In the Name of God

All Compassionate
All Merciful

To My Dear Family

ب

Islamic Azad University

Tehran Central Branch

Foreign Language Faculty

English Translation Department

A Study of Foreignization and Domestication Strategies in English-Persian Translation of African-American Literature in Toni Morrison's Novel

Advisor: Dr.Forouzan Dehbashi

Reader: Dr.Mansoor Fahim

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

by

Maryam Nemati

February 2012

CONTENTS

خ

LIST OF CHARTS

LIST OF TABLES

 د

ABBREVIATIONS

CSI	Culture Specific Items
DTS	Descriptive Translation Studies
SL	Source Language
ST	Source Text
TL	Target Language
TT	Target Text

1.1. Introduction

Translation as a meeting point of different cultures and civilizations has been dynamically involving with an introduction of various perspectives on the path of enlightening and awakening nations around the world. During the last few decades, the purely linguistic approach toward translation studies has given way to the view of translation as a cultural function. Therefore, a translator should be aware of the differences between the two linguistic cultures and should know, what is considered an appropriate or polite expression in one culture might not be true in another one. A factor, which is vital or very important in one linguistic culture, might not have a place in another culture.

Banks and McGee (1989) assert that most social scientists today view culture as consisting primarily of the symbolic, ideational, and intangible aspects of human societies. To them, the essence of a culture is the values, symbols, interpretations, and perspectives that distinguish one people from another in modern societies (p.76).

According to Nida as discussed in Delisle (1980:132), in order to translate, one must not only know a language but also must be familiar with the culture i.e. customs, civilization and mores of those who speak it .Nida also emphasizes that translation takes place in the context of the relation between two cultures, two worlds of thought and perception.

Bassnett and Levefer (1990, cited in Munday, 2001) state that "neither word nor the text, but culture becomes the operational unit of translation" (P: 127). Translation has discussed as the central models of contact cultures. (Bassnett & Trivedi, 1999, cited in Strierstorfer & Gomille, 2008: Vii). The translation aims to establish a dynamic relationship between text and cultures

2

rather than to reproduce a text in a foreign language. Levefer and Bassnet, (1998, cited in Munday, 2001) state, "History shows that translation constructs cultures. It does so by negotiating the passage of text between them" (P: 325).

In exposing the target culture to the source culture's influence, the translator exercises creativity both within and outside the target culture's norms. Venuti (2004), states that the translator has the choice between a domesticating translation, a translation that "leaves the reader in peace", i.e. an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to receiving cultural values, and a foreignizing translation that "leaves the author in peace", one which places an ethno-deviant pressure on the target culture (p.81).

Since, African-American literature, due to its historical background is the host of cultural images, myths, traditions and experiences, originated from a colonized culture by Anglo-Americans, the researcher decided to study the Persian translation of Toni Morrison's fifth novel, *Beloved* as a symbol of African-American literature that three different Iranian translators translated it into Persian. This research aims to investigate about the foreignization and domestication strategies which are adopted in translating the Afro-American culture specific concepts into Persian language in order to establish a dynamic cultural contact between Persian reader and African-American culture.

1.2. Background of the Study

Considering the importance of culture in translation, a large amount of scholastic attempts have been devoted to cultural translation strategies, in terms of foreignization and domestication. A theoretical survey of the related literature revealed that this domain of research has been an interesting field of

3

investigation for academic attempts. Here some of these studies are summerized. Montakhab (2006) has provided a product-oriented descriptive translation research to describe and analyze cultural translation strategies in the corpus. She focuses her study on three famous novel including: A Farewell to Arms by Ernest Hemingway, Animal Farm by George Orwell and Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix by j. K. Rolling. The research results indicate that domestication has been the most pervasive cultural translation strategy applied in the translation of mentioned novels from English to Persian.

Investigating the tension between domestication and foreignization, Maya Birdwood-Hedger(2006), has focused her research on the application of theses cultural strategies in Russian-English translation of "*Anna Karenina*".

Mlotkowki (2006) has investigated on the application of foreignization and domestication in translating science fiction literature. He focuses on the Star war, because he believes it is the best known representation for science fiction in polish literature. Mlotkowki has selected the proper names in subsequent translation of books adaptations of the classic *Star War* as the source materials for empirical study. The polish translated versions of these books are compared to their English correspondences. After statistical analysis of the subjects, the research results confirm that the dominate strategy in translating proper names in "Star War" is foreignizing strategy.

Heim and Tymowski (2006: 45) have attempted to elaborate the specifications of social science text in order to facilitate and qualify the translation process of these kinds of texts. Emphasizing on the crucial differences between natural science and social science, the authors try to provide practical strategies for translating social text. They believe that communication between author and translator is of crucial importance in

translation quality. One of the aspects that necessitate their mutual agreement is the extent of acculturating. It seems, the term "acculturate', here means to make original text readily accessible to the target culture by adopting its conceptual lexicon and structure."Acculturating" and 'clarity' refer to domesticating strategy. In the other words, the author and translator should have an agreement about to what extent a social science translation strives to reproduce the distinctive rhetoric and style of the source text. Striving to reproduce the distinctive rhetoric and style of the source text" and "distinctiveness of form" refer to foreignizing strategy. Heim and Tymowski believe that adopting foreignizing or domesticating strategy in translating social science text is a relative approach rather than absolute one.

Abdulaziz Al-Dammad (2008) asserts that applying domestication and foreignization has some political consideration. He cites an example in this regard: an Iranian translator, who works in Iran, should translate "الخليج العربى" as

"Persian Gulf" otherwise; he will probably miss his job. Abdulaziz Al-Dammad emphasizes the selection of each strategy should be conducted under careful examination of cultural and political factors. He believes both Arabic and Persian cultures have political values concerning that name, which would pose a real problem for translator. Abdulaziz Al-Dammad claims that adopting foreignizatin strategy in translating medical text of the Arab world has caused to produce so incomprehensible text insofar as , the medical students prefer to read the source text rather than translated texts.

Judickaite (2009) has done a case study on the applicability of foreinizing and domesticating strategies in Lithuanian subtitling of the Cartoon "Ratatouille". Judickaite attempts to draw a continuum of domesticating-foreignizing translation strategy. The inquirer has compared

5

the English script of cartoon with the corresponding Lithuanian subtitle in order to refine the above-mentioned CSIs. After carefully statistic analysis, Judickaite comes to conclusion that domesticating strategy is dominating strategy. Taking into consideration that the aim of subtitling is to achieve a comprehensible and even a simplified translation, the researcher argues that domestication is preferred strategy for translation.

Zare-Behtash and Firoozkoohi (2009) , have done a diachronic research study of domestication and foreignization strategies of Culture-specific items (CSIs), in English-Persian translation of six of Hemingway's work. The abovementioned researchers believe that the study of domestication and foreignization strategies in literary translation can provide valuable insight as far as it can determine the modern translation tendencies in translation text (P:1576). The research results demonstrated that despite of the presence of both domestication and foreignization strategies in translating the above mentioned novels into Persian, domestication has been most pervasive strategy and it surpassed foreignization strategy both in number of the procedures and number of applications.

Yang has done a comparative research study on the range of application of foreignization and domestication strategies in Chinese literature.

Afshar Zarandi (2010) has probed the fluctuation of domestication and foreignization in English translation of "Omar Khayyam's quatrains" by Fitzgerald.

Considering that researcher of the present study found no authenticated case study on treating of culture specific items of African-American literature in the field of translation studies, she has decided to investigate how Persian translators have treated cultural notion of African-American literature. Beloved as a "Noble-Prized" novel of African-American Literature has been

6

selected to find the Persian translation's approaches toward culture specific items of the source text.

1.3. Statement of the Problem

According to Venuti (2004), most publishers, reviewers, and readers judge a translated text as an acceptable product when it reads fluently. When the absence of any linguistic or stylistic peculiarities makes it seem transparent, giving the appearance that it reflects the foreign writers' personality or intention or the essential meaning of the foreign text ,the appearance, in other words, that the translation is not in fact a translation, but the "original" whether prose or poetry, fiction or nonfiction. The illusion of transparency is an effect of fluent discourse, of the translator's effort to insure easy readability by adhering to current usage, maintaining continuous syntax, fixing a precise meaning.

The scope of translation studies over the last deceased has shifted away from merely linguistically approach toward integration of the cultural, social and political aspects. The comprehensive works of Venuti (1992,1995,1998a,1998b) designate translation as vehicle of cultural and political engagement (Tymoczko , 2000:24) .Venuti in the light of considering culture as the operational unit of translation(Bassnett and Levefer 1990, cited in Munday, 2001: 127) has provided two major cultural translation strategies namely foreignization and domestication. Since the study of foreignization and domestication strategies in literary translation can provide valuable insight as far as it can determine the modern translation tendencies in translating literary texts(Zare-Betash and Firoozkoohi, 2009:1576), many of academic attempts have dedicated to examine the

7

application of these strategies in translation of English-American literature. Montakhab (2006) has focused this research on the novels of Hemingway, George Orwell, and j. K rollings .Zareh-betash and Firrozkoohi (2009) had done this research on the translation of Hemingway's six famous novels. Sadat Hosseiny (2007) has accomplished the similar research in English-Persian translation of Falkner's works. As it appears, all the investigations focus on application of foreignization/domestication on translating English literary text originated from dominant western culture, from white novelist.

Many of leading advocate of African-American literature, including H.L Gates (1984, cited in Bressler, 2006) insist that African-American literature should be viewed as a form of language not as a representation of western culture(P.332). Acknowledging the African-American literature as a distinctive literary practice, Bressler (2006:250), asserts that African-American literature should neither be interpreted through the lens of the dominant culture nor be dubbed as a subcategory of Anglo-American literature. Whereas, the African-American literature as a distinctive aspect of English posses special and unique characterization which originate from an enriched cultural, social and historical background. According to Lee, Rosenfeld and et.al (2003:47) the Afro-American discourse manifests the features like use of dramatic language, use of or description of body language and gesture, sermonic tone, cultural references, use of direct speech and field dependency.

Considering the mutual consensus of many language scholars on the cultural and social richness of African-American literature, it seems the treatment of distinctive features of it, demands especial versatility of translation. A translator should attempt to transfer the especial features of African-American literature to the target readers.

8

Tymoczko (2000: 29) acknowledges translation as a powerful means of drawing together oppressed peoples and giving them their potential role of self-determination. Considering that both African-American and Persian literature have originated from an enriched cultural civilization, this research aims to unveil the main cultural translation strategies in the dichotomy of foreignization /domestication applied in English-Persian translation of one of the most prominent of African-American literature .

1.4. Statement of the Research Questions

The present study is an attempt to investigate the cultural translation strategies that the Persian translators may adopt in translation of African-American cultural concepts considering foreignization and domestication tendencies in translation. To achieve the purpose of this study, the researcher has formulated two main questions; a qualitative one (**Q1**) and a quantitative one (**Q**2):

Q1: What are the most dominant cultural translation strategies among Iranian translators of Toni Morrison's novel *"Beloved"* as the symbol of African-American literature, considering domestication and foreignization?

Q2: Is there any significant difference between the domestication and foreignization strategies applied in English-Persian translation of Toni Morrison's novel "*Beloved"* as the symbol of African-American literature?

1.5. Statement of the Research Hypothesis

The following hypothesis is based on the second question of the research, which has a quantitative nature and has to be answered quantitatively.

H0: There is no significant difference between the domestication and foreignization strategies applied in English-Persian translation of "***Beloved***" as the symbol of African-American literature?

1.6. Definition of the Key Terms

Translation Studies

According to Baker (1998:227), translation studies is an academic disciplines which concern itself with the study of translation .It deals with the study of translation at large, including literary and non-literary translation, various forms of oral interpreting ,dubbing and subtitling.

Foreignization and domestication

According to Venuti (1995:19-20), foreignising strategy refers to the translation method which does not conform to norms and values prevalent within the target language system.

Munday (2001:147) believes that adopting a foreignization strategy, results in visibility of translator by preserving the cultural and linguistic differences between source language (SL) and target language (TL).

Baker (1998:243) points out that foreignization produces a non-fluent and alienating target text (TT).

Domestication, in contrast is a translation strategy by which the source text (ST) made appropriated according to the norms and conventions of the target language by using of stylistic devices. (Venuti, 1995:20).

According to Baker (1998:242) domestication involves selecting texts which conforms the literary canons, resulting in "conservative and assimilationist approach to the foreign text", provides a transparent and fluent reading by minimizing the foreignness of the TT (Munday:146)

African-American Literature

According to Dickenson-Car (2005:10-11), African-American literature refers to the body of literature produced in the United States by writers of African descents. Bressler (2007:224) asserts that this body of theory and criticism has been evolving overtime since the publication of earliest literature poem written by African slaves such as Jupiter Hammons (1711-1806) and Phillis Wheatley (1753-1784).

According to Rabteau (1934: cited in Dickenson-Car, 2005) all African-American studies, including African-American literature speaks to deeper meaning in this nation (P.32). It explores the very issues of freedom and equality, which were long denied, to blacks in the United States. Bressler points out African-American criticism challenges established ideologies, racial boundaries and racial prejudice.

Culture Specific Items

According to (Fyodorov, 2002:199, cited in Birdwood-Hegdger, 2006), culture specific items denote physical objects and social realities, specific for a peculiar nation or country(P:107). They sound natural in the source language and especially difficult to translate.

11