



Translation Shifts and Narratology: A Case Study of ‘Journey to Heading 270 Degrees’

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ABSTRACT

Bringing the concepts of narratology and optional shifts together, the present research elaborated on the Iran-Iraq War’s translated narration through a case study of a novel on this war. We analyzed the English translation of the Persian novel, *Journey to Heading 270 Degrees*, to examine how Iran-Iraq War narratives were translated and if and how the different narration of the translator affected the narratological aspect of the source narrative. To this end, Pekkanen’s (2010) model was applied to explore into the formal dissimilarities between the source text and the target text at the micro-textual level through a linguistic comparative analysis aimed at identifying optional shifts. Optional shifts were then categorized and the most frequent optional shifts, which made a pattern in the translated text, were identified. As the final step, the narratological aspect(s) were studied in the light of the optional shifts. Our analysis revealed that optional shifts of expansion-additions which were the most frequent shift type with 203 instances, contraction-deletions with 112 instances, and optional shifts of miscellaneous cases with 36 instances affected the degree of the specification as a narratological aspect in this study.

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Introduction

Although narratology has a long history in literature and literary studies, it is a rather new concept in Translation Studies. Narratology examines the translated narratives to see whether they are close to the source narratives or not. Translated narratives can become critical in those genres that are mostly based on realities like *resistance literature* since changing the narration can change the reality. Therefore, the present study investigates the Iran-Iraq War’s translated narration through a case study of war literature to see whether or not the different narration of the translator affected the narratological aspect of the source narrative.

Iran-Iraq War was an armed conflict between Iran and Iraq lasting from 22 September 1980 to 20 August 1988. This war which is also known as the Sacred Defense and the Imposed War lead to the emergence of the so-called “Sacred Defense Literature” or “Resistance Literature” in Iran (Khakpour, Khorrani, Vatanabadi, 2016). Some of the works in this genre were produced by veterans who narrated their experiences during the war in their diaries and then rewrote them in the form of novels and this was then when the reality shaped a literal form and narratives and reality came together (Ghanoonparvar, 2016).

Labov defines narrative as “one method of recapitulating past experience by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events which (it is inferred) actually occurred” (as cited in Baker, 2006, p. 8) and Bruner further highlights the importance of narrative in shaping reality by asserting that “it was perhaps a decade ago that psychologists became alive to the possibility of narrative as a form not only of representing but of constituting reality” (as cited in Baker, 2006, p. 17). The present study inspired by the power of

narrative in shaping reality, studies whether or not the translator’s narration of the novel ‘*Journey to Heading 270 Degrees*’ differs from the author’s. Therefore, the focus of this study is on the concept of narratology. To achieve this goal, formal dissimilarities between the source text and the target text at the micro-textual level are investigated through a linguistic comparative analysis. Then, optional shifts are identified and categorized and the most frequent optional shifts, which make a pattern in the translated text, are distinguished and finally the narratological aspect(s) are taken into account.

2. Methodology

The methodology of the present qualitative case study is explained in the present section.

2-1 The Novel ‘*Journey to Heading 270 Degrees*’

The present study investigates the narratological aspect(s) in the novel ‘*Journey to Heading 270 Degrees*’. This novel narrates the incidents happening during the Iran-Iraq War written in the first person point of view. It has so many desperate and real moments that take the reader to the battlefield. Ahmad Dehghan, the author and the narrator of the book, became famous after he published this novel (Habibi, 2016) in which he tried to reflect his own experiences during the war. He believes that these are the realities of the war that many people may not be aware of and therefore have to be narrated (Mashreghnews, 2015)¹. The first edition of the book was published by Sarir Publication

¹ The publication of Persian date is based on Iranian solar calendar.

Company in 1996. It was reprinted thereafter. In 2005, Soreie Mehr Publication Company published the second edition and Mazda Publishers printed a paperback edition in the United States in 2006 (Habibi, 2016).

The book '*Journey to Heading 270 Degrees*' has been translated by Paul Sprachman into English in 264 pages and has been published by Mazda Publication in 2006 (Habibi, 2016). Sprachman is a professor at Rutgers University in the United States who has translated a number of Persian books into English including Gharbzadegi (*Plagued by the West*), *A City Under Siege: Tales of the Iran-Iraq War*, *One Woman's War: Da (Mother)*, *Tehran: Revolution Street and Chess with the Doomsday Machine*. (Habibi, 2016).

2-2 Theoretical Framework

The study draws on the Pekkanen's (2010) model which is "within the framework of narratology, linguistics and stylistics, on the one hand, and translation studies, on the other" (Pekkanen, 2010, p. 21). There are three levels at work in this model (Pekkanen, 2010) including general level which defines the style of the translator, intermediate level which concentrates on the narrative elements as the representative(s) of the narratological aspect(s), and linguistic level which investigates formal linguistic choices made optionally by the translator and analyses the recurrence of these optional shifts.

Pekkanen's (2010) model investigates formal optional shifts in each translation through four factors including expansion, contraction, order, and miscellaneous shifts. Expansion shifts consist of two primary subcategories including "expansion replacement and expansion addition" (p. 72). Contraction shifts too consist of two primary subcategories including "contraction replacement and contraction deletion" (p. 74). Order has to do with shifts "in time and place", but also considers other shifts of order which do not fall under the categories of shift of order of time and place (p. 77). Finally, miscellaneous shifts "comprise all optional formal shifts that did not fall into the categories of expansion shifts, contraction shifts and shifts of order" (p. 78) and consist of tense (shift of tense), mood (shift of mood) which refers to the shift of modalities, deletion of repetition, agency "(shift of agency in the sense that the acting agent in the narrative changes)", referential relations (shift of referential relations), and singular to plural-plural to singular shifts (p. 78).

Pekkanen (2010) looks at narratology through four stylistic factors. It is necessary to mention that since these stylistic factors express the narratological aspect(s) on the intermediate level, the researchers use the term narrative elements rather than stylistic factors in this study. These narrative elements are as follows:

Degree of specification which refers to "the amount and accuracy of information provided by the translator for the reader" (Pekkanen 2010, p. 31), order of presentation which "refers to the ordering of the entire subject matter of a novel" (p. 32), focalization which is about "directing focus (drawing attention to certain elements or hiding other elements) and giving additional emphasis through sequential or referential arrangements." (p. 34), and finally Rhythm which "consists of the way in which the stress, length and phonological characteristics of elements are manipulated to achieve effects in the atmosphere of the narrative" (p. 34).

2-3 Procedure

Since the purpose of the present study was to investigate into the narration of the Iran-Iraq War, the novel of '*Journey to Heading 270 Degrees*' by Ahmad Dehghan and its English

translation by Paul Sprachman were studied using Pekkanen's (2010) model adopted from Leech and Short (1981).

At first, the frequencies of optional shifts made by the translator were investigated through a linguistic comparative analysis of the entire source and target narratives in order to come up with the most frequent optional shifts which would affect the narrative elements and show the narratological aspect(s) in this study. Every shift, which was not the result of linguistic or cultural obligation, was counted as optional shift. Following Glaset and Strauss's grounded theory (1967) adopted by Pekkanen (2010), the analysis of optional shifts was done at the word, phrase, and clause/sentence level. After optional shifts were identified according to Pekkanen's (2010) definition, they were classified and categorized and the frequency of each one was counted and recorded. Then, the most frequent ones, which made a pattern, were linked to the intermediate level of narrative elements.

3. Results

After all optional shifts were identified, it was revealed that there were 203 instances of optional shifts of expansion-addition in the English translation of the novel under study making up 21.92 percent of the total number of optional shifts identified. There are some examples presented below, which show how such optional shifts affected the narratological aspect and resulted in a different narration in the translated narrative and affected the reality of the war as portrayed in the novel "*Journey to Heading 270 Degrees*".

Table 1. Examples of Shifts of Expansion-Addition

The driver has his head out of the window and is glaring at me, "Drag that sorry corpse out of the way.	p. 43
I turn around and say, "Mister... You son-of-a ... louse...!"	p. 43
I rush toward him wanting to punch him in the face.	p. 43

From the above sentences, it can be inferred that Naser's character in the translated narrative is not the one portrayed by the author in the source narrative. Naser in the source narrative was a teen boy who had a naughty and fun character in the story, however, in the translated narrative, there were several cases of expansion-additions which portrayed him as an aggressive and rude person who insults others. These expansion-additions, done by the translator, changed Naser's character as portrayed in the source narrative.

Table 2. Examples of Shifts of Expansion-Addition

There are three young boys walking in the opposite direction with their books tucked under their arms- When they see the couple, they start whispering and giggling.	p. 23
From the alleys farther on, some boys rush toward us, with stones in their hands. Their arms rear back and they shout, perhaps to hurl at us both their stones and insults at the same time.	p. 49
There is a soldier standing in front of him (Ali) smoking a cigarette. As he looks around, he exhales in every direction. I cough. Ali looks at me and says, "It would be nice if people show some concern for others!"	p. 50

Sentences exemplified above describe the situation in Iran. Such sentences refer to people's concern about other issues rather than war, while in the Persian source text it is implied that war was the people's only concern. Therefore, in the translated narrative, the concern of people was expanded from merely war to other social issues, which were not mentioned by the author in the Persian narrative. Smoking cigarette by a trooper, unwelcoming behavior of the boys from the alleys, and inappropriate manner of the teenage boys when they saw a couple walking in the street, were some of

the instances of these other concerns, missing in the Persian source text and added in the translation.

Contraction-deletion optional shifts were repeated 112 times throughout the translated novel. Some examples are presented below to show how they affected the reality of the war as portrayed by the author in this novel. It is worth mentioning that contraction-deletion was not the most frequent optional shift and there were other shifts, like contraction-replacement, which were repeated 123 times (more than contraction-deletions), but they were not taken into account as affective factors on narratological aspect since they did not show any shifts on any aspects of the narratology. Following examples showed how such optional shifts affected the narratological aspect and resulted in a different narration in the translated narrative and affected the reality of the war as portrayed in the novel “*Journey to Heading 270 Degrees*”.

Table 3. Example of Shifts of Contraction-Deletion

بعد مهدی، او فرمانده مان است.	p. 203
یکی از بچه های دسته مون این سنگر بغلی بود، صبح یه ترکش خورد زیر گلوش. تا همین دو ساعت پیش جون می داد. غروبی تموم کرد نشد بفرستیمش عقب.	p. 152

As it can be observed, the sentences, exemplified in the table above in the source narrative, were missed in the target narrative. The first one implied that Masood became the commander of the second platoon after Mehdi's martyrdom. The other example portrayed the situation in which many troopers in spite of being alive, they could not survive.

Table 4. Example of Shifts of Contraction-Deletion

راه بازه. شما می تونین برین هویزه...	p. 163
The rat's net is open. Come through...	p. 184

The name of 'Hoveyzeh' was deleted in the target narrative. By deleting this linguistic element, the information about the Iraqi's aggregation place in which the troopers planned to enter and launch an attack, was missed. This shift was a contraction-deletion shift which happened at the word level.

The shifts which fell into miscellaneous category of shift types (Pekkanen , 2010) and had some influence on the narrative element through the aspect of the degree of specification by changing the information of the source narrative, were categorized as miscellaneous shift cases. 36 miscellaneous shift cases were found in the study out of which 3 cases were related to the word level, 3 cases to the phrase level, and 30 cases to the clause/sentence level, which means that most optional shifts occurred at the clause/sentence level.

Moreover, although miscellaneous shift type was found to be the less common optional shift type in this study in contrast to the expansion-addition and contraction-deletion, it changed the information presented in the source narrative in several cases. There are several instances represented below in order to certify the changing of information, which affected the degree of specification as the narratological aspect in this study.

Table 5. Example of Shifts of Miscellaneous Types

مولا مپسند که لوطیان خوار شوند.	p. 40
LORD ALI PRESERVE THE DIGNITY OF THOSE WHO ROB THE RICH TO HELP THE POOR.	pp. 58-59

As can be observed in the example above, the translator translated the sentence presented in the source narrative so differently that it affected the semantic field of the text and led to a shift in the degree of specification. Persian source narrative is saying “Lord Ali! Do not let your followers become humiliated; however, it was translated into English as

“Lord Ali preserve the dignity of those who rob the rich to help the poor”.

The underlined part of the sentence is expressing something new and this affects the readers' interpretation and viewpoint of the novel and of the shi'ism and Islam. Therefore, this shift type can be considered as a miscellaneous shift case, which occurred at the sentence level and affected the source narrative stylistically and semantically and changed the information presented in the source narrative.

Table 6. Example of Shifts of Miscellaneous Types

بی پدرا تو محلشون مظلوم گیر آوردن.	p. 140
The poor bastards are stuck in their own backyards!	p. 161

The sentence exemplified above, was quoted by Ali and refers to the Iraqis who surrounded the Iranian troopers so that they were not able to exit from their foxholes. The sentence was changed not only linguistically and formally, but also semantically in the target translated narrative in the way that it refers to Iraqis themselves who were stuck in their backyards. In this example, miscellaneous shift case happened at the sentence level.

4. Discussion

Having analyzed the data, it was revealed that the optional shifts of expansion-additions were prevalent (203 instances) and they provided target readers with information not included in the Persian source novel. Moreover, 102 instances of contraction-deletion revealed that many important linguistic elements, which carried information, were missed and remained untold in the target narrative. In addition, 36 miscellaneous shift cases changed some information presented in the source narrative.

In fact, these optional shifts can be said to change the realities that portrayed the war. According to Pekkanan (2010) “the degree of specification may shift in translation if information is added, deleted or changed” (p. 141). Therefore, the many instances of optional shifts identified in this study, which added information to the source narrative (expansion-addition), deleted some information from it (contraction-deletion), or changed the existing information (miscellaneous shift cases), can be said to affect the narrative element of the degree of specification. Furthermore, shifts identified in the aspect of the degree of specification can be said to affect the reality of the war as portrayed in the novel ‘*Journey to Heading 270 Degrees*’ and lead to a different translated narrative in contrast to the source narrative. The following table illustrates the effect of optional shifts on the narrative element.

Table 7. The Effect of Optional Shifts on Narratological Aspect

MICROLEVEL FEATURES
Common Features: Expansion-Addition, Contraction-Deletion and Miscellaneous Cases
↓
INTERMEDIATE LEVEL NARRATOLOGICAL ASPECT
Common: Shifts in Degree of Specification

This different narration observed in this study actually came from a shift in the narratological aspect, which was the result of the frequent optional shifts of addition, deletion, and miscellaneous shifts and changed the information presented in the source narrative. Therefore, we may claim that the many instances of optional shifts in this study caused a

change in the degree of specification, which is concerned about “the amount and accuracy of information provided by the translator for the reader” (Pekkanen, 2010, p. 31). Therefore, 351 instances of optional shifts identified in the English translation of the Persian novel affected the degree of specification and so the amount and accuracy of the information in the translation.

5. Conclusion

This research studied one of the many literary works on the Iran-Iraq War and attempted to reveal some changes in the narration of the war through bringing narratology and optional shifts together. In fact, we identified the optional shifts and investigated their influence on the narratological aspect through a case study of the novel ‘*Journey to Heading 270 Degrees*’. The Persian source narrative and its translation into English were compared using Pekkanen’s (2010) model adopted from Leech and Short (1981). Our analysis revealed that optional shifts of expansion-additions (203 instances), contraction-deletions (112 instances), and miscellaneous shift cases (36 instances) affected the degree of specification as a narratological aspect in this study. Therefore, we can rightly claim that the target narrative of war was different from the narrative of war in the source text as manifested by the amount of information changed during the process of translation.

The present research in fact provided a chance for the readers to see how the reality of the war as portrayed by the author in the novel ‘*Journey to Heading 270 Degrees*’ was affected by the translator’s different narration. It further shows how important it is for translators translating sensitive narratives like the narratives of the Iran-Iraq War and other narratives related to the Literature of Resistance to be aware of their translation strategies and the effect they may have on

changing the reality of the war. As Eshteaaghi (2015) states, “since this literature enjoys specific characteristics, its translation into other languages may be challenging” (p. iv).

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