



Ideological/Cultural Orientations in the Translation of a Narrative Text: the Persian Translation of the Adventures of Hajji Baba of Ispahan

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated ideological and cultural aspects of literary translation by specifically focusing on the analysis of the textual features of a literary source text, namely, Morier's *Adventures of Hajji Baba of Ispahan*, a novel originally published in English in 1823, and its corresponding translated target text, namely, *Sargozašt-e Hāji Bābā-ye Ešfahāni*, rendered into Persian by Mirza Ḥabib Iṣfahāni in the 1880s. Employing Halliday's (1985) systemic functional linguistics (SFL) as well as Venuti's "domesticating/ foreignizing" dichotomy for the analysis and assessment of translated works, the researchers analyzed the TT by accounting for the sets of constraints within which the expression of ideology and cultural elements take place. In order to indicate the translator's ideological orientations, the study concentrated on the analysis of a number of textual features, namely, "nominalizations", "voice shifts", "modality shifts", "agency shifts", "expansions", "contractions", and "thematic progressions". Domestication and foreignization strategies in the translated text have also been investigated to see if the translator had to apply any of the two strategies especially in translating cultural elements. The study finally comes up with the conclusion that the TT has been under the influence of ideological and cultural manipulations by the translator in order to conform to the target culture's textual and social values.

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Introduction

Regardless of various disciplines and fields of study, it is almost an agreed-upon belief among scholars—especially, those investigating into the history of civilization and the field of translation studies—that the very act of translating from one language into another has been with us as human beings since time immemorial (see, for instance, Calzada Pérez, 2003, p. 1). Translation has been playing a crucial role in disseminating knowledge, expanding scientific breakthroughs, and passing on mankind achievements across cultures and generations since the dawn of civilization. Nonetheless, as a social, psychological, linguistic activity, translation may not be regarded as a neutral undertaking (cf. Hatim & Mason, 1997), but as an activity in which social, political, religious, and ideological beliefs of the translator can be traced, though not explicitly. With the emergence of the cultural turn in translation studies, external factors affecting translation have been paid attention to in this field. Therefore, macro factors, such as translator, history, culture, politics in target contexts, translators' agency and ideological manipulation have become the main concern of translation studies (Munday, 2008). In this relation, Lefevere (1992), one of the representatives of the Manipulation school, believes that translation is the rewriting of STs which are manipulated by ideology, poetics, patronage and universe of discourse in which ideology and poetics are the most important constituents (p. xi). According to what has been said, ideology, which is a component of translation manipulation, is very close to language and language is a part of culture, so the relationship between ideology and culture can be shown by these definitions: 1. Culture is "a complex of beliefs, attitudes, values, and rules which a group of people share" (Larson, 1984, p. 431).

2. Ideology is a system of beliefs shared by members of a certain social group, sharing the same attitudes or knowledge (van Dijk, 2002). In Simpson's words (1993, p. 5), ideology may be defined as "the taken-for-granted assumptions, value systems and sets of beliefs which reside in texts".

According to these definitions, the translator should be well aware of the beliefs, attitudes, values and rules of the source culture, to understand them and to adequately translate them in the target culture.

Since ancient Rome there has been a discussion on how to transfer culture-specific items of the source language text into the target language text (Robinson, 1997). The hardest thing in translation is to find right equivalents for words with cultural implications. In the theory of translation this problem is called as untranslatability. Staškevičiūtė and Baranauskienė (2005) claim that cultures have not developed at the same time and assumed the same characteristics; as a result, translatability and equivalents are not readily possible. Kazakova (2004) points out that translation is more complicated when there is a considerable temporal or spatial distance between the source and target cultures. In a similar vein, Thriveni (2002) stresses that the writer's cultural tendencies should be reflected in the translated text.

As to the various translation strategies, or methods, applied by translators, or what Schleiermacher (1813, as cited in Lefevere, 1992) has labeled "the roads open to the translator", throughout the history of translation, the many different strategies that have emerged since ancient times may roughly be divided into two large categories: 'domesticating' and 'foreignizing' strategies (cf. Venuti, 1998, as cited in Ghazanfari, 2005, p. 28).

Schleiermacher (ibid.) in his speech claimed that there were only two different methods of translation (Lefevere, 1992, p. 149): "Either the translator leaves the author in peace, as much as possible, and moves the reader toward him, or he leaves the reader in peace, as much as possible, and moves the author towards him". Hatim (1999, p. 214) characterizes domestication as transferring "the discursive, generic and textual designs of the source text in terms of target language norms and conventions", leading to a final product which may convey an ideology different from that of the original text; whereas, he recognizes foreignization as a strategy which transfers "these values in terms of source language norms and conventions" (ibid.).

Relying partially on the frameworks of analysis put forward by Halliday (1985), later proposed by Calzada Perez (2002) for ideological orientations, and Venuti, this study will present ideological and cultural aspects of the literary translation under investigation by focusing on the analysis of the textual features of the literary ST and its corresponding translated TT.

Theoretical grounding of the study

The theoretical foundations of the present research are basically rooted in the theoretical premises put forward by Holliday's (1985) SFL, on the basis of which Calzada Perez (2002) proposed her own model of critical text analysis that delves into the ideological realms of translations. Their theoretical proposals are, in turn, fundamentally based on the line of thought put forward by critical discourse analysis (CDA). The other strand of thought on which this study draws to interpret the data is related to the methodological dichotomy proposed by Venuti (1995). A brief description of each theoretical orientation follows.

Holliday's framework for discourse analysis

Holliday's model of discourse analysis, based on what he terms systemic functional grammar (SFL), is geared to the study of language as communication, seeing meaning in the writer's linguistic choices and systematically relating these choices to a wider sociocultural framework (Munday, 2001, p. 90). The sociocultural environment therefore in part conditions the genre, understood in SFL as the conventional text type that is associated with a specific communicative function (Munday, 2012, p. 138). Genre itself helps to determine other elements in the systemic framework. The first of these is register (ibid.). In SFL, it is a technical term, richer and more complex. As Munday (2012, p. 139) points out, it links the variables of social context to language choice and comprises three elements: field of discourse, tenor of discourse and mode of discourse. Each of variables of register is associated with a strand of meaning or metafunction: ideational, interpersonal and textual (Munday, 2001, p. 91). The metafunctions are constructed or realized by the lexicogrammar, that is the choices of wording and syntactic structure (ibid.). The links are broadly as follows (see Eggins, 1994, p. 78, as cited in Munday, 2001, p. 91):

The field of a text is associated with ideational meaning, which is realized through transitivity patterns (verb types, active/passive structures, participants in the process, etc.).

The tenor of a text is associated with interpersonal meaning, which is realized through the patterns of modality (modal verbs and adverbs, any evaluative lexis).

The mode of a text is associated with textual meaning, which is realized through the thematic and information structures (mainly the order and structuring of elements in a clause) and cohesion (the way the text hangs together lexically, including the use of pronoun, ellipsis, collocation, repetition, etc.).

Venuti's translation strategies

The terms "domestication" and "foreignization" have been coined by Venuti (1995), on the basis of what was originally proposed by Schleiermacher (1813). The former refers to the translation strategy in which a transparent and fluent style is adopted in order to minimize the strangeness of the foreign text for target language (TL) readers. It means making the text recognizable and familiar and thus bringing the foreign culture closer to that of the readers (Zare-Behtash & Firoozkoobi, 2009). The latter strategy designates the type of translation in which a TT deliberately breaks target conventions by retaining something of the foreignness of the original (ibid.). Venuti (1995) sees the role of foreignizing translation "to register the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text, sending the reader abroad" (p. 20).

Method

Materials and procedures

As it was mentioned earlier, an English novel by James Morier (1823), entitled *The Adventures of Hajji Baba of Ispahan*, was selected as the literary ST and its translation into Persian (namely, *Sargozašt-e Hāji Bābā-ye Eṣfahāni*, rendered into Persian by Mirza Ḥabib Iṣfahāni in the 1880s) as the TT. The analytical comparison of the ST and TT was made in terms of Holliday's SFL with regard to nominalization, voice shifts (passive/active sentences), modality shifts, agency shifts, expansion, contractions, and thematic progressions by comparing the two texts sentence by sentence to locate ideological orientations adopted by the translator. Moreover, in order to see to what extent the translator has been under the influence of cultural constraints, a sentence-by-sentence comparison of the two texts was made in terms of Venuti's domesticating/ foreignizing translation strategies. Instances judged to involve ideology and cultural orientations in the TT have been located and noted down as qualitative evidence. To put it in other words, the researchers have attempted to investigate the following research question:

1. As the ST and TT producers are associated with different cultures and ideologies, to what extent are the translator's ideological and cultural inclinations reflected in the TT?

Morier's *Adventures of Hajji Baba of Ispahan*

Abbas Amanat (2003, pp. 561-8), in *Encyclopedia Iranica*, has described the book in the following lines:

The *Adventures of Hajji Baba of Ispahan* is the most popular oriental novel in the English language and a highly influential stereotype of the so-called "Persian national character" in modern times. . . . Morier's display of the Persian vagaries served as a reassurance of Europe's cultural and moral superiority and the civilizing mission of the imperial powers. The book contains eighty chapters. Despite Morier's biases, one can still read *Hajji Baba* as an informative source of the early Qajar period, by virtue of its Persian expressions and proverbs, portrayals of historical figures (often under a thin fictionalized disguise), and the general sense of everyday life in the Persian environment that it conveys. Mirza Ḥabib Iṣfahāni rendered this novel in Istanbul in the 1880s. His translations of European popular novels are indisputably superior to those of many of his contemporaries in style and complexity, as well as his grasp of the original message.

Analysis of textual features in terms of Halliday's SFL

In order to better clarify the intended meaning of the sentences or expressions under scrutiny in the TT, the translation of each instance of the ST into Persian is followed by a literal back translation into English by the researchers to allow the

comparison of the ST meaning with that of the TT for those readers who might need more clarification.

Thematic structures

According to Halliday (1985), Theme is the element which serves as the point of departure of the message; it is that with which the clause is concerned. Theme can be identified as that element which comes in first position in the clause. The remainder of the message, the part in which the theme is developed, is called in Prague school terminology the Rheme. (pp. 38-39)

In Halliday's opinion (ibid.), shifts in the thematic structure of a clause lead to changes in the meaning of the clause.

(1) ST: He took his new wife with him. (p. 100)

زن نوش در آن سفر همراه بود. (ص. 45)

TT: *zæn-e nosh dær aan sæfær hæmrah boud.* (p. 45)

[His new wife was with him in that journey.]

In the ST, 'He', which serves as the Theme, and, at the same time, as the agent of the sentence, has been replaced in the translation by 'zæn-e nosh' (his new wife), suppressing the agency of the man and, instead, granting the woman an agentive role.

(2) ST: She was delivered of me on the road. (p. 100)

من در آن راه از تنگنای نیستی به فراخنای هستی قدم زدم. (ص. 45)

TT: *mæn dær aan rah æz tængna-ye nisti be færahxnaye hæsti ghædæm zædæm.* (p. 45)

[I stepped from the tightness of annihilation to the vastness of existence on that road.]

Regardless of the couple of metaphors the translator added to the original message (an instance of 'addition', for certain), like the previous example, "she" in the original text has been translated into "I", shifting the agency in the original version from the mother to the baby.

Nominalizations

According to Fairclough (2005), "nominalization is linguistically a shift from verbs to a particular class of nouns in the representation of actions and processes" (p. 926). Nominalized items do not have any agents; in other words, they "undercut agency in that they can occur without any overt mention of agency" (Kies, 1992, Nominalizations section, para. 1).

ST: Misfortune seems to take leave of Hajji Baba, who returns to his native city a greater man than when he first left. (p. 354)

دور شدن بدبختی از حاجی بابا و مسافرت او به دیار خویش با مرتبه بزرگی (ص. 461)

TT: *dour shodæn-e bædbækhti az Hajji Baba væ mosaferæt-e ou be diar-e khish ba Mærtæbe-ye bozorgi* (p. 461)

[Misfortune taking leave of Hajji Baba and his return to his native city as a great figure]

In the example above, the verbal phrase 'seems to take leave of', with the finite verb 'seems', and the finite verb 'returns' have been translated as the non-finite, gerund phrase 'taking leave of' and the nominal phrase 'his return', respectively, no longer conveying concrete notions, actions or processes, but rather conveying abstract, unspecific events devoid of any agent.

Modality shifts

The term modality refers broadly to attitudinal features of language, reflecting the text producer's attitude towards, or opinion about, the truth of a proposition expressed by a sentence, or generally the status of what is expressed. It refers to some of the grammatical means by which a speaker or writer, in Toolan's words (2001, p. 7), "qualifies what would otherwise be absolute statements (Like It's wet and cloudy in Lima; ... [vs.] It seems that it's wet and cloudy in Lima)." Modality is indicated through the use of modal verbs. According to Halliday (1985, p. 75),

modality is "the speaker's judgment of the probabilities, or the obligations, involved in what he is saying".

ST: she soon gave me to understand that this must be our last meeting. (p. 182)(199. ص.) گفت: این دیدار آخرین است.

TT: *goft, in didar-e akhærin ast.* (p. 199)[She said, "this is the last meeting".]

This is another difference in syntactic transformation between the ST and TT. While in the ST, the modal verb 'must' suggests an obligation, the modality is totally absent from the TT, implying an absolute statement.

Passivization

Agency "can be expressed (or suppressed) by a number of syntactic constructions. . . . Central among the linguistic features that undercut agency is passive voice" (Kies, 1992, p. 231). He adds that "passives are among the most common grammatical devices to undercut agency in English, allowing the agentive noun phrase to occur out of thematic structure." He further maintains that, in passivization, "characters are not conscious initiators of action" (ibid.).

ST: The caravan was appointed to collect in the spring. (p. 102)

در اول بهار، کاروان رفتنی بود. (ص. 50)

TT: *dær ævæl-e bæhar, karevan ræftani boud.* (p. 50)

[The caravan was to depart in the early spring.]

While in the source text, due to passivization, the agent of the action is not specified, in the Persian translation, it has been explicitly stated that 'the caravan' itself made the decision to depart. Thus, there is a discrepancy between the two texts.

Contraction

Contraction is the opposite of expansion, where a construction with a process (that is, a verbal phrase) is contracted into a no-process construction, a nominalization, a phrase, a combination of words, and so forth.

ST: I gave myself much pains to have it well understood in the city that I was a confidential agent of the grand vizier. (p. 352)

به هزار مرارت، در شهر خود را محرم راز صدر اعظم قلم دادم. (ص. 457)

TT: *be hezar mæraræt, dær shæhr khod ra mæhræm-e raz-e sædr-e æzæm ghælæm dadæm.* (p. 457)

[With so much pains, I declared myself a confidant of grand vizier in the city.]

The two constructions with the underlined verbal phrases in the ST have been diminished into a prepositional phrase and a noun phrase, respectively, in the TT, having rendered a contracted version of the original text.

Instances of domestication/foreignization strategies

In addition to the transitivity shifts the target text has undergone, as discussed above, there are also instances in the target text that may be categorized in terms of the dichotomy proposed by Friedrich Schleiermacher in the 19th century and centuries later were labelled as 'domestication' versus 'foreignization' by Venuti (1995). In Hatim's words, "domestication is a transparent, fluent style in order to minimize the foreignness of an ST" (2013, p. 286). He conversely defines 'foreignization' as "a translation which seeks to preserve 'alien' features of an ST in order to convey the 'foreignness' of the original" (ibid.).

(1)ST: I should perhaps have received no more education than was necessary to teach me my prayers. (p. 100)

سوادم بایستی منحصر به درست خواندن حمد و سوره و نماز باشد. (ص. 46)

TT: *sævadæm bayesti monhæser be dorost khandæne hæmd væ soureh væ næmaz bashæd.* (p. 46)

[My literacy should be exclusively limited to correctly recite Hamd and Sureh and prayer.]

The translator in the example above by applying the strategy of explicitation added a couple of elements of religious value

(i.e. Hamd and Sureh) to the original text, referring to two Qur'anic terms. The reference in the ST is simply to prayers, whereas in the TT, we are faced with a text containing elements specifically related to the receiving culture, the Muslim world. Hence, the product is a domesticated text.

(2)ST: a bag of broken biscuit (p. 101)

کیسه نان خشک (ص. 49)

TT: kise-ye nane khoshk (p. 49)

[a bag of dried bread]

There is a discrepancy between the ST and the TT with reference to 'biscuit' and 'bread'. The reason that the translator opted for 'bread' instead of 'biscuit' may be explained with respect to the historical era the translator belonged to. It seems that at that time, an item like 'biscuit' was not so familiar to the receiving culture, that is, the Iranian society, while 'bread' was not only considered a widespread cultural item consumed by everybody daily, but also was indeed regarded as the major meal of the ordinary people. Therefore, the translator decided to replace the word 'biscuit' by 'bread' through applying the domestication strategy.

Concluding remarks

As we presented a few examples of the source text and the corresponding translated versions in the target text, indicating that the two texts do not seem to correspond in some instances, we may come to the final conclusion that Mirzā Ḥabib Isfahani produced a rather free translation of Morier's original work by adding or omitting some elements, by shifting some socio-cultural or ideological orientations through domestication to adapt the source text to cultural, sociological and religious beliefs of the receiving culture. To put it another way, the translator made his attempts to produce a target text which could satisfy the Persian-speaking readership's tastes, values, and beliefs.

As far as intervention on the part of the translator is concerned, the translator has exerted maximal mediation, to use Hatim and Mason's words (1997), in the process of translating the source text. Therefore, the result seems to have been producing a text "that is more compatible with generic, discursal, and textual conventions and norms of the target-language culture rather than the source-language culture" (Ghazanfari, 2005, p. 36), since the target text in some instances conveys ideological, cultural or religious associations which somehow differ from those in the original source text.

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