

IN THE NAME OF GOD



Kharazmi University

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**Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master of
Arts Degree in English Translation Studies**

**The Comparative Study of Retranslation of Literary Works in Iran:
A Case Study of Retranslations of John Steinbeck's *the Grapes of
Wrath***

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We hereby recommend that this thesis by Majid Hesampour entitled "The Comparative Study of Retranslation of Literary Works in Iran: A Case Study of Retranslations of John Steinbeck's *the Grapes of Wrath*" be accepted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in English Translation Studies.

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Abstract:

Branded as the ‘Historical exponent of relativity of translation’, the phenomenon of retranslation had never before received due attention or is used to raise other translation-related issues, instead. A hypothesis that sought to explicate it based on the initial ideas by Berman and Besnison (1990) posits that first translations mark a ‘deviation’ from the original, being TL oriented in nature. With time, the hypothesis runs, every new translation becomes more SL oriented to compensate for the ‘inherent’ failure of the first translations as TL readers gain knowledge and appreciation of the SL culture and text. Thus much of the literature on retranslation worldwide aims at testing the retranslation hypothesis (RH) to establish its credibility against empirical data of case studies. As for the current research, the corpus consists of three translations of the novel *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck translated by Meskoob and Ahmadi, Taherkish, and Sharifian, respectively. The main focus of the research was to test the fundamentals of RH by conducting the comparative analysis of the original and each of the translations based on Newmark’s translation procedures model (1988, pp. 81-88). By taking a quantitative approach, the analysis was meant to decide the method each of the translators used and to establish which one of the renderings was ‘closer’ to the original, then it was decided whether RH was substantiated or not. The findings seem to complement the arguments that not every retranslation is produced because of the aging of the previous translation as a result of changing needs of the contemporary readers. The present research, in the domain of DTS, might be helpful in taking an analytical attitude toward the translators’ works when considering further aspects of retranslation like changing of translation norms in Iran on the basis of other analytical paradigms.

Keywords: Translation, Retranslation, Retranslation Hypothesis (RH), Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS), Translation Procedures, Translation Procedures Model.

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Abbreviations

RH Retranslation Hypothesis

DTS Descriptive Translation Studies

ST Source Text

TT Target Text

SL Source Language

TL Target Language

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Overview

In his foreword to Alison Beeby's (1996) book, Amparo Hurtado Albir reminds that by the end of the twentieth century Translation Studies established itself as a discipline in its own right, giving rise to a definition of translation not only as "a textual operation, but an act of communication and a cognitive process" (Beeby, 1996, p. XI). He saw this "triple perspective" fit to be the point of departure for translation research which could, then, "count on a minimum theoretical foundation based on discourse analysis of comparative texts, the translator's cognitive processes, and the factors that intervene in translation as an act of communication" (Beeby, 1996). In his view, integrating these approaches, often "taken in isolation or as mutually exclusive", was the only remedy to move the discipline forward. The future of the discipline, as James Holmes had foreseen, was realized and molded within three separate branches, namely theoretical, descriptive, and applied translation studies, with the applied branch remaining the least investigated despite its applications in translation teaching, translation in language teaching, and translation criticism and evaluation.

However, when the first comparative studies of languages were formulated, there was much to be expected in terms of expanding the applied aspect of the translation profession. Most prominent among these was Vinay and Darbelnet's (1958) well-received work which later on was proved insufficient on both theoretical and pedagogical grounds despite undeniable implications in the development of strategies, techniques, or procedures (Beeby 1996, p.106). Comparative analysis of ST and TT which was the cornerstone of the above-mentioned model, being a case in actual study of translations remains capable of raising questions not just about the translation equivalence *per se* but about its type and degree (Baker 2009, p. 99). It can also serve as the starting point for a description of 'text structures' and 'systems of texts' (2009, p. 239).

Even the typology of shifts in translation is unimaginable without the aid of comparative analysis. So is the criticism of translation which necessitates the analysis of the source language text. For example, Newmark's five-part model for criticism is accompanied by a comparison of the original and the translation, entertaining comments about the translation's potential role as a translation (1988, p. 188). Of course, comparative study is the 'heart' of his model. Toury, as well, argues the probable role of comparative study in translation criticism, yet he notes that such comparisons often lead to no better results than 'enumeration of errors and a reverence for the original' (1978, p. 26; cited in Baker 2009, p. 239). The descriptions, so far, highlight the role customarily ascribed to parallel texts; a concept mainly pointing to the use of the TT of an ST (or vice versa) to discover the translation procedures and the translation strategy. With advances in descriptive research, today, translation memory systems are facilitated by comparable collections of such texts (Munday, 2009, p. 214).

When it comes to comparison, the subject of discussion, inevitably, shifts to the matter of quality in translation. Aspiration for quality as a concern expressed intermittently by all professional translators underlies the desire to translate. Quality in translation, of course, takes many faces which is why perfect translation models cannot and should not be created. Yet in "the construction of the comparable" (Ricoeur, 2006, pp. 37-8), to which translation has been equated in the yearning for an accurate, sensitive, and clear rendition of a text, translators are involved in much more than a translation process. And in this process, it is not only the translator who is in danger of being invisible, but the many tasks s/he needs to perform in order to work satisfactorily. It might, therefore, be important to make sure that the notion of translation encompasses a wide range of activities, including those related to analysis of the translated product.

The final shape of translation is, indeed, determined by the numerous factors involved in the communication process: the message to be transferred (the text to be translated), all the parties involved (e.g. author, translator, target text reader, as well as editor, publisher, distributor, illustrator, and critic) and also the intended function of the translation. Moreover, translating is also governed by numerous norms. Norms arise when one particular way of problem-solving has proven to be effective, and as a result of this success becomes standard procedure. Norms tell a community what procedures are usual and preferable, just like conventions, but in addition, they are normative, telling members of the community “how they *ought to* behave” (Hermans 1999, p. 81, original emphasis). All social life is constantly influenced by norms, which makes it impossible to dissociate translation from its broader historical context. Historicism is clearly inevitable.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Seen as a problem solving activity as in Wilss (1998), translation offers a solution to the communication breakdown that language barriers may cause. Sometimes, communication may be successful without translation too, especially when dealing with a transfer from a superior culture, i.e. from a geographical and/or political point of view, to a minor one, or when dealing with multilingualism in the receiving culture (Grutman, 2006, 2009). But mostly, language barriers are tenacious and some kind of translation is being called for. Regarding translating as solving a socio-communicative problem calls attention to the relativity of translation. As problems and solutions interdepend, changes in social context leads to changes both in translations and in the way translations are looked upon. Therefore, every translation as well as every definition of what is a (good) translation is relative; there will never be such a thing as ‘the’ perfect translation or ‘the’ translation theory (Desmidt, 2009, p. 670). Exponents of

historical relativity of translations are the so-called retranslations, i.e. new translations of the earlier translated texts. Especially older, classical works have been frequently retranslated, but even more recent and/or less canonical texts – can even take into consideration technical texts such as brochures or instructions – are often subject to retranslations. Retranslations result from the wish to meet the requirements of the receiving culture, requirements obviously not (no longer or not entirely) met by the existing translation(s) (Desmidt, 2009). As cultures continuously change, “every generation may take a different view on what is a good, i.e., functional, translation and may ask for the creation of a new translation” (Desmidt, 2009).

The phenomenon of retranslation is illustrated as a fairly simple matter: “a text that has previously been translated is translated again into the same language” (Paloposki and Koskinen, 2010, p. 30). Even the reasons for this seem simple. With “age”, the language of translations becomes “obsolete”; thereby, they fail to live up to “prevailing standards of faithfulness”. Readers are sometimes surprised to find that there are numerous retranslations of a single novel, short story, or other works of fiction. Moreover, the translation criticism is usually summed up in such statements as “it reads like an original” or “it is fluent.” These one-sided statements usually come from the fact that no comparisons are made between the originals and the translations (Reiss, 2000). And no doubt if such comparisons are made, many strengths and weaknesses of the translated texts come to the fore. Where the weaknesses and mistakes are due to incapability of the translators, it would be wise to make a retranslation in compensation. Such might be the case for a semantic translation that tends to be, in Newmark’s view, “more complex, more awkward, more detailed, more concentrated, and pursues the thought processes rather than the intention of the transmitter” (1981, p. 39) He believes that semantic translation tends to *overtranslate*, to become more specific than the original, to include more meanings in its search

for one nuance of meaning. Hence, there seems to be a common problem with many literary translations that they are incapable of producing the same effect – whether being intended by the translator – or adequate in terms of culture, language, and so on. That makes the case for retranslations which in the eye of many translation scholars is necessary for proper understanding and appreciation of the literary texts.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study, as the title suggests, lies in the application of comparative analysis to retranslation of literary works, on certain aspects. Samples taken from the novel *The Grapes of Wrath* as well as its three parallel texts have been subjected to the comparative analysis using the model of translation procedures proposed by Peter Newmark (1981; 1988, pp. 81-93) who initially differentiates between translation methods and translation procedures saying that while the former apply to “whole texts” the latter refer to “sentences and smaller units of language.” (1988, p. 81) The choice of the method for handling the procedures shows agreement with the use of sentences in the samples, to be precise; the procedures are singled out in any one of the sentences in each sample. Then, the process is coupled with detection and estimation so that, ultimately, the prevalent translation method that characterizes each of the translations in the corpus becomes evident.

The purpose of this research is in fact twofold: first, to explore the procedures in the samples of each translation which might give us some hints regarding the prevalent translation method each translator had used; second, to see whether the Retranslation Hypothesis with all it purports is acceptable in the case of the English language novels translated into Persian.

1. 4. Significance of the Study

According to the Retranslation Hypothesis (RH) the textual profiles of translations are determined simply by their chronological order of appearance. Retranslations are believed to occur after an alleged assimilation carried out by first translation. Yves Gambier (1994, p. 414) argues that “a first translation always tends to be more assimilating, tends to reduce the otherness in the name of the cultural or editorial requirements [...] the retranslation, in this perspective, would mark a return to the source-text.”

Retranslations are a frequent object of study in TS (Koskinen and Paloposki, 2003; Paloposki and Koskinen, 2004, 2010); They can be used as data for a number of research problems (Desmidt, 2009), or studied as phenomena on their own (Venuti, 2003, 2008; Susam-Sarajeva, 2003; Brownlie, 2006). This study seeks to argue for a need for a comprehensive treatment of retranslation as a phenomenon and discusses the implications of textual analysis for a better understanding and appreciation of this phenomenon. Vanderschelden (2000) argues in favor of a role for retranslation that probably overlaps that of evaluation and criticism. Along with ‘insightful observations’ usually found in translators’ prefaces and annotations, he adds that:

...Retranslations, however, are frequently undertaken with the intent of improving or even rectifying existing versions, and the evaluative comments they contain must themselves be evaluated in the light of their possible role in a translator’s own project (2000 cited in Baker 2009, p. 237).

In fact, there are numerous case studies performed, and theses or dissertations submitted worldwide on the phenomenon of retranslation at the national level, noteworthy among them are the following:

- Deane, Sharon L. (2011). *Confronting the Retranslation Hypothesis: Flaubert and Sand in the British Literary System*, PhD, University of Edinburgh, Scotland.
- Vándor, Judit (2009). *Adaptation and Retranslation*, Translation Studies PhD Programme, Eötvös Lorand University, Budapest.
- EKMEKÇİ, Aslı (2008). *The Shaping Role of Retranslations in Turkey: The Case of Robinson Crusoe*. Dokuz Eylül University Institute of Social Sciences Department of Translation and Interpreting (English) Master's Program.

To my knowledge and through consulting the available sources such as the National Library website, there has been no comprehensive empirical published work in Iran, particularly in universities, on the topic of retranslation with the specific reference to the novels. The domain of inquiry on retranslations in our country remains restricted to a few published Farsi articles in Persian scholarly journals with various areas of interest written by those presumably self-styled authorities on translation whose academic background mainly has to do with literature and nothing to do with translation studies (Eqbalzadeh, 2003). The regular theme of all such works, at best, is finding fault with one translation at the word level and favouring the other in the name of defending the precious mother-tongue and purifying the language from mistakes by illiterate, inconsiderate translators (Footuhi and Taebi, 2010). Lack of a clear-cut theoretical approach to retranslation and translation evaluation or criticism characterizes all such works.

Therefore, the account, so far, makes the current research somehow unique in that it suggests to be one (if not the first or only) of the kind that deals with the subject of retranslation of novels in Iran observing a theoretical foundation that makes use of a model of translation procedures proposed by Peter Newmark (1988) to see whether the retranslation hypothesis applies to the literary milieu of Iran. It is worth keeping in mind that translated literature has created an untapped reservoir for the study of retranslation that entices every researcher to work with (Jianzhong, 2003; Cetera, 2009; Venuti, 2003, 2008). The unfortunate thing is that the subject, in its entirety, has not yet drawn the attention of the few scholars who are still mesmerized with worn out matters like “equivalence” and “faithfulness” among other things. The researcher calls for a more attentive look on the capabilities that might be raised as a result of tapping on the subject of retranslation which has currently been sidestepped in Iran. The present study hopes to fill part of the gap.

1.5. Research Questions

In what follows questions are presented as the building blocks upon which this whole research is based. The number of questions has been limited to two so that they become more manageable.

1. Are the new Persian translations made out of texts which have already been translated due to inconsistencies that appear in the first translations?
2. Do Persian retranslations of the novel *the Grapes of Wrath* mark a return to the source-text after an alleged assimilation carried out by the first translation?