In the Name
# of Allah
The Most
Trustful

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Translation Quality Assessment of Two Translated Versions of “Matilda”, a Story for Children, Based on Julian House’s Model

Advisor:
Dr. Kourosh Akef

Reader:
Dr. Masoud Motahari

By:
Nafiseh Tahernezhad

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Dedicated to
My Dear Parents
to Whom I Owe
a lot

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Abstract

Children are among special literature audiences and writing and also translating for them have specific characteristics which are different from those of adult’s literature. Considering these characteristics would be more important when the story is read by the child himself. A translation with a proper quality can increase the reading tendency of those children who are practicing their first years of reading experiences. Since its introduction in 1959, Translation Quality Assessment (TQA) has been among the most addressed research topics in translation studies. Thus, this study aimed at evaluating the qualities of two translations of a long story for children, Matilda, based on House’s model of the translation quality assessment (TQA). According to the House’s model of TQA, the analyzed data showed, despite the valuable work by Tahmasebi, Alipour’s translation was more appropriate because it is translated more overtly. Through this study this model was proved as a means by which translators and publishers could assess their translations. It could also be used in translation workshops by translation students in order to practice to produce translations with good qualities.

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CHAPTER I

Background and Purpose

Since its *introduction* in 1959, Translation Quality Assessment (TQA) has been among the most addressed research topics in translation studies. During recent years, there has been a crucial increase on the study of TQA. Various methods have come on scene. Although these methods are based on scientific theories, most of them have remained at the level of theory. Juliane House's model is among those methods which are applied in different TQA researches.

Juliane House (1976) has regarded almost all translational theories in her book as *Mentalist* view; *Response– based* view; and *Discourse and text – based* views. She has stated that her view is a part of discourse – based theories which she has elaborated on her model later on. According to her "equivalence" is the fundamental criterion of translation quality.

House, in her model, has introduced two types of translation which are suitable for different texts based on their situational dimensions and functional equivalence. These two translational types are overt and covert translations.

Overt translation is a kind of translation in which target text addressees are not directly addressed. It is tied to the source language and culture. The definition of *covert translation* indicated by House (1976) is

“It is a kind of translation that enjoys the status of an original source text in the target culture” (House, 1997, p.69).

She believes that *overt translation* includes political, simplified, literary, religious texts, etc. On the other hand, *covert translation* consists of business circulars, scientific texts, journalistic texts, advertisements, information booklets and etc (House, 1997, pp. 66-71).

Due to different target language audiences and different translation purposes, a source language text can be translated in several ways. According to Oittinen (2000), children’s literature has its own special features: children’s books are often illustrated and meant to be read aloud. Thus, one way to classify the literature audiences is the age. Hence, children are among the specific literature audiences.

Cuddon (1984) mentions that until 18th century there was no book, specifically written for children. But nowadays, society views childhood as the most important period of life, because most of the behaviors of adults are perceived to be connected with their childhood experiences (Shavit, 1986). On the other hand, Shavit (1986) believes that patterns used in children’s literature are simple, because children’s knowledge of the things around them is limited. Hence, unfortunately some translators try to translate children’s books as simple as possible without paying much attention to the source text.

According to Hejazi (2006), books with good translations are essential for all children, especially those who are experiencing reading by themselves, because good translations play an important role in children's reading, or better to say their learning development, and in shaping good memories of reading in their mind which will lead to increasing reading habits. Therefore, it can be said that the TQA for children literature is more important than it can be for adults' literature.

This study aims at applying House's model of TQA on two different Persian translations of a story for children, "Matilda" by *Roald Dahl*. The researcher applies some examples in both languages of English and Persian to make the statements more clear.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Translation is a challenging activity and its product has always been assessed by its addressees, its translator, other translators and so on. There are difficulties that appear during translation process, as each language describes the world in a different way, is tied to a specific culture and has its own grammar structure, grammar rules and syntax variance. For example, some words seem untranslatable when one wishes to remain in the same grammatical category and to maintain the same cultural meaning.

On the other hand, sometimes due to special addressees, a text may have its own special characteristics. According to Oittinen (2000), children's literature has its own special features: children's books are often illustrated and meant to be read aloud. Thus, children’s literature is among the special kinds of texts, the translation of which may be problematic to translators. Hence, the matter of assessment of the quality of the translated versions of children’s literature will be of significance. Accordingly, the questions would be:

- How a translator can assess the quality of his/her translated version of a children-specified text?
- Is there any theoretical and practical framework through which a translator can assess the translated text for children?

The purpose of the present study is to apply House’s model of TQA on two different Persian translations of a story for children, “Matilda” by *Roald Dahl*. It should be mentioned that this story is chosen, because its translations have been published by two famous Iranian publishers, namely Ofogh and Markaz.

1.2. Research Question

According to what was stated above, the research question of this study can be posed as:

- Considering House’s model of TQA, in what ways are the qualities of two Persian translations of “Matilda” different?

1.3. Definition of Key Terms

***Translation Quality Assessment*:** It refers to a “branch of translation studies concerned with both linguistic analysis and comparison of source and target texts and social value judgment” (House, 2009, p. 119).

***Julian House’s model of Translation Quality Assessment*:** It involves a systematic comparison of the textual “profile” of the source text and the target text (House, 1997). “This comparative model draws on various and sometimes complex taxonomies, but this can be reduced to a register analysis of both source text and target text according to their realization through lexical**,** syntactic and textual means” (Munday, 2001, p.92).

***Function of the language (function of the text)*:** It is the application or the use which the text has in the particular context of a situation (House, 1997, p. 36).

***Overt translation*:** It is a kind of translation in which target text addressees are not directly addressed. It is tied to the source language and culture (House, 1997, p. 66).

***Covert translation*:** It is a kind of translation that enjoys the status of an original source text in the target culture (House, 1997, p.69).

***Children’s literature*:** the literature for children and young people is defined not as those books which they read, but as a literature which has been published for – or mainly for – children and young people (Reiss, 1982, cited in Lathey, 2006, p.7)

1.4. Limitation of the Study

This study applies the House's model of TQA on two different Persian translations of a story for children: "Matilda" by *Roald Dahl*.

Of course in the practical process of assessment, the influences of some factors such as setting, time, fatigue and etc. can not be controlled by the researcher.

1.5. Delimitations of the Study

There are different models for TQA like Halliday's model, Malcom Williams's model, Reiss's model and etc. Among these models researcher has applied House's model for this study.

The mentioned story has been selected as a sample of famous children stories, because it has been translated to Persian by two different translators and both source and target texts are available. Other studies can be done on other available samples.

Under House's model of TQA, the researcher will assess the quality of two different translations only according to features of overt and covert translations. There maybe other possible factors that are not involved in this study.

This study has been done only on Persian translations of the mentioned story. Other studies on translations of this story to other languages may prove different results.

1.6. Significance of the Study

Unlike what happens in the translation process of adults' books, the translation of children's literature "is permitted to manipulate the text in various ways by changing or abridging it or by deleting or adding to it" (Shavit, 1986, p. 112). Some of these changes may lower the quality of translation. Hence, one of the most crucial problems in the translation is evaluation or assessment. This kind of evaluation is more needed in children's literature, because childhood is a crucial period and the first reading experiences happen in this period of life. Reading good translated books in childhood can develop the whole reading process in future.

Scholars have viewed the translation quality assessment differently. One of the effective models of the quality assessment of translation is House's model. This model introduces two main types of translation, i.e. *overt* and *covert* translations.

In this study the House's model of TQA will be applied to indicate the situations in which two translators of a story for children, "Matilda", have improperly translated some parts of the deemed sentences. The possible method for these translations, according to House, must be overt translation. However, sometimes translators render some parts of sentences covertly, which is not correct. Due to this fact, problematic sentences are selected from the mentioned translations.

Finding a model for the assessment of the children's literature can answer the needs of some publishers in order to have a framework through which they can assure the publishing of books with a better quality.

The issues presented in this study will also be beneficial for those who are interested in translation and the related studies. The study can be helpful to the translators, especially the amateur ones, having problems in translating children's stories. It can help the students whose major is translation studies. It offers them a number of ideas and techniques to consider in their translations.

CHAPTER II

Review of the Related Literature

This chapter reviews the related literature in different parts. The first section briefly discusses the history of the translation and translation quality assessment. The next part investigates the importance of translation quality assessment in the context of translation studies. The third section deals with different approaches toward translation quality assessment. Afterwards, different models of TQA including House's model, based on which this research is conducted, are reviewed. Then, the children's literature and its features and goals are defined. Finally, the analyzed story (i.e. Matilda) and its author are introduced.

2.1. A Brief History of Translation and Translation Quality Assessment

Writing on the subject of translating goes far back in recorded history. The practice of translation was discussed by, for example, Cicero and Horace (first century BCE) and Saint Jerome (4th century CE). Their writings were to exert an important influence, up until the 20th century. In Saint Jerome's case, his approach to translating the Greek Septuagint bible into Latin would affect later translations of the scriptures. Indeed, the translation of the bible was before well over 1000 years and especially during the reformation in the 16th century- the battleground of conflicting ideologies in the Western Europe.

However, although the practice of translating is long established, the study of the field developed into an academic discipline only in second half of 20th century. Before that, translation had normally been merely an element of language learning in modern language courses. In fact, since the late 18th century to the 1960s, language learning in the secondary schools, in many countries, had come to be determined by what was known as grammar-translation method. This method which was applied to classical Latin and Greek and then to modern foreign languages, focused on the rote study of the grammatical rules and structures of the foreign languages. These rules were both practiced and tested by the translation of a series of usually unconnected and artificially constructed sentences, exemplifying the structures being studied. This approach persists even nowadays in certain countries and contexts.

The application of the translation to language teaching and learning may partly explain why academia considered it to be of secondary status. Translation exercises were regarded just as a means of learning a new language or of rendering a foreign text, until one had the linguistic ability to read the original.

Study of a work in translation was generally continued till the time the student had acquired the necessary skills to read the original. However, the grammar-translation method fell into increasing disrepute, particularly in many English language countries, with the rise of direct method of communicative approach to English language teaching, in 1960s and 1970s (Munday , 2001, pp.7-8).

Before the second half of 20th century, the norm of the translation was the literal translation. Translators were perceived as machines that had to reproduce just the meaning of words and did not have the right to add or omit something to the original. In fact, before the 20th century there was a war between proponents of literal versus free (i.e. word for word versus sense for sense) translations. Religious centers such as churches established some rules, under which a translation was considered as a good translation if it stuck to the source text and a literally translation was produced. Those translators who did not obey these rules were punished severely. The most famous examples are “Dolet” and “Tyndale” who were burned at the stake and “Wycliffs” whose works were banned. Hence, the translation quality assessment was meaningless in those years.

In the second half of the 20th century, different theories of the translation began to emerge. Translations did not stick to an established rule and translators could translate freely. In the “Quality in Translation: proceeding of the IIIrd Congress of the International Federation of Translators (IFT), Bad Godesberg 1959”, translation quality assessment found its way in the academia for the first time (Tajvidi, 2005, p.28).