

# **In the Name of God**



**Shahid Bahonar University of Kerman**  
**Faculty of Literature and Humanities**  
**Department of Foreign Languages**

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**Translation of Narratives in *The Adventure of Hajji Baba*  
*of Isfahan***  
**Based on Baker's methodology**

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**Prepared by:**

**Morteza Masoumnejad**

**Supervisor:**

**Dr. Masoud Sharififar**

**Advisor:**

**Dr. Moeinzadeh**

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**Shahid Bahonar University of Kerman**  
**Faculty of Literature and Humanities**  
**Foreign Languages Department**

Hereby, we recommend that this thesis submitted by *Morteza Masoumnejad* be accepted as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Translation Studies (M.Sc.).

Committee Members:

**Supervisor:** Dr. M. Sharififar

**Advisor:** Dr. N. Moeinzadeh

**Referee 1:** Dr. A. Rostami Abou Saeedi

**Referee 2:** Dr. M. Shariati

**Faculty Representative:** Dr. H. Tirgar

**Research and Education Deputy of Literature and Humanities**

**Faculty:** Dr. E. Sharifpour

**Head of Department:**

Dr. Sh. R. Sistani

**Dedicated to:**

Anyone who taught me even a word

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## **Abstract**

Elements such as power, politics, colonization, etc., are among those which may impose intentional or unintentional manipulations or changes in translations by influencing the translator's thought and ideology. In this study Baker's methodology has been used to investigate the ways in which translators accentuate, undermine, or modify aspects of narratives encoded in a literary source text. According to Baker, factors such as temporality, rationality, particularity, and genericness are effective in encoding ideology into a text and consequently into its translation. Examining these factors in *The adventures of Haji Baba of Isfahan* and comparing it with two Persian translations, one of which has been done in 2000 and the other some 120 years earlier in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was observed that not only the source text is ideologically different from its translations but the two Persian translators have also applied different strategies to maintain their own ideologies in the translation, due to the fact that each Persian translation has been done in a different era with different political and ideological structure of the society.

**Key Words:** Translation, Ideology, Power, Narratives

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

SL.....	Source Language
ST.....	Source Text
TL.....	Target Language
TT.....	Target Text

## Chapter one: Introduction

### 1.1. Introduction

Communication plays a very important role in our life. Mankind needs to live a social life and therefore there must be a language with which he can express his feelings, talk about his needs, and negotiate his ideas. Not only the members of a society need to communicate but also societies and nations in the broader sense have to do so. In the globalized and modern life of this era, societies have to have relations with each other in order to survive. This is where translation emerges. Each society has its own language. Thus, some sort of transference of language must happen when communication takes place between different societies. This transference of language is called *translation*. Therefore; translation has gained a great deal of importance especially in the last few decades in which a new discipline called *translation studies* has been developed which is “related to the study of the theory and phenomena of translation” (Munday, 2001, p. 1). Since then, translation has been studied more scientifically and systematically. New approaches and theories have been introduced by scholars, new areas of study have entered into the discipline, and new

interdisciplines such as *translation and gender*, *translation and politics*, *translation and ideology*, etc. have emerged.

One of the most recent notions which have entered into translation studies is the notion of *narratives*. Baker has defined narratives as “public and personal stories that we subscribe to and that guide our behavior. They are the stories we tell ourselves, not just those we explicitly tell other people, about the world(s) in which we live” (2006, p. 19). Narrative in this sense is very much similar to Foucault’s discourse. It shapes the way people understand and think about their world. Societies differ not only in the language they speak but also in the beliefs and values they have. Each society has its own ideology and culture which determines and affects the behavior of its members. This ideology is often defined and constructed by those who are in power in the society. The rulers of a society often decide which values and norms should be promoted and which ones should not. They may make stories about the past which affect people’s view about present. These stories are called narratives. Many political stories such as the story of the invasion of Iraq or the story of Holocaust or that of the December 11 are familiar narratives which Baker (2006) has pointed out as the political narratives which are told

from many different points of view and are sometimes completely at odds with each other.

So, according to Bennett and Edelman “narratives shape people’s view of rationality, of objectivity, of morality, and of their conceptions of themselves and others” (1985, p. 159).

Given that each society wants to negotiate its narrative not just among its own community but in the international arena, translation and interpretation receive a very important status in this process. Translators like any other member of a society are influenced by the narrative which is imposed upon them. Each foreign term carries a wide range of ideological and cultural background with itself. Translators and interpreters face a basic ethical choice with every assignment: to reproduce existing ideologies as encoded in the narrative elaborated in the source text or utterance, or to dissociate themselves from those ideologies, if necessary, by refusing to translate the text or interpret in a particular context at all. Given that “accepting the work... implies complicity” (Seguinot, 1988, p. 105), translators can normally absolve themselves from such commitment by refusing to translate a text at all. However; there are many ways in which translators and interpreters can accentuate, undermine, or

modify aspects of narratives encoded in the source text or utterance. Baker (2006) has introduced some procedures and has explained how a translator can apply them in his work. This study is to examine these procedures to see how much they are applicable in the translation of a literary text, *Haji Baba of Isfahan* (Morier, 1828), which has been translated into Persian twice; once before and another time after the 1978 revolution of Iran. Since this work is about Iranian culture and lifestyle in pre-revolution time, and given the fact that the political and ideological system of these two periods—before and after revolution—is very different from each other, Morier’s novel has been chosen as the case of study.

## **1.2. Statement of the problem**

Translation of political texts has always been a challenging work for the translator, considering the fact that ideological and social values are different in the source and target culture. Translators may face some questions when transferring such text into another language: should he remain faithful to the ST and transfer the ideologies into the TT without making any change, regarding the receiver’s norms and values; or should he modify the text in order to

make it appropriate for the receiving society? The extent to which a text should be modified is also a problem for the translator. Translations need to be accurate regarding the ST and also acceptable regarding the TT; but, is it possible to achieve both when dealing with ideological issues? There is no direct method which tells the translator what to do to figure out this problem. This study has tried to find a practical solution for this problem.

### **1.3. Objectives of the study**

The purpose of the present study is to examine the effect of narratives elaborated in a literary text and the ideologies which they impose upon such text on a translator who wants to transfer such text into a TL. Using Baker's methodology (2006) as the frame of the work, this study is going to find out how a translator should deal with ideological aspects of a text and what procedures can he follows to make a text ideologically accurate and acceptable at the same time.

### **1.4. Research questions**

This study is to answer the following questions:

- a) Are translations really affected by the ideologies and narratives which rule over society?
- b) To what extent can a translator manipulate the ST?
- c) To what extent are Baker's strategies applicable in translation of literary texts?

### **1.5. The significance of the study**

Since cultural studies—especially those related to gender, politics, power relations, and ideology—have gained a great deal of importance in translation studies, and given the fact that not much works have been done on the subject, especially in Iran, the researcher found it appropriate to focus on narrativity and to study its effects on the translation of literary texts.

Narrativity is one of the most important, though least studied, notions which deal with translation. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, not much work has been done on the subject, especially in the context of English-Persian translation for which the researcher could not find any source of information or even related material. The only available work was that of Baker (2006) in which she first defined narratives and clarified its typologies and then introduced



some procedures that translators may apply when transferring a concept from a source text into a target one which has different ideology encoded in the narrative elaborated in it.

This study hopes to provide a helpful source of information for those who intent to work on such aspects of translation that deal with narratives and ideology. The following groups can benefit from this study:

- a) Students of translation studies who work on more recent areas of translation
- b) Anyone who is interested in translation and wants to know the relationship between translation and such terms as narratives, conflict, ideology, etc.
- c) Students of humanities, especially those who study politic sciences, and want to explore the function of translation on political situations and the effects of politics on translation.

### **1.6. Theoretical framework**

In her influential work, Baker (2006) has introduced some strategies which translators may apply when facing different narratives in two languages. She has divided narratives into four

types based on Somers (1992, 1997) and Somers and Gibson (1994) classification:

- a) Ontological narratives: Personal stories we tell ourselves about our place in the world and about our own personal history.
- b) Public narratives: They are, as their name suggests, stories elaborated by and circulating among social and institutional formations larger than the individual, such as the family, religious or educational institution, political or activist group, the media, and the nation.
- c) Conceptual narratives: Conceptual narratives may be defined as the stories and explanations that scholars in any field elaborate for themselves and others about their object of inquiry. Some of these stories or conceptual narratives can have considerable impact on the world at large, while others remain limited in scope to the immediate community of scholars in the relevant field
- d) Meta- (master) narratives

Somers and Gibson (1994, p. 61) defined **meta** (or **master**) **narratives** as narratives “in which we are embedded as contemporary actors in history ... Our sociological theories and

concepts are encoded with aspects of these master-narratives – Progress, Decadence, Industrialization Enlightenment, etc.”.

Then, Baker has explained how narratives work by defining some features of narratives which can be classified as follows:

a) Temporality

Temporality means that sequence is an organizing principle in interpreting experience. The set of events, relationships and protagonists that constitute any narrative—whether anthological, public or conceptual—has to be embedded in a sequential context and in a specific temporal and spatial configuration that renders them intelligible. Even when they are “characterizable in seemingly nontemporal terms (as a tragedy or farce)”, argued Burner, “such terms only summarize what are quintessentially patterns of events occurring over time” (1991, p. 6).

b) Rationality

*Relationality* entails that it is impossible to make sense of an isolated event, and that for an event to be ‘interpreted’ it has to be conceived as an episode, one part of a larger configuration of events.

c) Casual emplotment

While relationality means that every event has to be interpreted within a larger configuration of events, *causal emplotment* “gives significance to independent instances, and overrides their chronological or categorical order” (Somers, 1997, p. 82). It is causal emplotment that allows us to make *moral* sense of events, because it enables us to account for *why* things happened the way a given narrative suggests they happened. Thus, two people may agree on a set of ‘facts’ or independent events but disagree strongly on how to interpret them in relation to each other.

d) Selective appropriation

The appropriateness of a set of events in a narrative is determined by the agents who construct that narrative. Agents have specific evaluative criteria which enable and guides selective appropriation of elements from the vast array of open-ended and overlapping events that constitute experience.

Finally she has examined “some of many ways in which translators and interpreters... accentuate, undermine, or modify aspects of the narratives encoded in the source text” (2006, p. 105). She has introduced some procedures which “translators and interpreters can and do resort to... to strengthen or undermine