

In the Name of God



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**Skopos Theory and Translating Strategies of CSIs in
Translated Literary Texts from English into Persian**

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To

All those

who have had

significant roles

in my life.

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Abstract

Translation has become a cultural act which plays a significant role in human life. With the emergence of functional translation theories, and *skopos* theory in particular, translation has been considered as a purposeful, interpersonal and intercultural activity which is produced for particular recipients and directed by a specific purpose. This purpose determines the translation strategies employed in translating different elements of a text. So it is the translator's task to choose the best strategy due to the specific purpose. Some scholars maintain that *skopos* theory is not applicable to literary texts since such texts do not have any specific aim. The present study investigated the applicability of *skopos* theory to the literary texts from English to Persian and checked the effect of translation *skopos* on the translation strategies of political and religious CSIs. Therefore, two novels, *The Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan and *1984* by George Orwell, and their translated Persian versions were analyzed. The results demonstrated that *skopos* theory is applicable to literary texts, and the translation purpose has a significant effect on the translation of religious and political CSIs.

Key words

skopos theory, translation purpose, translation strategies, literary texts, political and religious CSIs

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List of abbreviations

ST	Source text
TT	Target text
SL	Source language
TL	Target language
SC	Source culture
TC	Target culture
CSI.....	Culture-specific item
DTS.....	Descriptive translation studies

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1. Introduction

Translation has become an art in modern world. It is a kind of communication means through which the opinions and thoughts are exchanged. Since language is a part of culture, the translator should be aware of both the source and target cultures in order to translate adequately. There have always been some problems regarding the translation of cultural terms. Language is not just a classification of general concepts. If it were so, it would be so easy to translate from one language into another. However, language is a part of culture and different concepts have different meanings in different languages. The difference between two languages and the difference between their cultures make the translation a very challenging act.

Theories of translation and the role of translator have been changed significantly over time. For many years translation was considered as copies of the source text (ST), and translators were identified as the entities replacing linguistic terms from one language into another and didn't have a given identity. In the

recent years, under the influence of functionalism the focus of attention has been changed and the translator is no longer considered as inferior to the author (Baker, 2001). There was a great shift from the linguistics to the function in translation, and the traditional view of translation in which the translator's primary task was to transfer the meaning of the source text, has been wholly challenged. Functionalism is a major shift from linguistic equivalence to functional appropriateness. From the perspective of functional approach to translation, translation is viewed as a cultural act (Schaffner, 1998).

As the source text is originally produced for a given situation and specific readers in a source culture, the translator deals with intercultural communication and transfer. Since the author of the original text doesn't know anything about the target culture, so it is the translator's task to do the cultural transfer. The source and target texts may be different from each other not only in the formulation of the content but also in the aim or goal determined for each. As language is a part of culture, so the translation is also related to the culture. Therefore the translator needs not only to be bilingual but also bicultural. A good translator is the one who has a comprehensive knowledge of both the source language (SL) and target language (TL), and the source culture (SC) and target

culture (TC), and the translation is dependent on the needs and expectations of the recipient and also extra-linguistic situation.

When the translator wants to start translating, s/he should pay attention to the text type and specify the purpose of translation. There are so many factors which should be taken into consideration by translators while translating cultural elements and there is much more success in the process of decision making by taking these factors into account.

This thesis tries to examine the role of the purpose of translation on translating cultural elements.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Translation is a process dealing with many factors. Whenever a translator decides to translate something, s/he should deal with many difficulties. Translation is an activity which inevitably involves two languages and as a result two cultures.

The definition of culture according to Oxford dictionary (2009) is: “Customs, beliefs, art, way of life, etc. of a particular country or group”. Newmark (1988b, p.94) defined culture as “the way of life and its manifestations that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expressions.”

Language and culture are closely related to each other. Language is a part of culture and in fact "the heart within the body of culture" (Bassnett, 1980, p.13). It is believed that culture has a significant effect on language, and it is the culture that makes language.

Since different nations have different cultures which give local color to their language and as far as the translator deals with two different languages and therefore different cultures, it's obvious that translators suffer from difficulty of translating cultural elements from one language into another which requires a great linguistic and cultural knowledge of both languages. Translation is actually a process of transferring culture and translators are always faced with the problem of translating culture- specific items (CSIs) in the most appropriate way. In 1964, Nida concluded that differences between cultures may cause more severe implications for the translator than do differences in language structure.

Some strategies and procedures are introduced by Newmark (1988b), Vinay and Darbelnet (1995) and some other scholars concerning cultural translation. It's the translator's task to choose among different strategies the best one. In order to do that, s/he needs to be aware of factors affecting cultural translation.

Newmark (1988b) introduced some contextual factors for translating process of culture- specific items among which the purpose of the text is of great importance.

Each text in each language has a function, and consequently a purpose should be taken into consideration by the translator (Vermeer, 1996). In 1989, Reiss discussed that the transmission of the predominant function of the ST is the determining factor by which the TT is judged. But sometimes the function is not the same for both ST and TT. There are basically three text types: informative, expressive, and operative, each of which includes different text varieties (Reiss, 1989). Specific translation methods are recognized according to the text- type and predominant function. Functionality is an important criterion for translation. However, a relationship should be established between ST and TT, the nature of which is determined by the aim or purpose or as Vermeer (2000) states “*Skopos*”. Therefore the purpose of translation determines the translation method and strategies that are to be used to produce a functionally adequate TT. As a result the translator needs to know why he is translating an ST and what the function of the TT will be. So the translator is the key player in a process of intercultural communication (ibid). Translation of cultural items depends on the purpose of translation, and the

strategies employed in the process of translation are determined by that purpose. In some texts, certain culture-specific items are retained in the TT to maintain the local color. In some others, equivalence should be provided for a communicative purpose. So the strategies employed in each case are different due to the purpose of translation. Some believe that literary texts do not have any specific purpose and neither do their translations (Vermeer, 1996). Nowadays, literary texts are filled with culture-specific items and play a significant role in cultural communication. So they do have specific aims. The eternal problem of translation and especially literary translation is that the translator gets confused of how tightly a translation should follow the original text and what kind of liberties s/he has when translating a text. As mentioned earlier, many factors affect the way in which a text is translated. The purpose of the translation, among all these factors, has a significant effect on the translator's decision-making in rendering CSIs. Therefore it's necessary for literary translators to find the function of the source text in the source culture and to decide on the purpose of their own translation in order to choose the best strategies based on the translation *skopos*. They have to decide whether the target text serves the same function as the ST and

accordingly be aware that this decisive factor highly influences their application of translation strategies.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study is to test whether *skopos* theory can be applied to translation of religious and political culture- specific items of the selected literary corpora from English into Persian. Since the purpose of translation determines the translation strategies employed in translating different elements of a text, and as far as the *Skopos* theory is valid for different varieties of informative and vocative texts, this study seeks to investigate whether it's also applicable to literary texts which are known as expressive texts or not, and wants to find out how Newmark's translation strategies employed in translation of cultural elements are effected by the purpose of translation. Consequently, it is to check whether the employed strategies serve the significant purpose or not.

Therefore, the present study is to analyze two English literary books, named *The Pilgrim's Progress* and *1984*, and their Persian translations in order to check whether *Skopos* theory and its rules can be applied to them or not.

1.4. Research Questions

This study is to provide answers to the following research questions and if possible try to find whether there is solution for them. It also seeks to test the hypothesis which was a criticism to the *Skopos* theory as mentioned in the theoretical framework.

1. To what extent is *skopos* theory applicable to the translation of religious and political culture- specific items in literary texts from English to Persian?

2. How does the purpose of translation affect translation strategies employed in translating religious and political culture-specific items from English to Persian in the selected corpora?

1.5. Significance of the Study

This study, to the best of researcher's knowledge, is one of the few studies which search the translation of cultural elements in literary texts concerning the purpose of translation through a comparative textual analysis between Persian and English.

So far, some studies have been done to investigate the problems and difficulties of cultural translation in literary texts,

but none of them has paid enough attention to the purpose of translation as an important factor which is believed to determine the translation strategies and even methods.

The present study highlights the effect of the purpose of translation on translator's decision-making process and strategies s/he applies to the translation of cultural elements.

Those who will benefit from the result of this study are:

1. Translation students who should learn the problems and difficulties of translation, cultural translation in particular, from the beginning of their studies. Reading a text to translate, translators come across some cultural elements the translation of which is problematic for them. To solve this problem, they have to take many factors into consideration, one of which is the purpose of translation.

2. Translation teachers who are supposed to instruct students in the most appropriate way and help them find solutions for translation difficulties based on the fundamental translation theories and practical studies which have been done so far.

3. Researchers who need the information and results of the previous studies related to their works.