

# The Application of Baker's Taxonomy on Translation of Literary Texts, A Case Study of George Orwell's Animal Farm

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**Abstract:** *This study aims to evaluate the Persian translation of an English literary text, namely, Animal Farm which was written by George Orwell in 1945 and translated by Ali Akbar Akhondi in 2004. Firstly, literary Translation and its relevant issues will be explicated. Then, a brief biography of George Orwell and a short introduction of the fiction illustrated. After that, some aspects of Translation Quality Assessment (TQA) will be elaborated. Through this study, a Persian translation of the above-mentioned English literary work is going to be evaluated based on Baker's taxonomy of translation. The present research recognizes two paragraphs of the fiction to analyze in accordance with aforementioned theory. Baker's Taxonomy considers five levels for equivalences named Word level, above word level, Grammatical level, Textual level and Pragmatic level. Finally, a conclusion is drawn based on the assessment of the Persian translation of Animal Farm and frequencies and percentages will be calculated in terms of five equivalents.*

**Keywords:** Animal Farm, Translation Quality Assessment, Literary Texts, Baker's Taxonomy.

## 1. Introduction

Basically, majority of scholars of translation and translators believe translating literary works is more difficult than translating other types of texts. Some scholars contended that this is because of the fact that literary texts or works contain specific words and structures. These structures bring specific values to literary texts which make their translations very difficult.

The traditional discussion of the problems about literary translation regards searching for proper equivalents for lexical items and syntactic structures. However, recent studies pay much attention to some other features like style, genre, figurative language, and connotation. The choices made by the translators like the decision whether to retain the stylistic features of the source language text or whether to retain the historical stylistic dimension of the original becomes the most important issue in the case of literary translation.

The comparison of texts in different languages inevitably involves a theory of equivalence. Equivalence can be said to be the central issue in translation although its definition, relevance, and applicability within the field of translation theory have caused heated controversy, and many different theories of the concept of equivalence have been elaborated within this field in the past fifty years [2].

Animal Farm is one of the classic stories of modern English fiction, and is a powerful study of the use and abuse of political power. According to Orwell, the book reflects events leading up to and during the Stalin era before the Second World War. Orwell, a democratic socialist, was a critic of Joseph Stalin and hostile to Moscow-directed Stalinism, especially after his experiences with the NKVD and the Spanish Civil War. In a letter to Yvonne Davet, Orwell described Animal Farm as his novel "contre Stalin".

This book was first thought of, so far as the central idea goes, in 1937, but was not written down until about the end of 1943. By the time when it came to be written it was obvious that there would be great difficulty in getting it published (in spite of the present book shortage which ensures that anything describable as a book will "sell"), and in the event it was refused by four publishers [4]. Though Animal Farm eventually made Orwell famous, three publishers in England rejected the novel at first. One of those who rejected it was T.S. Eliot, the famous poet and an editor at the Faber & Faber publishing house. Several American publishing houses rejected the novel as well. One editor told Orwell it was "impossible to sell animal stories in the U.S.A" [4].

Orwell didn't just write literature that condemned the Communist state of the USSR. He did everything he could, from writing editorials to compiling lists of men he knew were Soviet spies, to combat the willful blindness of many intellectuals in the West to USSR atrocities [4]. The novel addresses not only the corruption of the revolution by its leaders but also how wickedness, indifference, ignorance, greed and myopia corrupt the revolution. It portrays corrupt leadership as the flaw in revolution, rather than the act of revolution itself. It also shows how potential ignorance and indifference to problems within a revolution could allow horrors to happen if a smooth transition to a people's government is not achieved [4]. In this article, we are dealing with the Translation Quality Assessment of Persian Translation of this fiction by the original version of it on the basis of Baker's Taxonomy of Equivalences.

## 2. Review of Related Literature

### 2.1. Baker's Taxonomy

Some translation scholars consider literary texts different from other texts just in terms of words and structures. However, others regard some other aspects besides word and structures. In addition, they contend that literary texts are the production of cultures. This is also related to the social aspects. Therefore, any literary work is the matter of social and cultural aspects [3].

The assumption that literary texts or works are closely related to the culture and society comes from significant ideas of four scholars and theorists, namely, Andre, Tory, Evan-Zahra, and Theo Herman. All these theorists consider literature as a system. They are central system and peripheral system. Furthermore, André contends that literature is one of the systems which constitute the systems of discourse. In addition, he refers to literature as a subsystem of a society or a culture. It may mean that literary translation is also the translation which is related to the cultural and social issues and matters [3].

Here, two points of view were elaborated. The first one posits that literary translation is just matter of different words and structures. This is due to fact that literature comprises different words and structures. Consequently, for this point of view, in the process of literary translation, translating just word and structures from one language into another is adequate. On the other hand, the second point of view contends that literature is the matter of culture and society or literature is subsystem of society and culture. Andre maintains that literature is one of the systems which constitute the system of discourses in society and culture. Hypothetically, parallel to these two ideas toward literary translation, there are approaches of TQA which regard both ideas. Traditional approaches which is taken into consideration by some translation theorists like Nabokov and the others. The recent or novel approach which is culture-bound is regarded by some other scholar like Mona Baker [3].

Baker theorized a taxonomy which is based on equivalence. Various equivalents were introduced by Mona Baker. On the basis of what has been mentioned before, Baker's equivalents almost consider both views of TQA. This is because of the types of equivalents which are taken into consideration by Mona Baker. Baker's equivalents comprise both approaches (Traditional approach which is word and structure-based and novel approach which is culture-based). Although Baker's taxonomy of equivalents is not specifically theorized for literary translation, it can be applied in this field as a type of a translation, generally [3].

To put it in a nutshell, this study regards Baker's taxonomy as a model for translation quality assessment. In other words, Baker's model will be utilized in order to evaluate a translation of a literary text. In fact Baker's taxonomy of equivalents will be a model for assessing translation quality of an English literary text, namely, Ante-gone which was rendered into Persian [3].

New adjectives have been assigned to the notion of equivalence (grammatical, textual, pragmatic equivalence, and several others) and made their appearance in the plethora of recent works in this field. An extremely interesting discussion of the notion of equivalence can be found in Baker (1992) who seems to offer a more detailed list of conditions upon which the concept of equivalence can be defined. She explores the notion of equivalence at different levels, in relation to the translation process, including all different aspects of translation and hence putting together the linguistic and the communicative approach. She distinguishes between:

1. Equivalence, that can appear at word level and above word level, when translating from one language into another. Baker acknowledges that, in a bottom-up approach to translation, equivalence at word level is the first element to be taken into consideration by the translator. In fact, when the translator starts analyzing the ST s/he looks at the words as single units in order to find a direct "equivalent" term in the TL. Baker gives a definition of the term word since it should be remembered that a single word can sometimes be assigned different meanings in different languages and might be regarded as being a more complex unit or morpheme. This means that the translator should pay attention to a number of factors when considering a single word, such as number, gender and tense [1].
2. Grammatical equivalence, when referring to the diversity of grammatical categories across languages. She notes that grammatical rules may vary across languages and this may pose some problems in terms of finding a direct correspondence in the TL. In fact, she claims that different grammatical structures in the SL and TL may cause remarkable changes in the way the information or message is carried across. These changes may induce the translator either to add or to omit information in the TT because of the lack of particular grammatical devices in the TL itself. Amongst these grammatical devices which might cause problems in translation Baker focuses on number, tense and aspects, voice, person and gender [1].
3. Textual equivalence, when referring to the equivalence between a SL text and a TL text in terms of information and cohesion. Texture is a very important feature in translation since it provides useful guidelines for the comprehension and analysis of the ST which can help the translator in his or her attempt to produce a cohesive and coherent text for the TC audience in a specific context. It is up to the translator to decide whether or not to maintain the cohesive ties as well as the coherence of the SL text. His or her decision will be guided by three main factors, that is, the target audience, the purpose of the translation and the text type [1].
4. Pragmatic equivalence, when referring to implicatures and strategies of avoidance during the translation process. Implicature is not about what is explicitly said but what is implied. Therefore, the translator needs to work out implied meanings in translation in order to get the ST message across. The role of the translator is to recreate the author's intention in another culture in such a way that enables the TC reader to understand it clearly [1].

The notion of equivalence is undoubtedly one of the most problematic and controversial areas in the field of translation

theory. The term has caused, and it seems quite probable that it will continue to cause, heated debates within the field of translation studies. This term has been analyzed, evaluated and extensively discussed from different points of view and has been approached from many different perspectives. The first discussions of the notion of equivalence in translation initiated the further elaboration of the term by contemporary theorists [1].

## 2.2. George Orwell

Eric Blair was born and spent his youth in India. He was educated at Eton in England. From 1922-27 he served in the Indian Imperial Police in Burma. Through his autobiographical work about poverty in London [7] his experiences in colonial Burma [6] and in the Spanish Civil War [8], and the plight of unemployed coal miners in England [9], Blair (who wrote under the name George Orwell) exposed and critiqued the human tendency to oppress others politically, economically, and physically. Orwell particularly hated totalitarianism, and his most famous novels, *Animal Farm* (1945) and *1984* (1949), are profound condemnations of totalitarian regimes. Orwell died at the age of 47 after failing to treat a lung ailment.

## 2.3. Animal Farm

*Animal Farm* was published on the heels of World War II, in England in 1945 and in the United States in 1946. George Orwell wrote the book during the war as a cautionary fable in order to expose the seriousness of the dangers posed by Stalinism and totalitarian government. Orwell faced several obstacles in getting the novel published. First, he was putting forward an anti-Stalin book during a time when Western support for the Soviet Union was still high due to its support in Allied victories against Germany. Second, Orwell was not yet the literary star he would quickly become. For those reasons, *Animal Farm* appeared only at the war's end, during the same month that the United States dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The tragically violent events of the war set the stage well for Orwell's fictional manifesto against totalitarianism [4].

*Animal Farm* was Orwell's first highly successful novel (the second being *1984*), and it helped launch him out of the minor fame of an essayist into the stratosphere of acclaimed fiction. Despite publishers' initial hesitance toward the book, the public in both Britain and the United States met it with enthusiasm. In the United States alone, it sold 600,000 copies in four years. *Animal Farm* was translated into many languages, proving its universal reach [4].

*Animal Farm* is an allegory or fable, a fairy tale for adults. Orwell uses animal characters in order to draw the reader away from the world of current events into a fantasy space where the reader can grasp ideas and principles more crisply. At the same time, Orwell personifies the animals in the tradition of allegory so that they symbolize real historical figures. In their own universe, people can become desensitized even to terrible things like deception, mistreatment, and violence. By demonstrating how these things occur in an allegorical world, Orwell makes them more clearly understood in the real world. For instance, in

*Animal Farm's* public execution, Orwell lays bare the matter of execution by having the dogs rip out the supposed traitors' throats. In this scene, the reader is led to focus not as much on the means of execution as on the animalistic, atrocious reality of execution itself. *Animal Farm* is also a powerful satire. Orwell uses irony to undermine the tenets of totalitarianism, specifically that of Stalinism [4].

Almost instantly after the novel's publication, it became the subject of revisionism. In one instance, the CIA made an animated film version of the book in which they eliminated the final scene and replaced it with a new revolution in which the animals overthrow the pigs (see the 1999 Hallmark film version for another change in ending). They distributed the film as anti-communist propaganda, which is ironic when one considers the novel's own censure of the propagandist rewriting of history. This revision and others over the years (whether in changing the story or interpreting it) contributed to the public's general misunderstanding of Orwell. Though he was staunchly anti-Stalinist, he was certainly not a capitalist. In fact, he was a revolutionary socialist. During his lifetime, Orwell did little to detract from his skewed public image. He was a man of contradictions--Louis Menand calls him "a middle-class intellectual who despised the middle class and was contemptuous of intellectuals, a Socialist whose abuse of Socialists ... was as vicious as any Tory's" [4].

*Animal Farm* is universally appealing for both the obvious and the subtle messages of the fable. While the allegory's characters and events are deeply or specifically symbolic, Orwell's narrator softens some of the punches by including a gentle and un-opinionated narrator. The third-person narrator is outside the animals' world, so he does not relate any of the lies, hardships, or atrocities firsthand. Rather, he is a quiet observer [4].

Moreover, the narrator relates the tale from the perspective of the animals other than the dogs and pigs. In this way, the narrator's approach to the story resembles Orwell's approach to life. That is, just as Orwell developed empathy for the working class by experiencing working-class life firsthand, the narrator's tale is based on the experience of someone who is not quite an insider but no longer just an outsider. The narrator's animal perspective, as well as his reluctance to opine, fits well with the naivete of the animal characters [4].

One example of the narrator's indifferent approach to the tale is evident when the pigs use the money from Boxer's slaughter to buy a case of whisky. Rather than relating this event in stark terms, the narrator states impartially that on the day appointed for Boxer's memorial banquet, a carton arrives at the farmhouse followed by loud singing and "the word went round that from somewhere or other the pigs had acquired the money to buy themselves another case of whisky" [4]. The scene also exemplifies how the narrator's naïve perspective produces a drily ironic effect. Here are two other examples of ironic humour in the novel. In Chapter I, the narrator describes "Beasts of England" as "a stirring tune, something between "Clementine" and "La Cucaracha"" [4]. Anyone familiar with those two songs knows that they are childish ditties. In Chapter IX, the narrator reports that the

pigs find "a large bottle of pink medicine" in the farmhouse's medicine cabinet. They send it out to Boxer, who is deathly ill. We can assume that the medicine, being pink, is the antacid Pepto-Bismol, hardly useful to someone on his deathbed. By lightening his allegory with ironic humour, Orwell makes the story more palatable without taking away from his message [4].

### 3. Methodology of Research

In accordance with Baker, there are, at least, five levels for equivalence. They are as follows:

1. Word level: This equivalence exists in almost all languages of the world. It is at the level of the word.
2. Above word level: This equivalence comprises collocation meaning of a group of the words.
3. Grammatical level: This equivalence includes word order in a sentence.
4. Textual level: This equivalence includes thematic and information structures like cohesive devices like references, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical cohesion.
5. Pragmatic level: This level of equivalence comprises coherence and processes of interpretation like speech act forces.

As a part of literature, *Animal Farm* is a fiction written by George Orwell. It is a story happened at a farm somewhere in England in the first half of the 20th century. *Animal Farm* is an allegory of the Russian Revolution and the Communist Soviet Union. Many of the animal characters in *Animal Farm* have direct correlations to figures or institutions in the Soviet Union. *Animal Farm* depicts a revolution in progress. Old Major gives the animals a new perspective on their situation under Mr. Jones, which leads them to envision a better future free of human exploitation. The revolution in *Animal Farm*, like all popular revolutions, arises out of a hope for a better future. At the time of the revolution, even the pigs are excited by and committed to the idea of universal animal equality.

So what undermines the animal's revolution and transforms it into a totalitarian nightmare? *Animal Farm* shows how the high ideals that fuel revolutions gradually give way to individual and class self-interest. Not even Napoleon planned to become a dictator before the revolution, but as his power grew, he took more and more until his power became absolute. Revolutions are corrupted in a slow process. *Animal Farm* portrays that process. *Animal Farm* as an English text was translated by Ali Akbar Akhondi. This study is going to evaluate the Persian translation of *Animal Farm* according to Baker's taxonomy. It includes the following steps:

1. From among problematic paragraphs, two paragraphs will be selected randomly to be evaluated. (Population and Sample)
2. These paragraphs will be analyzed in accordance with five types of above-mentioned equivalence by Mona Baker.
3. Frequencies and percentages will be calculated in terms of five equivalents.

4. A conclusion is drawn based on the assessment of the Persian translation of *Animal Farm*.

## 4. Data Analysis and Discussions

### 4.1. Overview

In this study we are going to pay attention to English into Persian translation and the strategies shown in dealing with specific translation problems. We were mainly concerned with the translation of *Animal Farm* in accordance with Baker's Taxonomy in the field of Translation Quality Assessment (TQA).

### 4.2. Data Analysis of Paragraph 1

**Table 1:** The Application of Baker's Taxonomy on Paragraph 1

Baker's Taxonomy	Word Level	Above Word Level	Grammatical Level	Textual Level	Pragmatic Level
Mistakes	4	6	3	1	-
Frequency	4	6	3	1	-
Percentage	4%	6%	3%	1%	-

### 4.3. Data Analysis of Paragraph 2

**Table 2:** The Application of Baker's Taxonomy on Paragraph 2

Baker's Taxonomy	Word Level	Above Word Level	Grammatical Level	Textual Level	Pragmatic Level
Mistakes	20	7	5	1	-
Frequency	20	7	5	1	-
Percentage	20%	7%	5%	1%	-

### 4.3. Data Analysis of All Tables (From Table 1 and Table 2)

**Table 3:** Data Analysis Table

Baker's Taxonomy	Word Level	Above Word Level	Grammatical Level	Textual Level	Pragmatic Level
Mistakes	20	7	5	1	-
Frequency	20	7	5	1	-
Percentage	20%	7%	5%	1%	-

### 4.4. Data Analysis of the Mistakes of All Levels

**Table 4:** Table of the Mistakes of All Levels

All Mistakes	47
Frequencies	47
Percentages	47%

### 4.5 Discussions

In this study, we represented mistakes, frequencies and percentages of the Persian translation of the English novel "Animal Farm" based on Baker's taxonomy. The application of Baker's taxonomy on paragraph one, we evaluated mistakes, frequencies and percentages in five equivalence levels: word level, above word level, grammatical level, textual level, and pragmatic level. As displayed in table 1, the frequency of "above word level" in Persian translation is more than "Word level", "grammatical level", and "textual

level". But in "pragmatic level", we do not have any distribution in mistakes, frequency and percentage.

The application of Baker's taxonomy on paragraph 2, mistakes, frequencies and percentages are more than the other levels. In comparison in table 1, mistakes, frequency and percentage are 16% more than of the paragraph one. So, these results show that the literary Persian translation of two paragraphs is high literal in many parts. In table 3 we represented data analysis of all tables for table one and two. According to the tables, mistakes, frequencies and percentages in "word level" in two tables are:  $4+20=24$ , about above "word level", we pulsed both of them. So, we have  $6+7=13$ , in grammatical level. We have:  $3+5=8$ . In textual level, we also have  $1+1=2$ . But in pragmatic level we do not have any distribution. In table 4 we represented data analysis of the mistakes of all levels. We again have  $24+13+8+2=47$  for all mistakes frequencies and percentages. So, according to the all tables the most problematic equivalence in this translation was at "word level".

## 5. Conclusions

In this study, the Persian translation of the English book "Animal Farm" written by George Orwell was evaluated based on Baker's model of equivalence in various situations and conditions. As a sample two controversial paragraphs were selected and analyzed. Then various levels of equivalence were assessed based on Baker's taxonomy. The most problematic equivalence in this translation was recognized at the level of words. Then, equivalence above the level of word and textual level were controversial. Equivalence at the level of grammar and word order seem to be less problematic. Finally pragmatic equivalence was the least distribution in the tables of the mistakes.

All in all, by considering all mistakes in all levels holistically, forty seven percent is very high for a literary translation. This frequency and percentage can be generalized to all paragraphs which were controversial and problematic. It seems that the Persian translation of the English book, namely, "Animal Farm" by George Orwell is very poor. In terms of equivalence levels, this translation has a low quality and needs to be revised.

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