Translating Propositional Polysemy from English into Persian: the Case of Over

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Abstract

The widespread phenomenon of polysemy has been always a controversial and troublesome issue for linguists. However, in this study an attempt has been made to investigate translating polysemous word over, from English into Persian with the help of Tehran English-Persian Parallel Corpus (TEP), a corpus borrowed from Tehran University. For such an examination, the framework was based on the semantic network of over which was suggested by Tyler and Evans (2001). In this process, English semantic network of over, in different sentences with different senses were identified and the phrases and sentences including the considered polysemous word and their Persian translations were compared with each other. In the Persian version, the most intended meanings have been understood carefully and transferred into TT.

Keywords: polysemy, translation, semantic network, TEP corpus

1. Introduction

It is a linguistic convention that language, in both spoken and written forms, is message-oriented and serves a specific intended function so as to “pass on information” and “maintain social relationships” Nguyen Hoa (2004, p. 16). Prepositions are considered to be words which bear several meanings, even though their linguistic form remains consistent. Prepositions are highly polysemous in understanding the whole meaning of an utterance. This difficulty becomes more challengeable when a translator attempts to perceive the meaning of the source text correctly and then transfers it to the readers of the target one. So here the problem would be defined as two levels, first, understanding the meaning of the text rightly and second, translation of the text. Polysemy comes from Greek poly (many) and semy (to do with meaning as in semantics) and it happen when a word acquires a wide range of meaning. Therefore, a polysemous word is a word with different meanings and, therefore, a problematic ambiguity becomes the first issue whenever these words are used. Quiroge-claire (2003) claims that Polysemous words are the most common types of words causing ambiguity. According to Mason "adults realize that many words are polysemous, that without context words can be characterized by more than one meaning, and that only through context is a particular meaning obtainable" (1976, p. 4).

1. The differences between polysemy and homonym:

"Polysemy can be defined as one form (written or spoken) having multiple meanings that are related by extension" (Yule, 2010, p. 120). Radford held that most words are polysemy, as by passing time they may gain marginal meaning which are derived from the central one (1999, p. 263). According to Palmer (1976) a polysemous word is treated as one entry while homonyms are treated as different entries. This claim would be a great help in distinguishing between polysemy and homonym. "Homonyms are words that have separate histories and meanings, but they have accidentally come to have exactly the same form" (Yule, 2010, p. 120).

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2. Radial categories:

Bloomfield (1933) believed that from the traditional point of view, the lexicon has been regarded as items which attained their meaning arbitrarily, with considering the regularity and productivity associated with language taking place in the syntax. Tyler and Evan held as a result of this perspective that the lexicon is "a static set of words and word senses, tagged with features for syntactic, morphological and semantic information, ready to be inserted into syntactic frames with appropriately matching features" (2001, p. 725).

Cognitive linguists try to interpret semantic networks on the basis of human perception, human experiences. It is assumed that different meanings of a polysemous word form a semantic network which extends from the primary sense suggested by Rosch (1975) to its sub-categories, described as a "radial category" which is introduced by Lakoff (1987).

Radial categories are based on semantic networks. A crucial feature of these networks is that they are placed around a core meaning which is generally called prototype. So prototypes are considered as good examples of a particular category. However the idea of radiality is in strong opposition toward Aristotle category which all members of any category should have all determined feature, if not, they become excluded from the category.

By considering all these together, in cognitive semantic approach, the different meanings of a polysemous item like prepositions are regarded to form a family resemblance network. This is a prototype-based network where the relations among its members are highly motivated. Brugman and Lakoff (2003) believe that in the general theory, the links between members of the network are not arbitrary. The theory of radial categories comes with a characterization of possible link types. In the case of polysemy, the link types are the types of relations linking the senses of the word. In general, some of the links may involve shared information, some may involve relation between a general and a specific case, and some may be metaphoric.... But, overall, there is only a small number of types of relations between senses of words...."

Nerliche, Todd, and Herman in their book" trends in linguistics" (2003) held that cognitive linguistics postulated the notion of embodied meaning: the meanings related to many individual lexemes are instantiated in memory not in terms of features, nor as abstract propositions, but rather as imagistic, schematic representations. Such image-schemas are considered to be embodied, in the sense that they arise from perceptual reanalysis of recurring patterns in routine physical experience.

II. Background:

Polysemy and the translation of the polysemous words have been studied from different perspectives. Golfam and Yousefi Rad (2009) investigated the Persian polysemous preposition /dar/ from the pedagogical perspective. Nguyễn Hải Hà (2012) in an MA thesis worked on examining linguistic ambiguity as a source of constructing funniness in English verbal jokes. Shirai (1990) has studied prototype and metaphorical extension, the polysemy of put. Evans and Tyler (2001) have worked on reconsidering prepositional polysemy networks: the case of over. Kamakura (2011) studied collocation and preposition sense. Mahpeykar and Tyler (2011) examined the semantics of the Persian preposition [be]by applying the principled polysemy model. The effect of Persian polysemy on the interpretation of English sentences is another attempt which has been done by Samanianpour and Hashemian (2011).

III. Methodology:

1. Design of the study

The present research is a descriptive study in which different usages of the preposition "over" were investigated according to the semantic network presented by Tyler and Evans (2001). Since the main aim of this paper was to show how these distinct senses had been translated into Persian, it was required to collect the data from the TEP corpus.
2. Procedures
   i. First, the sentences and phrases containing *over* from the TEP corpus were gathered along with their Persian translations.
   ii. After collecting data, many usages of the preposition were categorized based on the semantic network of *over* which is suggested by Tyler and Evans (2001).

The semantic network for *over* (Tyler and Evans 2003a: 80)

The semantic network of *over*, which is given, here shows that the prototype at the center is surrounded by the peripheral senses and connected through clusters which represent attributes and which group similar senses together.

iii. Then, by investigating the senses in the original text and Persian version of the ST, English text, an attempt has been made to examine how these senses are transferred to the TT. TT: target text; ST: source text; TR: trajectory; LM: landmark.

IV. Data Analysis and Discussion:

ABC trajectory
TR cannot hover and must return to the ground; and use of over is to designate the key spatial/functional configuration (i.e. the TR being higher than the LM in position but this configuration is temporary. Since, the TR returns to the ground again).

1. Pasm, ազրօշարադամ, զանումկահարուշի ժողով.
   1. So, no. I jump over the fence. I scraped my knee.

2. ունզան ալան ազրօղագրապան հայր.
   2. That woman just jumped over the side of the ship!

According to the available translation of these sentences in the corpus, the concept of jumping from the starting point A, then hovering B, returning to the ground C was translated truly. TR here in the example 1 is a person and 2 is a woman. LM in example 1 is fence as translated by [հեսար] and in example 2 is the side of the ship which is translated as [մարտկոշ]

i. On the other side of

1. va Manchester daghigband poshtesarem in nardehast, ճրով.
   1. Now, the Winchester is just over that fence, all right.

   The trajectory is Winchester. The considered sense of over is being located at a place where human’s eyes can look at it from the far. In the Persian version, this sense of over is translated as [پوشهناردها].

ii. The above-and-beyond (excess I) sense

When the TR misses the target, it goes above and beyond the LM.

1. Ինժեներատորի ոչ միջին ազատություն, بريد kim, azhadikekelazeme.
   1. This generator produces over ... amp. Much more than what is necessary.

2. հելիկոպտերի ազգային իներ ժառանգ, լատրո ազան պարտ կար.
   2. The chopper flew over the beach. Someone tossed this out.

In sentence 1 we cannot interpret the higher physical position of TR rather than the LM. However the considered sense here is an excess meaning, passing a definite limitation. In the TT, this sense was pointed out by [ինի ազ].

In example 2, there is an implicit meaning that the LM here beach, represents an intended goal or target and the TR, chopper, moved beyond the intended, or desired point. In the Persian version of the sentence, this concept was transmitted by [رادر].

iii. The completion sense

1. ճիշ տասնամասն ժամանակ ժամ.
   1. All right. Show's over.
2. Tamāmekhtelāfāthal shod.
2. Everything has been smoothed over completely.

Here, in both examples the intended sense of over is being complete. In the Persian sentences, the sense is transferred by [tamum shod].

iv. The transfer sense
1. Fərməndetasmimgereftand ke in dokhtarrā be shomābargardānim.
2. To be man gholādīke, midehi man nīkhi.
2. You promised you'd hand him over to me.

In two sentences, over is used to convey the transfer sense. Here, the motion of TR from one point to another is the main usage of over. In the Persian version, the transfer is indicated by [bargardānim] in example 1 or [nīkhi].

v. The covering sense
1. Inyeğirīmramānike yoresare man gozāshītan.
2. Khob, Inger, digarbāyad sarpöshrā bar röyetabott to bogzārim.
3. Inchizrārīyotesrātummāzarīd.
3. Don't put that thing over my face.

The surface of TR is perceived as covering the surface of the LM. All the examples show this concept and in the Persian version this sense is completely conveyed.

vi. The examining sense
In this case, the connection is construed as that between the examiner and the examined. Because the protoscene for over contains these elements—a TR higher than a LM, proximity between the TR and LM, and a conceptual connectedness.
1. Man parvandeye to r obāresikardam.
2. khob, negāhibeheshunbāzid va 'agar harsoalidāshtid be daftaramzangbezanid.
2. So, just look these over and if you have any questions, call me at my office.
3. 'Avalinmoshtariam, yekmardenirumand be deghatmanochkard.
3. My first client, a stout man named Vaccari, looked me over carefully.

In the examining sense, the TR's line of vision is directed at the LM. In these sentences, by TR examined something carefully and the same sense in their translation is conveyed by using: [barresikard], [chekkard], and [negāhandakht].

vii. The focus-of-attention sense
1. Töyekhöneneshastam va barātgeryekardam.
1. I sit alone at home and cry over you.
2. Enjilikemāmishenāsimardnezārat shod
tavasoteyekmardnezārat shod.

Here, TR is as means for directing attention toward LM. Since the focus of attention in both examples is LM. Over in the first sentence can be replaced by an "UP" cluster.

viii. The more sense
1. Emröz, bishtar... tā barge bude...
1. Today, they were over... pages.

The normal interpretation of αer in this context is "more than". In translated sentence by using the adjective [bishtar] is transferred the mere sense.

ix. The over-and-above (excess II) sense
1. Man khoshhālam, ghalbe man sashar 'azhīs 'ast.
1. I'm happy... my heart's overflowing with emotions.
2. A'gar daryāche Mishigāntoghyānkone chi.
2. Suppose, lake Michigan overflows.
3. Sālonhā pormishod 'azgāvcherönhāvam'amörānrāh 'ahānvaekteshāfkonandehāyem'adenvatofangdārhāvaghomārbāzhāvazanān.
3. Saloons just overflowing with cattle drivers and road agents, prospectors, gunslingers, gamblers and women.

This sense is closely related to the previous sense. The nuancedifference is that this sense adds the meaning of too much. In the Persian version, words like [sashar 'ast], [fotghyānkardan] and [porshodan] are used. These words accurately transferred the intended sense from the ST to the TT.

x. The control sense
1. 'Age ön to rābedozdeönvaght man majbūrantslimshām.
1. If the criminal were to, say, kidnap you, he would have power over me.
2. hamishedonbālepiruzimigardihattā 'age in piruzi bar 'alaiheshekāyāt e khodetbāshe.
2. You look for any victory you can get, even a victory over your own self-doubt.
3. yanike tamāme in forudgāhziredaste mane.
3. It means that my authority over the security of this airport is absolute.

This sense does not mean that TR is higher than LM with respect to the physical position. Main sense here is that, for instance in the third sentence, TR, the person's authority is influencing the LM, airport. In the translated version for pointing to power of TR on the LM, words like: [taslim shām], [‘alayhe khodetbāshe] and [ziredaste mane]has been applied.

xi. The preference sense
1. Ishunhamishe be sabzān sefidronesbat be beresfātābarjihmidādand.
1. She has always preferred white rice over rice with beans.
2. In khelibehtar 'ast 'azinkeshomā 'az man mohāfezatmikardid.
2. I prefer it over you trying to protect me being considerate.

In an experiential feeling being physically up is related to human's positive states. Here the usage of over shows the significance of one item rather than the others. In the TT some words has been applied such as: [tarjihmidādand] and [‘in kheilibehtar 'ast].

xii. The reflexive sense
1. Ālen tötakhtghaltkhord va be man goftkenemitunamsöratamroheskonam.
1. Alan rolled over in bed and he looked at me and he said, I can't feel my face.
2. Man shenidamyekbārheivunrālehkardebudandvaönmorde bud.
2. I heard an animal once do that, but then they rolled him over, he was dead.

As the name of this sense introduces itself, reflexive position is intended. The initial position of Alan (in the first sentence) is distinguished from his final position, in which the he is lying on the other side of his bed. For transferring this sense, [ghaltkhord] and [lehkardeboodand] have been observed.

xiii. The repetition sense
1. Bayadberizameshdörva‘az ‘avvalavvaldekorkram
1. I've got throw it out and start all over.
2. Vabāzgashtabadiineke to yekzendegirādobārevadobāretajrobekoni.
2. And eternal recurrence is when you live the same life over and over again.

The main reason for using over in these sentences is to achieve the repetition meaning. This sense is indicated again in the translated versions by using ['az ‘avval] and [dobārevadobāre].

V. Conclusion:

This study was an attempt to show that how semantic networks of polyseymous word over has been transferred. Based on this investigation most of the intended meanings in the ST have been translated into TT with the same sense in the mind of the TT reader. As a result, radiality is a property for both of the source and target languages. The main conclusions of this study were reflected on the table below.

| Intended sense          | English phrases and sentences including over | Persian translation                                           |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| ABC trajectory         | Jump over the fence/ jumped over the side of the ship | azeyehesheramton    |
| On the other side of   | The Winchester is just over that fence        | Manchester daghīghaamānestsare in nardehāst          |
| The above-and-        | beyond This generator produces over ...        | dib 'æz ... ampertoldēmikome/ bālīkīptērka 'azbūdayešītd rad shod |
| (excess I) sense       | The chopper flew over the beach                |                                                             |
| The completion sense   | Everything has been smoothed over completely  | kheēlikbōmamāyeshtamum shod.                               |
| The transfer sense     | to turn her over to you/ handed him over to me.| bōm būro toya/ hārdīmōr tome.                              |
| The covering sense     | they put over my head/ we must put the lid over you/ don't that thing over my face | eyēsāre nom gozicstom/ nīfīlidi bārīya    |
| The examining sense    | looking over your case/ just look these over/ looked me over carefully | negāhibeheshunbendāzhī/ be dēghatman hōkard |
| The focus-of-attention sense | try over you/ It was finally presided over by one man. | barātgeryekardam/ tavasotyekardunzārat shod |
| The more sense         | they were over ... pages                      | kīstār                        |
| The over-and-above     | myheart's overflowing with emotions/ lake Michigan overflows/ Saloons just overflowing | sarshar 'azēh 'ast/ daryāche Mishīgāntoghyānkone chi/ Sālonhāpormishod |
| (excess II) sense      | power over me/ over your own self-doubt/ my authority over the security of this airport is absolute | manmājibīramtamālu shamu/ bar 'alaibeheshūjāt e khodēthābās ā/ tamāme in fardaʃājārīz̄ẹstā māne. |
| The control sense      | preferred white rice over rice with beans/ I prefer it over you trying to protect me | barēn esfīdānshāt hē/ barēn jīfīlōshīkātarjīmānātīdānd/ In khālīhe ḫar 'aṭ | azīnkešamā/ azānammuhālīgēzmānikārād    |
| The preference sense   | Alan rolled over in bed/ they rolled him over | Alēntālīkītēgīlātkorāf/ bāeumālībārētekārdandvāinmānnd rad bud. |
| The repetitive sense   | start all over/ same life over and over again | az 'adārāmnikom/ azēzadegārihādārevadobārētajrobekoni    |
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