Birjand University

Faculty of Literature and Humanities

Department of English Studies

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Master of

Art in English Translation at Birjand University

The Pathology of Historical Texts' translation:
A Study of Persian Translations of 7th volume of
Cambridge History of Iran

Supervisor:

Dr. Mohsen Mobaraki

Advisor:

Dr. Hasan Emami

Research by:

Fateme Rostami Rad

Summer 2012

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in any form for the award of higher degree elsewhere.

Dedication

I dedicated this thesis to my dear husband for his generous help and companionship.

Acknowledgment

I must first offer my sincere appreciation and gratitude to my thesis supervisor, Dr. Mobaraki, for his practical comments, guidance and encouragement on the way of doing this research.

Very special thanks are due to my thesis advisor, Dr. Emami, whose advice and patience encouraged me.

I also appreciate Dr. Alizade, Dr. Farughi, Dr. Ghorashi, Ms. Nushinfar, and Ms. Farhadi, the Faculty members at English department, who helped me during my education at Birjand University.

I am very grateful to my dear family, especially my dear husband, for their love, support and having faith in me. I appreciate them for their companionship and affection throughout the time of writing this thesis.

Abstract

Translation has been started since the development of language and its importance has been increased these days. In fact translation as a branch of knowledge and a way of transferring culture, experience, and science was first considered in Qajar period in Iran and translations of historical texts were the first translations of that time, because in that time they were the best works that showed the reasons of historical advances in western world. So little by little, translation of historical texts has been increased.

Translators have made some mistakes during translation process usually because of their lack of knowledge in history or English language. In fact, there are some points that should be considered in translating historical texts like correct translation of historical expressions, translation of references, translation of administrative expressions, translation of proper nouns, etc. But, to the researchers' knowledge, no book has yet been published on the general and special translation strategies in translating historical texts and this issue has unfortunately been ignored by most historical translators. This thesis has presented a framework for translating historical text, and then based on this framework; investigates part of three translations of The Cambridge History of Iran (Vol.7), and then determines the effects of language knowledge, historical knowledge and humanities knowledge on translating historical text that Mokhber's translations show that translating in human sciences is really effectual in translating historical texts.

Based on this thesis's findings, proficiency in languages (English and Persian) or proficiency in history may not be caused in perfect history translation. Even though both of them are necessary.

Keywords: historical texts, translation strategies, Cambridge History of Iran

Tables of Contents

Chapter One:

Introduction

1.1. The Statement of Research Problem

Task of a translator is to render a text written in one language in to another. Therefore, translation is a communicative activity that involves transferring information across linguistic boundaries. Simple definition of translation is conveying based on whatever is written in the source language (SL) in to the target language (TL).

Theorists of translation have long acknowledged the difficulty of total equivalence between languages. In fact from the earliest attempts, there were distinctions between translations and later between texts. The primary factor influencing the translator's choice of a proper translation method is text type. In any text one of the three functions of language identified by Karl Buhler (expression, appeal, or representation) will predominate. Where the content of a text becomes very important, such texts are content-focused, where the expressive function predominates, the most important aspect of the text will be its form; such texts are form-focused, where the appeal function predominates, the most important aspect of the text is its power to persuade and such texts are appeal-focused. So the translators should first determine the type of source text and consider its important points during translation process. Historical texts include information about past events. As their contents are really important and include information for historians so they are considered as content-focused texts. There are some important points during translation of historical texts but unfortunately most of the translators do not care. Also there are not enough books and articles to inform about important principles during translation of historical texts. Unfortunately most of the times, the mistakes of historical translators lead to misunderstanding or even false information for the readers. Historical texts contain lots of proper names related to different

countries, cultures and times. So the translator should be careful about them and consider the important points in translating them that will be discussed in chapter two. History is based on references of past and generally these references play an important role in historical texts.

One thing that even is more important in historical texts is considering the period of the events of the text. In fact translators are supposed to choose words based on the historical period and use the common expressions of that time. There are also some important points in historical text like footnotes that their translations need more attention. In some cases translators do not consider these points and make some mistakes. So it sounds a necessity to introduce and elaborate some important points of translation to help historical translators more.

1.2. The Significance of the Study

Translating historical texts has been started since 4th century A.D. but translation as a way of transferring culture, experience, science, and information, has been started since Qajar period. In fact historical texts were among the first texts that were translated that time, because they were included the Europeans' past and reasons of their advances or failures and politicians were curious about finding ways to reach advancements. Translating historical texts have been continued so far and have become more academic. But unfortunately there are still translations that are not precise at all. The main reasons of this problem are generally due to the translators. In some cases translators do not have enough knowledge about history and made several mistakes during translation process, or they have historical knowledge but they cannot even understand the correct concept in target language themselves because of their lack of knowledge in language.

Unfortunately, there have not been any books to elaborate important points during translating historical texts. So this thesis tries to work on this aspect of translation by using and comparing one of the important historical books that has been translated by several translators. Introducing the most common mistakes of history translators and also trying to show the importance of language knowledge and historical knowledge together for the translators.

1.3. Novelty of the Research

Based on the writer's researches in libraries and on the internet, there are not any books similar to the topic of this thesis (the Pathology of Translating Historical Texts).

There are some articles that their subject is only about one aspect of the present thesis. As there is no published works about the main problems in translating historical texts and important points during translation process, this thesis can be considered useful as an interdisciplinary work for translation theorists, history researches and also history translators. In fact it is necessary to work on this area and give some general instructions for better translations.

1.4. Research Questions and Hypotheses

The present research will answer the following questions:

- 1. to what extent translator's knowledge of language or history can be effectual in translating historical texts?

- 2. Is it important for a history translator to be skillful in translating texts of human sciences?

This thesis tries to prove the following hypotheses:

- 1. Being proficient in English is more important than having knowledge of historical texts.
- 2. A professional translator is knowledgeable in both languages and also skillful in writing in the field of human sciences.

1.5. The Goals and Objectives of the Research

Translating technical texts has its own characteristics; some of these characteristics are similar in different kinds of texts but others are completely different, therefore translators are expected to be aware of them. This thesis introduces some of the important points of translating historical texts.

Then these points will be discussed in different historical translations. There will be several examples for each of these points from different historical books.

The case study of this thesis is "the Cambridge History of Iran" that it is a book about Iran's history from prehistoric times up to the present time. This book is written in 7 volumes by different writers. The 7th volume is from Nadir Shah to Islamic Republic of Iran. There are many translators who translated this chapter but only three of them are chosen and their translations of two chapters are compared to each other. The writer has tried to choose translators based on their specialty. One who is expert in language, one who is expert in history and the other who is a historical translator.

The idea of a survey of the history and cultural achievements of Iran was conceived in 1959 by Arthur J. Arberry, professor of Arabic at Cambridge University, and Qods Nakha'I, the Persian ambassador in London. The idea owed its fulfillment to a generous subsidy offered by

the National Iranian Oil Company. After the exhaustion of the foundation fund, additional subvention was granted by the Foundation for Iranian Studies, Washington D.C. (volume II), The Yarshaters' Fund, Columbia University (volumes VI and VII), and Prince Abounasr Azod.

1.6. Methodology and Research Framework

The framework of the given thesis is theoretical, it comprises of two parts. The first part is analyzing different historical translations to present main points and factors in translating historical texts by using several historical books in the libraries and on the internet in two languages (Persian and English), the next part is the case study (the Cambridge History of Iran). The Cambridge History of Iran is a historical book about Iran From prehistoric times up to the present time. This book has seven volumes, several authors and translators that they work on different aspects of Iran's history like political, economical, social, etc. This thesis is about the seventh volume and its translations by three translators. The important factors of historical translations will be discussed and elaborated by comparing these three translations.

There are some successful people whose first major are not history but their main researches and studies focus on history and they teach history academically, for instance, Dr. Abd-al-Hossein Zarrinkub, Dr. Abbas Zaryab Khoei, Dr. Shariati, and Dr. Abd-al-Hossein Navaei did not study history at university but they all taught history at historical departments at universities. So the important criteria for being an expert in history is researching, studying and translating in this area. The first translator in this thesis is Mortza Saghebfar, who studied sociology at university. As

he said in his interviews, he is really interested in history (aryaadib.blogfa). His translations are basically translations of sociology and history of Iran and are listed in chapter three. He even teaches history at university right now. Even though Saghebfar has not studied history academically, he has around one hundred compilations and translations in history and also is a history teacher at Azad University right now and is considered as an expert in this major especially ancient history of Iran. Saghebfar is considered as an expert historical translator in this thesis.

The second translator is Abbas Mokhber, who translates in different areas such as history, social sciences, economic sciences, and mythology and literature. So we consider him as a translator who is expert in translating humanities. And the third one is Teimur Ghaderi who studied English literature and Ancient languages and Cultures. Even though most of his translations are historical, he does not have any specialty in history and teaches English academically. So in this thesis, he is considered as an English expert.

So based on the theoretical researches and frameworks, this thesis tries to determine some important factors in translation of historical books and help the translators to translate better and also help the researches to use better sources.

1.7. Layouts of the Thesis

The present thesis consists of four main chapters which can be illustrated as follows:

Chapter One: The present chapter shows the necessity of presenting important principles during translation of historical texts and explains the problems that some wrong translations may cause. Also the main

hypotheses and questions of the present thesis are expressed. At the end of this chapter some related works whether in Iran or other countries will be briefly discussed.

Chapter Two: In this chapter, definition of translation, technical text, and translation of technical text are brought and also the main characteristics of a translator are discussed as well. In the next part, the important points that are necessary to consider during translation of historical texts will be mentioned. For each of the points, several examples from different historical books and their translation are chosen as well.

Chapter Three: In chapter three, the case study of this thesis is introduced and there will be an explanation about the history and its authors. Three of its translations from three translators are chosen and some information about their translators will be mentioned. Then there is a comparison of their translations with the source text and checking whether these translations consider the important points or not.

Chapter Four: This chapter is the conclusion part and will represent important points about the pathology of translating historical texts including the case study.

1.8. Related works to the present research

In this part, some related works to this thesis will be briefly introduced. It comprises of two parts:

1) Works done around the world
2) The works done in Iran

1.8.1 Related Works around the world

Proper names in Translation: A Relevance theoretic Analysi by Vermes Albert Peter

The aim of this article is to show what happens to proper names in the process of translation particularly from English into Hungarian and within the frames of translating proper nouns from a literary work, and explaining the useful methods, analyzing the shortcomings of the various traditional approaches and then introducing the general cognitive and communicative theoretical framework mainly on the basis of Anderson and Wilson, in which it becomes possible to explain translation not as an isolated phenomena but as a special form of communication. The writer also used a case study to prove that proper names, like any other expressions, behave in a more or less predictable way in translation. At the end of the thesis, the author summed up the major findings of the study and briefly discussed some implications of the results, concerning translator's education and the use of translation in teaching training.

1.8.2. Related works in Iran

Translation of Proper Nouns, the Problems and Strategies by Samad Mirza Suzani

Translating proper nouns have always been a challenge for translators. The main aim of this article is to explain the problems and give some strategies for translating proper nouns. Also it includes several examples in translating names of things, geographical places, and explanations of how to translate these names.

Translation of proper names by Alireza Sadeghi

At the beginning of this article, the writer discusses the common methods of translating proper names, and then he writes about the general information that a proper noun can give us and elaborates his idea by bringing other similar theories. He also classifies nouns and briefly explains about them. At the end, he explains how to translate different proper nouns like names of towns, municipalities, villages, people, and events…

The first conference of History and Translation in Iran (1389)

There are some articles related to this topic that are written on different aspects of translation and the relationship between history and translation in this conference. Some of these articles with similar topics are chosen and will be explained very briefly.

Translation of Proper Nouns, Problems and Strategies by Mirza Suzani Samad

Translating proper nouns have always been a challenge in translation process. The purpose of this article is to introduce some of the problems in translating proper names to readers and translators and also present solutions.

The main problem during translation process is introduced by bringing several examples. The final purpose is to draw translator's and writer's attention to these points.

The Pathology of Translating Historical Texts of Saljuqs period
by Mohsen Rahmati

The importance of Saljuqs period in Iran and its variations in languages of resources (Persian, English, Turkish, French, Germany, and Russia, Syrian, Aramaic) are clear for everybody. As it is not possible for anyone to be proficient in all these languages, there are a lot of questions about this period. Fortunately in the last decades, the numbers of translations have been greatly increased and these translations are used as resources for researchers. So they become more important. In fact the pathology of these translations can improve the translation process and also improve the correctness of the translated texts.