



**SHEIKHBAHAE UNIVERSITY**

**SCHOOL OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

**The translator's agency and ideological manipulation  
in translation: The case of political texts in Translation  
classes in Iran**

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN THE PARTIAL  
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE  
DEGREE OF MASTERS OF ARTS IN TRANSLATION  
STUDIES

By

Morteza Mohammadi Hossein Abadi

Supervisor

Dr. Katayoon Afzali

**January 2013**



**In the name of God**



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## **DECLARATION**

I declare that this thesis was composed by me, that the work contained herein is my own except where explicitly stated otherwise in the text. This work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification except as specified.

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## Dedication

To my Family and My wife for their support during the writing this paper

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am indebted to my supervisor, Dr. Katayoon Afzali, for her invaluable comments and patience which were indispensable for me to finish this thesis. I would also like to thank my wife for her unconditional love and encouragement.

## Abstract

This study aimed to investigate how and to what extent Iranian translation students may manipulate a political text ideologically. To this end, the researcher selected an editorial from the SpaceWar website regarding United States' claims about Iran's nuclear program and gave it as a translation assignment to thirty postgraduate Iranian students majoring in Translation studies at Sheikhabaee University. Firstly, the students were asked to merely translate the text without being aware of the purpose or function of the translation. In the second phase, the students were asked to translate the same text in order to be published in *Keyhan* newspaper. The two sets of translations were analyzed using Van Dijk's (2004) CDA Framework. Finally, frequencies and percentages of the discursive structures were computed across two sets of translations and used to systematically find out what proportions of the information extracted from translated texts were ideologically manipulated compared to the source text. The findings of the study did not show any significant difference across two types of translation. Furthermore, it was revealed that lexicality is the most frequent discursive structure used by the students to show their ideology in translation.

# Chapter one

## 1.1 Introduction

With the emergence of the cultural turn in translation studies, external factors affecting translation have been paid attention to in translation studies. Therefore, macro factors, such as translator, history, culture and politics in target context have become the main concern of translation studies. Meanwhile, translator's agency and ideological manipulation have been given significant roles in translation studies.

Manipulation is a common phenomenon in translation which has only recently been proposed by translation theoreticians of what is called "manipulation school". Lefevere(1992), one of the representatives of the Manipulation School, believes that translation is the rewriting of source texts which is manipulated by ideology, poetics, patronage and universe of discourse in which ideology and poetics are the most important constituents. Lefevere (1984) calls the manipulated text as "refraction". He argues that refraction would be any text produced on the basis of another, with the intention of adapting that other text to a certain ideology.

Recently, the effect of ideology of the translator on the target audience and the ideological presence of the translator in his/her translations have been noticed considerably by experts of the field. In some cases, such influences are obvious and explicit. On the other hand, in some cases more disciplined efforts are needed to realize the boundaries of the influences. The ideologies underlying a text could be found and understood through Critical discourse analysis (CDA). CDA as one of the main

branches of Discourse Analysis (DA) has mainly concentrated on the links between different approaches to talking and thinking. The focus of CDA is the idea that cultural and ideological cues could be found in spoken and written texts (O'Halloran, 2005). The current study using Van Dijk's CDA framework, intends to find out the extent to which translators and translation students are aware of the concepts of ideology in translation. At the same time, the study tries to investigate strategies used by translation students to manipulate a text.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

Since 1980s, translation has been synonymous with derivation. In the same vein, translators were assumed as mechanical living systems that replaced linguistic units from one language into another. The issue of translator's autonomy has been always questioned by those believing that translator is an imitator without any choice of creativity (Leppihalme, 1997). However despite the changes that have occurred in the field, some translation students are not still aware of them.

Recently, the concept of translation has been influenced by post-structuralism and functionalism. Thus, new concepts such as translator's agency and subjectivity have emerged. Likewise, the old concepts such as originality, absolute equivalence and author's superiority over translator have been reviewed and modified. In fact, the author's superiority over the translator is not valid anymore. In this respect, Bassnett (1996) has emphasized that the role of the translator in translation process should be modified. She goes on to say that translators intervene in different ways in the process of linguistic transfer and their role should be based on their interventions. Currently, translators have more authority toward the text which has created more accountability too.

Undoubtedly, attitudes and identities can make a variety of different translations of the same text or discourse that differ in socio-linguistics aspects. Similarly, a variety

of strategies are applied by translators to manipulate a text ideologically. As a result of these variations, the borders of translation ethics and visibility and invisibility of the translator in the target text is not crystal clear for most translation students or even professional translators. Lack of codified and comprehensive curriculum covering the issue is a problem of most universities that offer translation courses. The ideological presence of the translator in the target text and the effect of ideological manipulations of the text on the potential audience have been noticed by the experts of the field recently. These effects have been investigated via discourse analysis and some of them have clearly been defined and recognized.

In this regard, Nord (2003) believes that almost all the decisions taken in the process of translation are affected by ideological criteria, consciously or unconsciously. Ideological factors play a vital role in defining translation scopes (target-text intended purpose) and choosing appropriate strategies by translators regarding the clients' expectations.

Since it is believed that translators should be objective, faithful and trustful, the prevailing opinion of most of the readers is that the ideology of translators is not expressed in the target texts. On the contrary, it should be notified that the translator's ideology is integrated in every word they choose, and during the whole process of translation (Toury, 2000). Considering the significance of ideology in translation, the current study aims to investigate these changes occurring in the area of translation studies and the strategies used to manipulate the ideology of the translated texts. Accordingly the meaning of ethics has changed through out the years and ethics has been categorized into two branches: faithfulness to the text and faithfulness to the audience.

Considering the above mentioned changes occurring in the area of translation studies, the current study aims to investigate the extent translation students are aware of these changes happening to specify the strategies used by them to manipulate the ideology of the translated text.

## **1.3 Research Questions**

Considering Van Dijk's framework, this study is going to address the following questions:

1-To what extent translation students may consciously manipulate a political text based on their ideology in the process of translation?

2-To what extent translator's ideology may affect his/her translation unconsciously?

3- What are the common strategies used by the translation students in order to manipulate a political text ideologically according to the purpose of the translation?

## **1.4 Significance of the study**

There seems to be no doubts about the choice-making nature of translating activities. In the field of translation studies, the two poles of translation equivalence have been expressed in various terms: 'free' versus 'literal', 'dynamic equivalence' versus 'formal equivalence' (Nida 1964 & 1974), 'communicative' versus 'semantic' (Newmark 1981) and translators make choices on this spectrum.

The emergence of cultural turn in translation studies in twentieth century has taken translation studies away from a static concentration on individual ST-TT word equivalence, incorporating additional elements of context, participants and 'culture' (Vermeer 1986, 1989). In the cultural turn, the role of ideology in translation and ideological manipulations have been highlighted.

In order to convey the appropriate and intended message from one language to another language precisely, the translator should be completely aware of the ideological aspects of the source text as well as the intention of the author. Thus, translators and academics should be able to understand the original intentions of authors and speakers.

They also should be equipped with a reliable device in order to detect manipulative and ideological biases of language.

Considering the above mentioned facts, it is important for translation students to be aware that nowadays their responsibility is not just limited to the faithfulness to the author, but according to Baker (2011), the translators and interpreters are responsible for being faithful to the values of their society. Therefore translation students should be aware of this new change of scope in the area of translation studies. The findings of this research will indicate to what extent the translation students are aware of this change of scope.

## **1.5 Aims of the study**

Despite the efforts made so far, the role of ideology has not clearly been defined in translation and it has not been clear for most of the translators. How ideology shows or hides itself in the text and what is translator's agency regarding these ideologies are two questions that should be answered at first stage.

Although this study doesn't have a prescriptive approach, namely it is not going to say do's and don'ts of translation , but there is no doubt that being aware of students weak and strong points is essential for taking any substantial decision regarding translation courses. To this end this study is aimed to reveal that Iranian translation students to what extent are aware about ideological manipulation in translation and what are their most frequent strategies in order to manipulate a political text which can be helpful in the process of decision making for the authorities.



## **1.6 Definition of key terms**

### **Ideology**

According to Van Dijk Ideologies are foundational beliefs that underlie the shared social representations of specific kinds of social groups. These representations are in turn the basis of discourse and other social practices. He believes that ideologies are self-governing principles that are used by members of the social groups to answer the basic questions about the nature of the group such as who they are and what they work for. (Van Dijk 2006)

### **Political discourse**

The political discourse is defined in simplest way by defining its participants or politicians. In fact, political discourse is the discourse used by politicians. From this point of view, politicians are a group of people who earn money from their political activities and they are selected as the main players in the policy game. Common people are involved in political discourse when and only when they participate in political actions and act as political actors. (Van Dijk 1995)

### **Manipulation**

According to Longman dictionary, “manipulation means to make someone think and behave exactly as you want them to, by skillfully deceiving or influencing them” (Longman Online Dictionary, Retrieved January10, 2013). Van Dijk believes that manipulation is a communicative and interpersonal act through which an individual controls others behavior usually against their will or their interests (Van Dijk 2006).

## **Agency**

According to Britannica Encyclopedia agency is the relationship that exists when one person or party (the principal) engages another (the agent) to act for him. (Britannica Encyclopedia, Retrieved January10, 2013)

## **Chapter Two**

### **Literature review**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter contains some of the studies related to ideology and ideological manipulations. It also briefly explains how with the emergence of cultural turn in translation studies new concepts such as ideology, manipulation, and translator's agency have been proposed. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a field with the main concern of studying and analyzing written and spoken discourses to discover the power, inequality, bias and dominance that are lying behind the surface forms is explained in the next part. Subsequently, the theoretical framework and the rationale for choosing it for the study have been mentioned in next part. And at the end part some of the studies related to this study have been mentioned in order to make the readers have a better understanding of the subject under study.

#### **2.2 Ideology and translation**

Translation theories have undergone different changes throughout recent years. In these years many theories have been proposed by scholars. Familiarity with these changes is essential for translation students.

Among the translation theories, the cultural approach which is usually known as "cultural turn" has created a theoretical and methodological shift in translation studies.

This approach which is associated with the work of Sussan Bassnet, André Lefevere and, later, Lawrence Venuti was presented in the early nineties. Cultural turn highlighted the subject of ideology and since that time, many articles have been written regarding ideology in different fields of study. Among the other fields, translation field has not been an exception.

In this regard, Lefevere declares that ‘on every level of translation process, it can be shown that, if linguistic considerations enter into conflict with considerations of ideological or poetological nature, the latter tend to win out’ (Lefevere, 1992a, p.39). Bassnett & Lefevere (1990) also believe that context is the most important factor in translation. They believe that translation is related to the target culture and cannot be explained via the linguistic connections between languages. Nowadays culture has taken the place of language in translation. It has been proved that Translation is a powerful mode of cultural construction, by which nations can introduce and sustain their identity to the other nations and cultures (Bassnet and Lefevere 1990, p.12). According to Penrod (1993, p.39) ‘since we are always required when translating “to take a position” relative to other cultures and languages, we must as well remain ever vigilant as to the nature of position assumed’. If so, then translators always have been applying their ideology and beliefs in order to affect their translations.

In this regard, many researchers have investigated the effects of translator’s ideology on translation from different viewpoints. Among them Schaffner (2003) believes that translation can be ideological since choosing the source text and the use of translated text is determined by interests, aims, and objectives of social agents.

Cultural turn in translation has presented new concepts to translation studies; concepts such as rewriting and manipulation are two important concepts that enable scholars to redefine translation. Translation is rewriting and rewriting is manipulation that was applied in the service of power (Bassnett & Lefevere, 1990). From cultural approach’s point of view translations are representations or images of the source texts, as well as the source culture and history. Initially Lefever used the term ‘refraction’ to refer to the words that manipulate a text. Afterwards the term ‘rewriting’ was coined by him. According to Lefever (1992, p.9), translation is the ‘most obviously recognizable type of rewriting’. In translation the source text may be manipulated due to the ideology of the