act theory on the English novel, 120 commissive and directive speech act utterances were randomly selected. Then, they were analyzed based on Nida's (1964) concept of equivalence and Zamani's (2013) notion of directness shifts. Next, the aggregated translations were qualitatively assessed based on Zamani's (2013) TQA framework, and Rahimi's (2004) translation theory. Finally, the results of the study indicated that with respect to the translation equivalence, dynamic equivalents outnumbered the formal ones, while regarding the directness shifts, the category of between shifts outnumbered within shifts. The findings of the study further indicated that about 58.5 percent of the translation equivalents were located in the third level of translation quality, i.e., successful translation, while with respect to the directness shifts about 74.5 percent of the two notions were justifiable.

**Key terms:** Translation, speech act theory (SAT), commissives, directives, formal and dynamic equivalence, directness shift.

### 1. Introduction

Both semantics and pragmatics, as subfields of linguistics, are engaged with the question of meaning; however, they differ in the way they study the type of meaning of an utterance. Semantics mainly focuses on the superficial meaning of an utterance whereas pragmatics is primarily concerned with the meaning in the context. In last few decades, the realm of pragmatics has played a pivotal role in different areas of language including translation studies. As Hatim (1998) states, from among different notions of the realm of pragmatics, the

phenomenon of *speech act* is one of the most complicated elements affecting the process of translation. A review of the literature on translation of speech acts indicates a dearth of empirical research on this area, especially between English and Persian. This scarcity of research in this area of translation studies has been one of the rationales behind conducting the present study.

One of the most comprehensive theories of speech act is the one proposed by Searle (1975). In his speech act theory, Searle (1975) has claimed that different notions of his theory are universal. However, there are different research projects (such as Samavarchi & Allami, 2012; Eslamirasekh, 1993) whose findings have questioned the universality of Searle's speech act theory. As Zamani (2013) states, there are some culture-specific illocutionary forces in Persian whose translations into English is complicated and problematic. This complexity of translation of speech acts has been another rationale behind conducting the present study.

## 2. Background

A great deal of studies has been already conducted in the realm of speech act theory. However, most of the previous studies have mainly focused on cross-linguistic analysis of the speech acts rather than their translation. In what follows, a brief account of the literature in the realm of speech acts will be presented.

Ghourchian (2012), for instance, conducted a study on speech acts in the context of drama. The results of the study showed that in both Persian and English dramas, *representatives* outnumbered the other types of speech acts as well as the fact that the speech act of *explaining* was the most frequent type of representatives. As a result, she came to this conclusion that since representatives are the most frequent types of speech acts in the context of drama in both languages, and owing to the fact that the speech act of explaining is realized through using the routine statement structures (i.e., Subject+Verb+(Object), in English vs. Subject+(Object)+Verb, in Persian) of the two languages; there is no difference between these two languages regarding the method of conveying speech acts, and thus the translators had no difficulty in translating speech acts. Furthermore, she concluded that the translators had used no specific strategy in translating speech acts in the context of drama translation. Finally, she provided a sub-classification of the five categories of speech acts used in the selected dramas.

Following Ghourchian (2012), Zamani (2013) carried out another piece of research on Persian translation of speech acts. To conduct his study, Zamani worked on the context of drama translation with this in mind that there is a plenitude of different types of speech acts in this genre of literary writings; ranging differently depending on the purpose of the playwright, the theme of the drama, the personality (characterization) of the characters, the type of the relations among the characters, and the like. To answer the research questions, three *American tragic* dramas written in relatively the same *time span* and *level of formality* were selected for the study.

The results of Zamani's (2013) study revealed that there were a large number of translation strategies and shifts involved in translation of directives and expressives, suggesting a degree of translation difficulty for these two categories, which rejects Ghourchian's (2012) overgeneralized conclusion, claiming that there is no difficulty in translating speech act utterances. Furthermore, Zamani's findings indicated that there was a large number of translation strategies involved in translation of directives and expressive, which, once more, rejected Ghourchian's claim that the translators had used no translation strategy during the process of translation of speech act utterances. In addition, Zamani determined the most frequent and the most useful translation strategies and shifts applicable to translation of directives and expressives.

The observations of Zamani's (2013) study, on the other hand, resulted in proposing some 'novel', 'newfound', and *pragmatic-based* translation strategies (7 new translation strategies) and *shifts* (5 new translation shifts) applicable to translation of speech act utterances (which was due to the shortcomings of Newmark's linguistic-based translation strategies as well as the deficiencies of Catford's linguistic-based translation shifts) as well as a practical *method* for drama translation, which all help to maintain the main illocutionary force(s) of each speech act utterance of the source language drama in TT (Zamani, 2013). Zamani's (2013) translation strategies were proposed "not only to render the exact illocutionary force of the SL speech act utterance into TL, but also to maintain both aspects of the drama translation, that is, *performability* and *readability* (especially *performability*)" (pp. 112-113). Further, to assess the translation quality of speech act utterances, Zamani (2013) proposed a relatively objective framework in which a combination of quantitative and qualitative paradigms was employed.

With respect to the cross-cultural investigation of requestives, a study was conducted by Eslamirasekh (1993) to compare the patterns in the requests of native Persian speakers and native American speakers. Results showed that Persian speakers were much more direct than American speakers when making requests. Furthermore, it was suggested that Persian speakers may compensate for the directness by using strategies like alerters, supportive moves and internal modifiers.

### **3.The Scope of the Study**

The scope of analysis of the study was limited two categories of commissive and directive speech act utterances. On the other hand, the context of this study was limited to the novel translation in which there is a great deal of speech act utterances to investigate.

### **4.Aims of the Study and Research Questions**

The present study aimed at exploration of translation equivalences (*formal* vs. *dynamic*), directness shifts (*between* vs. *within*) and their justifiability. To accomplish these aims, three research questions were addressed with respect to the aforementioned issues as follows:

1. What types of translation equivalents have been employed by the Persian translator in translating commissives and directives?
2. Are there any *directness* shifts in Persian translations of commissives and directives? If so, are they between or within the directness category?
3. Are the respective translation equivalents and directness shifts justifiable?

It is noteworthy that in research question 1, types of equivalents refer to the *formal*, *dynamic* equivalents.

## 5. Method

In order to conduct this descriptive-contrastive study, a combination of frameworks was employed. It should be mentioned that the nature of the present study is both qualitative and quantitative. In order to obtain more precise results, the present study was limited its scope to two categories of Searle's (1975) taxonomy of speech acts, namely, *commissives* and *directives*.

### 5.1. Frameworks of the Study

As for the frameworks, the present study was conducted using four different frameworks. More precisely, as the pragmatic framework, Searle's (1975) speech act theory was used to analyze different types of speech acts. On the other hand, to answer the first question of the study, Nida's (1964) translation theory of the dichotomous notions of formal vs. dynamic equivalence was employed as one of the translation frameworks. Moreover, with respect to the second question of the study, Zamani's (2013) pragmatic taxonomy of translation shifts, merely focusing on 'directness shift,' was utilized. As for the third question of the study, a combination of Nida's (1964) translation theory of equivalence, Rahimi's (2004) objective translation theory, and Zamani's (2013) framework of speech act translation quality assessment (TQA) was used in the study.

### 5.2. Materials and Instruments

To conduct this study, the novel *Of Mice and Men* written by the American novelist John Steinbeck (1937) whose Persian translation is by Darioush as *Mooshha va Adamha* (1966) was selected as the material of the study. In order to interpret the qualitative data of the study, a combination of statistical measures including, frequency and percentage was used.

### 5.3. Procedures

Employing Searle's (1975) speech act theory, 120 commissive and directive speech act utterances were randomly selected from the English novel. In the next phase, in order to answer

the first research question, the SL commissives and directives along with their Persian translations were analyzed based on Nida's (1964) concepts of formal and dynamic equivalence. They were also checked in terms of the justifiability of the type of equivalence used by the translator. Next, the population of 120 commissives and directives was investigated using Zamani's (2013) notion of directness shifts and the justifiability of their usage was assessed to answer the second question of the study. Finally, using Zamani's (2013) TQA framework, and Rahimi's (2004) translation theory, the translation equivalents and directness shifts were analyzed in terms of their translation quality and justifiability.

#### 5.4.Data Analysis and Results

Table 1. shows the results of the first question of the study regarding the translation equivalents used in translation of commissives and directives.

Table 1. *Frequencies and percentages of the translation equivalents*

Nida's Equivalents	Frequency	Percentage
Formal equivalence	38	31.66%
Dynamic equivalence	82	68.34%
<b>Total number of utterances</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100%</b>

As to the first question of the study, the results of the aggregated data indicated that the dynamic equivalence (with a percentage of 68.34) outnumbered the formal equivalence (with a percentage of 31.66). This illustrates the fact that the attitude of the Persian translator of the novel with respect to the type of translation equivalence has been in accordance with Nida's (1964). In order to illuminate these results, a few examples will be presented and discussed below.

Example 1:

ST 1: Lennie, you gonna be sick like you was last night. (IF: Warn → Prohibit)

TT 1: /leni, baz mesle diʃæb naxoʃ miʃiʃja./ (IF: Warn → Prohibit)

Translation equivalent: *Dynamic*

Adaptation: [like you was] and /baz/

According to Nida (1964), the receptor-oriented approach of dynamic equivalence is when the translator considers “adaptations of *grammar*, of *lexicon* and of *cultural references*” in order to achieve naturalness (pp. 167-168). In the above example, the translator has modified (adapted) the grammar of the utterance, and has employed a *dynamic equivalence* instead of using a *formal equivalent* like /mæriz miʃi mesle diʃæb ke budi/, which is ambiguous and unnatural. In this utterance, the speaker is *warning* the hearer to *prevent* him from doing an action which can result

in getting sick on the part of the hearer. Consequently, this utterance includes an *indirect* directive speech act in which two speech acts are used simultaneously. More specifically, the illocutionary force of warning acts as the secondary and the illocutionary force of prohibiting acts as the primary speech act of the utterance. Not only in order to maintain the naturalness of the SL utterance in TL, but also in order to render the same illocutionary forces and thus exert the same effect on the SL addressees as that of the SL, the translator has employed the dynamic equivalence through a grammatical adaptation. Besides, the grammatical adaptation on the phrase [like you was], the translator has added the adverb of /baz/ to the TL equivalent in order to show the speaker's stress on the result of the hearer's wrong action which is an illness. This way, besides warning, the illocutionary force of prohibiting has been conveyed into TL. As a consequence, the translation equivalent is justifiable since according to Zamani's (2013) TQA framework, this translation has taken into consideration the three elements of accuracy, clarity, and naturalness, leading to a completely successful translation.

Example 2:

ST 2: Come on, give it here. (IF: Order)

TT 2: /bija, bedef indža./ (IF: Order)

Translation equivalent: *Formal*

According to Nida (1964), a formal equivalence “focuses attention on the message itself, in both form and content. It is concerned that the message in the receptor language should match as closely as possible the different elements in the source language” (Munday, 2006, p. 41). This type of equivalence is more source-text oriented. As the translation shows, the translator has utilized no adaptation, leading to an unnatural and ambiguous translation. As a result, the type of translation equivalence used in this translation is formal. Even though the translation has to some extent rendered the illocutionary force of ordering (as a directive speech act) into TL, the translation is unclear and unnatural with respect to the meaning. Thus, this translation relatively includes accuracy, but it lacks clarity and naturalness. According to Zamani's (2013) TQA framework, such a translation stands on the second level of translation quality and is regarded as a relatively successful translation. A proper dynamic equivalence for this directive utterance could be /jalla, ræd kon bijad/, which would include the three elements of accuracy, clarity, and naturalness.

Example 3:

ST 3: No reason at all for you. (IF: Refusing)

TT 3: /dænil mixaj fjikar?/ (IF: Questioning → Eliciting information)

Translation equivalent: *Dynamic*

Adaptation: grammatical/structural (mood change)

The translation provided in this example is a dynamic one. More precisely, here, the translator has made a grammatical adaptation to the SL commissive utterance through changing the mood of the utterance from an informative one in SL into an interrogative one in TL, leading to a directness shift. More specifically, the commissive speech act of refusing has been conveyed directly in SL, while the directive speech act of eliciting information has been conveyed indirectly through questioning in TL. Consequently, it seems that that even though this translation is dynamic, the translator has made a mistake in adopting the proper dynamic equivalence. According to the above discussion, in this translation the factor of accuracy has been violated (since the illocutionary force of the SL utterance has been changed in TL), while the other two factors (clarity and naturalness) have been achieved. Hence, this is an unacceptable translation. An acceptable dynamic equivalence, in this case, could be: /nijazi be dæilil nis./.

Example 4:

ST 4: What the hell are you gettin' into it for? (IF: Questioning → Prohibiting)

TT 4: /to fɛra xodet-o daxel-e mæ?reke mikoni?/ (IF: Questioning → Prohibiting)

Translation equivalent: *Dynamic*

Adaptation: lexical and cultural reference

The above example has been provided through a dynamic equivalence in which a combination of lexical and cultural adaptation has been employed. Here, the SL utterance includes an indirect directive speech act in which the illocutionary force of questioning has been used to convey the illocutionary force of prohibiting. Accordingly, the TL utterance has rendered the same illocutionary forces as in the SL utterance by using a dynamic equivalence. Furthermore, due to the fact that the meaning of the TL utterance includes no opacity, this equivalence has observed the two factors of accuracy and clarity. However, the type of translation equivalence adopted by the translator could be more natural via using an equivalence like: / to fɛra xodet-o **noxode hæ** **?aʃi** mikoni?/. The cultural reference of this translation can be more natural than the equivalence provided by the translator. With reference to what was discussed above, this translation has observed a relative amount of naturalness, leading to be considered as a successful translation.

Table 2. shows the results of the second question of the study concerning the directness shifts occurred in translation of commissives and directives.

Table 2. *Frequencies and percentages of directness shifts*

Directness shifts	Frequency	Percentage
Between shifts	11	9.16%
Within shifts	5	4.16%
Total number of SAs without shifts	104	86.68%
<b>Total number of utterances</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100%</b>

With reference to table 2., the category of *between shifts* (with a frequency of 11 out of 120 utterances) outnumbered the category of *within shifts* (with a frequency of 5 out of 120 utterances). On the other hand, speech act utterances without directness shifts extremely outnumber commissives and directives with directness shifts. In order to illustrate these two types of directness shifts in context, and to discuss the justifiability of these two categories of shifts, a few examples will be provided below. These examples have been selected from among both correct and wrong translations.

Example 5:

ST 5: Why ain't we goin' on to the ranch and get some supper? (IF: Questioning → Suggesting)

TT 5: /berim tu abadi je fīzi vase jamemun begirim?/ (IF: Questioning → Suggesting)

Directness shift: *Within*

Translation equivalent: *Dynamic*

Adaptation: lexical and structural

Here, the secondary illocutionary force of the SL directive utterance is questioning, while the primary illocutionary force is suggesting. Hence, the speech act used here is an indirect one. Accordingly, the same illocutionary forces have been rendered in TL. Despite both SL and TL directive utterances convey the same secondary and primary locutionary forces (that is, questioning and suggesting), they differ from one another with respect to the degree of directness. More specifically, in English, the writer has utilized a negative question to convey a sense of indirectness, while in Persian, the translator has employed a positive question in which the level of indirectness has been decreased. This decline has been due to the positive form of the TL equivalent. With reference to the above discussion, the type of translation shift occurred in this example is '*within*.' That is to say, both the SL and TL utterances are indirect whereas the TL equivalent is less indirect than the SL equivalent. Due to the fact that in Persian such an equivalent is more natural than a formal equivalence of the SL utterance, this directness shift is justifiable.

Example 6:

ST 6: If you gather up some dead willow sticks. (IF: Saying → Requesting)

TT 6: /to je xurdeh faxehaje xoʃke bid ra dʒæ:m kon./ (IF: Requesting)

Directness shift: *Between*

Translation equivalent: *Dynamic*

Adaptation: structural

In this example, the translator has endeavored to provide a dynamic translation through employing a structural adaptation. This adaptation, however, has led to a directness shift from English into Persian. Technically speaking, it has resulted in a *between* directness shift. In the SL, the primary illocutionary force of requesting has been conveyed indirectly through using the secondary illocutionary force of saying. To clarify, the SL utterance has employed an *if clause* in order to indirectly render the requestive illocutionary force of the utterance, while in the Persian translation the translator has not employed any specific grammatical structure to indirectly convey the primary illocutionary force. It is noteworthy that the translator should have rendered this illocutionary force into the TL as indirect as the SL utterance. Since the TL has the potential to convey such an illocutionary force in the same way as the SL, this directness shift is not justifiable.

In order to illustrate the results of the *third* question of the study regarding the justifiability of the translation equivalents and directness shifts, a few examples will be presented and elaborated on below. It should be mentioned that the following examples will first focus on the translation equivalents and then on directness shifts.

- ***Translation Equivalents (Formal vs. Dynamic)***

Example 7:

ST 7: Come on, give it here. (IF: Order)

TT 7: /bija, bedef ?indža./ (IF: Order)

Translation equivalent: *Formal*

According to Nida (1964), a formal equivalence “focuses attention on the message itself, in both form and content. It is concerned that the message in the receptor language should match as closely as possible the different elements in the source language” (Munday, 2006, p. 41). This type of equivalence is more oriented towards the source text. As the translation shows, the translator has utilized no adaptation during the process of translation, leading to an unnatural and ambiguous translation. As a result, the type of translation equivalence used in this translation is formal. Even though the translation has relatively rendered the illocutionary force of ordering (as a directive speech act) into TL, the translation is ambiguous and unnatural with respect to the meaning. Thus, this translation relatively includes accuracy, but it lacks clarity and naturalness. According to Zamani’s (2013) TQA framework, such a translation stands at the second level of translation quality and is regarded as a *relatively successful* translation to which score 2 is assigned. A proper dynamic equivalence for this directive utterance could be /jalla, ræd kon bijad/, which observes the three elements of accuracy, clarity, and naturalness.

- ***Directness Shifts***

Example 8:

ST 8: Let's have different color rabbits. (IF: Suggesting)

TT 8: /xube ke xærguʃamun ræng be ræng baʃæn./ (IF: Saying → Suggesting)

Directness shift: *Between*

Translation equivalent: *Dynamic*

Adaptation: structural

Here, the TL equivalence is different from the SL directive utterance with respect to the type of directness extant within them. Technically speaking, in example 20, the SL utterance has directly conveyed the directive illocutionary force of suggesting, while the TL equivalent has indirectly conveyed the same illocutionary force. Hence, this example includes a *between* directness shift. To clarify, here, the clause /xube ke/ has been used to minimize the level of imposition on the hearer in order to increase the level of politeness. This way, the translator has conveyed the same illocutionary force (suggesting) indirectly. Due to the fact that in Persian, such a situation is naturally expressed in a more polite manner than in English, the directness shift occurred in this utterance *is* justifiable. Furthermore, according to Zamani (2013), if directness shift does not change the primary illocutionary force of the speech act utterance and does not violate the other two factors of clarity and naturalness, it can be regarded as a justified shift. Here, the shift occurred in the translation violates none of the three factors of translation quality and thus *is* justified.

Finally, with respect to the third question, the findings of the study revealed that, as far as the translation equivalents were concerned, about 58.5 percent of the translations (see appendix 1.) were located in third point of translation quality, that is, *successful* to which score 3 is assigned out of 4. On the other hand, as far as the directness shifts were concerned, the results of the study showed that about 74.5 percent of the directness shifts (see appendix 2.) were justifiable.

## 6. Discussions

The results of the study regarding Nida's (1964) dichotomy of translation equivalence, i.e., *formal* vs. *dynamic*, indicated that the dynamic equivalence (with a percentage of 68.34) outnumbered the formal equivalence (with a percentage of 31.66). This illustrates the fact that the attitude of the Persian translator of the novel (that is, Darioush, 1966) with respect to the type of translation equivalence is in accordance with Nida's (1964).

On the other hand, with respect to the second question of the study regarding Zamani's (2013) dichotomy of directness shifts, i.e., *between* vs. *within*, occurred in translation of commissives and directives, the results of the study proved that the category of *between shifts* (with a frequency of 11 out of 120 utterances) outnumbered the category of *within shifts* (with a frequency of 5 out of 120 utterances). This result is in accordance with Zamani's (2013) findings on expressive and directive speech acts. Furthermore, the results of the present study indicated that the number of commissives and directives in which a directness shift has occurred is few.

This is also in same line with Zamani's (2013) results and thus proves the previous findings in a different context. This finding was further led to coming to the conclusion that both English and Persian tend to use relatively similar linguistic structures to convey commissive and directive speech acts. Accordingly, this conclusion is in harmony with Zamani's (2013) even though his study was conducted in a context different from that of the present study. As Zamani (2013) asserts, from among his proposed pragmatic-based translation shifts, the category of directness shift is one of the least frequent ones, especially in the context of English and Persian expressives and directives, in the case of his study (p. 114).

## 7. Concluding REmarks

The results of the first question of the study indicated that the attitude of the Persian translator of the novel with respect to the type of translation equivalence is in accordance with Nida's (1964). Technically speaking, Nida is of the opinion that the message has to be interwoven with the target language addressee's needs and cultural expectations and aims at complete naturalness of expression which is referred to as a dynamic equivalence. Accordingly, these results illuminate the fact that the Persian translator has endeavored to provide a natural and receptor-oriented translation which can exert the same effect on the TL addressees as does the ST on the SL addressees.

The results of the second question of the study shed light on the fact that the category of *between shifts* (with a frequency of 11 out of 120 utterances) outnumbered the category of *within shifts* (with a frequency of 5 out of 120 utterances), conveying the fact that there are some cases in which the way of expression of a particular type of illocutionary force in English is different from the way it is realized in Persian. On the other hand, speech act utterances without directness shifts extremely outnumbered commissives and directives with directness shifts. This indicates the fact that in most cases both languages (English and Persian) are similar with respect to the directness of linguistic manifestation of the commissives and directives.

With respect to the third question of the study, the findings revealed that, as far as the translation equivalents were concerned, about 58.5 percent of the translations (see appendix 1.) were located in the third point of translation quality, that is, *successful* to which score 3 is assigned out of 4. This conveys the fact that Darioush's (1966) Persian translations of the commissives and directives, though not being excellent, stands at a good and acceptable level of quality, which proves the importance of having mastery of speech act theory, on the part of the translators. On the other hand, as far as the directness shifts were concerned, the results of the study showed that about 74.5 percent of the directness shifts (see appendix 2.) were justifiable. This conveys the fact that due to some cultural differences, there are some cases in which a directness shift is necessary to convey the same illocutionary force as the SL into the TL, as Zamani (2013) asserts.

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### Appendices

#### Appendix 1. *Frequencies and percentages of different levels of translation quality*

<b>Translation quality level</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Unsuccessful	7	5.7%
Relatively successful	15	12.3%
Successful	71	58.5%
Completely successful	27	23.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### Appendix 2. *Frequencies and percentages of justified and unjustified directness shifts*

<b>Directness shifts</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Justified	12	74.5%
Unjustified	4	25.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100%</b>