

In the Name of God



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**On the Study of the Translation of Gender Biased
Concepts from English to Persian: Based on a CDA
Approach Derived from Paknahad-Jabarouti's Model**

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Dedicated to

My Beloved Parents

And

Mr Mohammad Ali Mokhtari Ardekani

Who encouraged me to research and pen down the knowledge I achieved.

Whose course was one of the difficult yet inspiring lessons of my life.

Who repeatedly reminded me to "be a change" and "make a change" in the world,

Who taught me failure is indeed success, just sitting backwards,

Who taught me to never give up on a dream; for it is indeed attainable.

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Abstract

The present dissertation investigated the transmission of sexism as one of the most sensitive and culture-oriented ideologies from English to Persian. Sexism causes an unfair parting of a community into two groups of superior and inferior, and the parting is merely based on the individual's biological sex. The main questions were: 1) Is sexism translatable from English to Persian? And 2) How does the translator proceed to identify, interpret and transmit the gender derogation?

The corpus of this comparative and qualitative study was Sidney Sheldon's (1995) "The Stars Shine Down" and its translation by Sharafi (1376/1997) "PARVANEH AHANIN" (L.T. The Iron Butterfly). The framework of evaluation was Berman's (1985) "Negative Analytic" model.

The results showed that sexist implications had been dramatically modified and adjusted to Persian socio-cultural norms and readers' expectations. This had also caused the complete modification of the major theme of the novel and its provoking message.

Key Words: Sexism, Berman's Negative Analytic, Sidney Sheldon, English, Persian, CDA, Translation

Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	v
Abstract	vi
List of Abbreviations.....	ix
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	10
1.0. Overview	10
1.1. Introduction	11
1.1.1. Sexism, Sexist Language and Sexist Society	11
1.1.2. Language, the Molder of Ideology and Culture	12
1.1.3. Ideology and the Manipulation of Social Roles	14
1.1.4. Ideology as a Universal Fact with Cultural Specific Tendencies	18
1.1.5. On the Translation of Ideology	19
1.2. Statement of the Problem	21
1.3 Research Questions	22
1.4. Significance of the Study	23
1.5. Purpose of the Study	23
1.6. Theoretical Framework	24
1.7. Research Hypothesis	26
1. 8. Definition of Key Terms	27
1.9 . Limitations and Delimitations of the Study.....	28
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE	30
2.0. Overview	30
2.1. Introduction.....	30
2.2. The Emergence of Sexism.....	32
2.3. Basic Theories to Sexism	34
2.4. On the Translation of Ideology, Sexism and Berman's Negative Analytic Model	36
2.5. On the Investigation of Sexism in Abroad	38
2.5.1. From Lexis to Proverbs	38
2.5.2. Judging Deep and Surface Structure of Languages.....	41
2.6. On the Investigation of Sexism in Iran.....	42
2.6.1. Lexis and Beyond.....	42
2.6.2. CDA and Evaluation on Sexism.....	44
2.7. Introducing Paknahad-Jabarouti's CDA Model on Sexism.....	48
2.8. On Berman's Model: The "Negative Analytic"	49

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	54
3.0. Overview	54
3.1. Data Collection, and Research Type	54
3.2. Corpus of the Study	55
3.3. Approach and Framework	57
3.3.1. Section A: A Psychoanalysis	57
3.3.2. Section B: A CDA Approach	57
3.3.3. Section C: Berman's "Negative Analytic" Model	62
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS	72
4.0. Overview	72
4.1. Section A: The Psychoanalysis of the Main Characters	72
4.1.0. Overview	72
4.1.1. A Psychoanalysis of the Main Characters	73
4.1.2. Conclusion	91
4.2. Section B: A CDA on Sexism	92
4.2.0. Overview	92
4.2.1. Introduction	93
4.2.2. The CDA Approach to the Detection of Sexism	93
4.2.3. Conclusion	106
4.3. Section C: Translation Evaluation Based on Berman's "Negative Analytic"	107
4.3.0. Overview	107
4.3.1. Investigating Sexism Translation via the "Analytic" Model	107
4.3.2. Discussion of Further Examples	117
4.3.3. Conclusion	125
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION	126
5.0. Overview	126
5.1. A Brief Review to this Dissertation	126
5.2. Restatement of Research Questions and Attained Answers	128
5.3. Concluding Remarks: Are Sexism and Sexist Codes Translatable?	130
5.4. The Take Home-message: Research Implications	135
5.5. Suggestions for Further Studies	137
Bibliography	139

List of Abbreviations

AVT: Audiovisual Translation

CDA: Critical Discourse Analysis

LT: Literal Translation

SL: Source Language

ST: Source Text

TT: Target Text

TL: Target Language

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0. Overview

The following chapter is an introduction to the concept of "sexism" and how this ideology has affected the socio-cultural patterns of individuals in their communities. The introduction is then developed to discuss the changes that societies endure when different ideologies dominate them through time. Afterwards, the hypothesis of the study is mentioned alongside the questions. The objective of the present study was to investigate the translation of ideology inter-culturally and inter-textually in general, and the translation of sexism in specific. To do so, a corpus containing gender bias implications had to be selected; hence, Sidney Sheldon's (1995) "The Stars Shine Down" was elected and comparatively evaluated with its translation. Another aim was to detect the blue-print that the author and translator followed to depict this segregating ideology. The main question was then: is sexism at all translatable? And if so, how is the sexism implied in a source text (ST) transmitted into the target text (TT)? The investigation was broader than expected, and in order to answer the above, three frameworks were selected from three fields of Language Studies: Literature, Linguistics, and Translation Studies - note that all three frameworks were performed connectedly requiring one another, and the last resort could not have been accomplished lacking either one of the frameworks.

1.1. Introduction

1.1.1. Sexism, Sexist Language and Sexist Society

Sexism is an ideology that segregates the two sexes unequally: while one sex is subordinated (usually female), the other enjoys its deluded superiority and power. Sexism paints cliché images of men and women in the mind, and passes them on to the next generation – hence, it is a prejudicial ideology (Paknahad-Jabarouti, 1381/2002, p. 53-55). Sexism is generally believed to surface as two kinds: "sexist language" and "sexist society". The former stands for the correlation between language and thought, and how sexism (as a thought) can directly influence and shape one's (verbal) behavior, while a "sexist society" is considered extrinsic to the language region, and language at this point is, stipulated to be employed as a vehicle to represent sexism and sexist tendencies within a society (ibid).

Sexism compels the individuals to behave in certain ways based on their gender. This assigned behavior code is verbal and nonverbal. When "sexism" surfaces in verbal behavior codes, "sex language" and "sexist language" are likely to emerge.

The investigation of different language patterns applied by the two sexes have led scholars such as Mills(1995) to define and differentiate two other concepts: "sexist language" and "sex language". Whereas the former stands for an ideology that unfairly discriminates males and females; is accompanied by prejudice; expressed via language to suppress one sex and support the other; and allures the society in a certain direction (cited in Paknahad-Jabarouti, 1381/2002; Mahmoudi-Bakhtiari et.al 1390/2011, p. 93), the latter, "sex language", merely

"... represents the speech difference between males and females and reflects the persisting socio-cultural relationships of a society" (Lakoff, 1975, p. 45-80).

A "sexist society" on the other hand, is a community in which sexism has deeply rooted in the individuals' minds and has turned into a socio-cultural norm upon which social members are required to act. Thereby, sexist behavior codes are excessively observed in such community as all members have succumbed to this segregation (Paknahad-Jabarouti, 1381/2002).

It is noteworthy to mention that "sexist language" is amendable whereas a "sexist society" is much more complicated to heal, as all language elements are likely to be darkened under the duress of the flagrant sexist culture which has been publicly consented (ibid).

1.1.2. Language, the Molder of Ideology and Culture

As social members, all individuals are assigned to sexism and are expected to follow its terms from childhood. The assignment is transmitted to individuals via the same language that they use and interestingly assume to be a benign vehicle to carry out communication means.

Mahmoud-Bakhtiari et.al. (1390/2012, p.105) have defined "language" as a kind of "activity" which "elucidates the intrinsic beliefs and thoughts of individuals". This is in concordance with the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis and the Language Determinism Theory, stating that language determines the way one observes and comprehends the world, and develops his/her life upon it (containing one's social and personal life and culture). "[T]he ideological and

thinking systems are under the influence of the social language", and hence, it is likely to state that "language" also delimitates one's inception¹ potential; of "reality" (ibid). "It is this that constitutes a language *trap*" (Spender, 1980, p. 146; emphasis not mine).

Language is not always benign, and it does lead our thoughts in a certain direction (Spender, 1980). "[Language] ... is not merely a vehicle which carries ideas. It is itself a shaper of ideas, it is the programme for mental activity (cf. Whorf, 1976 cited in Spender, 1980, p. 145), so "each of us has *to learn to see*" (cf. Williams, 1975, p. 33 cited in Spender 1980, p. 146, emphasis not mine) as "language is a perceptual creation" (Croce, 1902, p. 37), and "there is no doubt, ... that a language reflects the thoughts, attitudes, and culture of the people who make it and use it" (Schulz, 1975, p. 82).

"There is no reality of familiar shapes, colors, sounds to which we merely open our eyes"(cf. Williams, 1975, cited in Spender, 1980). "To speak metaphorically, the brain is blind and deaf, it has no direct contact with light and sound, ... [it has to obtain its information from the outside world by] the external surface of the body [which is] its interface with the environment" (Smith, 1971 cited in Spender, 1980, p. 145). Thus, the brain only deals with "symbols", and "it never know[s] the 'real' thing" (Spender, 1980). Thereby, "the information we receive through our senses from ... the [outside] world ... has to be interpreted according to certain human rules, before what we ordinarily call 'reality forms'" (cf. Williams, 1975, cited in Spender, 1980). It is interesting that "this makes language a paradox for human

¹ Here the term "inception" is used to differentiate two concepts: human beings are capable of perceiving all ideas (perception) but the seed of all thoughts and ideas (inception) are not placed in every human, and that is because we view the world from different perspectives.

beings: it is both a creative and inhibiting vehicle" (Spender, 1980, p. 146).

The above mentioned states that proposition or assumptions can become more ascertained when we tilt our attention to the various ideologies which fabricate the so-called reality in a certain society. Ideologies can be considered as those leashes that delimitate one's inception potential and they are, most of them, rather culture-oriented. For instance, (and as the focus of this study) "sexism" is an ideology in general, and becomes taut when placed in a socio-cultural frame.

When a child is born, there is no specific prejudice or classification criteria for either sexes in his/her mind; yet, life is "a slow process of learning 'the rules of seeing' ", and this is the path of growth that every human being passes through (Williams, 1975 cited in Spender, 1980, p. 146). These rules shape the thoughts and behaviors of individuals in a certain social discourse, and they also bond together to construct social norms. Therefore, ideologies are the socio-cultural codes of thinking, while language is an instrument to prelude a society and their ideological perceptions and tendencies.

1.1.3. Ideology and the Manipulation of Social Roles

As Bertens (2001, p. 83-84) states, ideologies make us "blind" toward the detection and perception of the "real state of affairs" around us. Bertens (ibid) continues to point out that while these commonly distributed ideologies proceed to "delude" a majority of individuals in a society, some "are not deluded" by this "false consciousness".

Perhaps the Marxist definition of ideology is the one proper statement that suits the present study: "[i]n Marxist usage, ideology is what

causes us to misrepresent the world around us" (Bertens, 2001, p. 84). Although Marxism continues to elaborate on ideology in terms of economic means, capitalists and proletariats, the same delusion of false consciousness can also be expanded to cover other "material practices" (ibid, p. 85). "Ideology... has a *material* existence in the sense that it is embodied in all sorts of material practices" (ibid, p. 86; emphasis not mine).

"The list of material ideological practices could be almost infinitely expanded" (ibid). This can consist of different (smaller) communities such as a "sports club", "a small church", "a school day", etc. hence, "ideology" basically "pervades" almost all affairs that one is engaged in.

By "enslaving" the individual's mind, ideology filters the world around one, leaving him/her no other choice but to "... experience... life in a certain way and makes [that individual] ... believe that ... the world is *natural* [in the way it is]" (Bertens, 2001, p. 85-86; emphasis not mine). For distributing these fabricated assumptions, communities have most frequently and fundamentally taken "literature" and "culture" into use. These devices not only spread a thought, but they also contribute to the quality of its survival too. Bertens (2001, p. 88) states that novels (as the powerful influential literary device) "make them [individuals] complicit in their own delusions" by deceiving them of a freedom that they truly do not have. The reader assumes that s/he is making his/her own decisions through life, but the truth is that all of their thoughts and actions have always been and will be confined.

As mentioned, sexism is a type of ideology that has falsely passed on the crown of superiority to males, and simultaneously has spread this deluded "normality" that women should not share the same rights that males have.

It was then the feminist movement and feminism that attempted to alter the "traditional sexist power relationships" and "unveil" the former dominant patriarchy in society or other contexts (ibid, p. 96). Feminism also evaded its territory and entered the literary realm to conquer one of the most influential devices of production and distribution of a community's ideology. Even one specific branch of feminist criticism, just like sexism studies in linguistics, investigates gender and gender roles in a given socio-cultural context since:

Gender has to do not with how females (and males) really are [biologically], but with the way that a given culture or subculture sees them, [and] how they are culturally *constructed* (ibid, p. 98; emphasis not mine).

Hence, the term "gender" will be used according to the above, to refer to female and male cultural and traditional assigned roles and differences, while the term "sex" will be used to refer to biological differences.

Additionally, "[m]asculinity ... is a cultural construction". This suggests gender roles, assigned behavioral codes and sexist implications for males. This was another aspect of social relations and power distributions that feminism also pinpointed (ibid, p. 98-99). Feminism argues that with revising, reforming, and even manipulating the traditionally defined sex-roles, major changes and amendments are

likely to happen in the power relations and social rights of both females and males in a community (ibid).

After exposing the "assigned" sex-roles, feminism continued on with its mission to obtain social, cultural, economic, and political equality for females, and much was achieved in this regard. For instance, feminism has shown that "... a masculine gendering is supposed to evoke positive connotations, [while] a feminine gendering...is...to evoke negative..." (ibid, p. 99). Based on the above mentioned argument, it is fair to sum up this part with Althusser's (1971) perspective about the nature of all ideologies: "... ideology addresses us in a certain role and draws us into a conspiracy that is ultimately aimed at ourselves..." (cited in Bertens, 2001, p. 102-103).

Demands for equal rights will eventually shatter the existing power-relations in a society because new demands call for new measurements and that will consequently influence power relations, social role, norms, and expectations. Defined social roles have, as Millet(1970) has discovered, developed a power status in the smaller and larger groups of a community (cited in Bertens, 2001).

Millet finds a relationship between sex and power in which the distribution of power over the male and female partners mirrors the distribution of power over males and females in society at large. In other words, in terms of power, [the] acts that we usually think of as completely private turn out to be an extension of the public sphere. (Bertens, 2001, p. 95)

1.1.4. Ideology as a Universal Fact with Cultural Specific Tendencies

Languages share basic concepts, but differ in the way they represent those concepts. It is a fact that "... a second language learner does not have to learn to think, in general, all over again" (Brown, 2007, p. 213), or that "wisdom" is a universal known notion and related to age. Albeit its universality, it is represented by "white" in Persian and by "grey" in English (Ghazanfari-Moghaddam, Mokhtari, & Sharififar, 2013). This is because "...color terms exist in all languages (thus universals) but communities may apply them similarly to or differently from other communities ..." (ibid). Sexism too is a universal notion, but the fact is that communities take different measures towards it.

Sexism, as was mentioned, is a worldwide notion but communities may not always take similar penchants towards it. For instance, sexism is usually in favor of males, however in some communities, it sexism is in favor of females. In Alaska there is an Inuit (Eskimo) tribe in which females are the bread-winners of the family while the males participate more at home and take care of the children (Narsisians, 1383/2005).

"Language [is] a symbolic guide to culture" [cf. Sapir, 1949, p. 162 cited in Wierzbicka, 1997, p. 1), and "... it is commonly observed that the manner in which an idea or 'fact' is stated affects the way we conceptualize the idea" (Brown, 2007, p. 208). Additionally, "[m]eaning components are 'packaged' into lexical items, but they are 'packaged' differently in one language than in another"(Larson, 1984,

p.6). Thereby, ideology should be considered as both a universal and culture-oriented notion, in order to make fairer judgments.

"[T]he deep structure of language at its deepest level may be common to all languages" (Brown, 2007, p. 40), and it is this very "universal" or "deep structure" that makes translation possible (Newmark 1988; James, 1980). However "... we tend to perceive reality within the context of our own culture... that creates what we assume to be reality, ... we do not define the world empirically" (Brown, 2007, p.189). Thus, ideology in its universal nature can be considered translatable, but in its cultural specific aspect it can cause complications, and in some cases it is likely to be untranslatable.

1.1.5. On the Translation of Ideology

According to the above mentioned, "sexism" is a supposedly "universal" ideology, but it is at the same time cultural- specific. The translation or best to say the transmission of ideology is generally possible; yet, considering the fact that ideologies are mostly developed in a certain cultural context, the challenge emerges that how the cultural aspect of the ideology and its implications should or should not be transmitted to the target reader.

Another complexity is that every translation is to some extent the direct result of the translator's personal preferences. The translator makes certain decisions to maintain or filter different parts of a text. This decision is also influenced by the target socio-cultural norms and expectations. Interestingly, as the reader interprets the text based on his/her personal experience, knowledge, and expectations, the final transmitted implication (here the dominant ideology of a text) may be

altered many times and not be the atavism of its original. "Any text carries the marks of its producer" and this "mark" is actually "the ideological and cultural context in which it is produced", and beside all this "... every reader adds his/her own individual meaning to a text" (Adone, 2002, p. 144).

When writing a literary piece, the author's ideology could be quite possibly transferred into his/her literary piece, and so could the dominant ideologies of the author's society (Lefevere, 1992; Mokhtari, 1386/2007). Hence, a literary piece is like an ambassador that represents its society, and as literary pieces (for the most part poetry and fiction) are most appealing to other societies, they are translated into multiple languages. This consequently contributes to the premise and distribution of different ideologies worldwide.

Translation here has a critical stand point, as it is held liable for transmitting information. The translator consciously or unconsciously decides which ideologies to transmit to the target culture, and which ones to filter. "Translation manipulation" has always been a part of translation practice and it happens most when the translator decides which ideologies to preserve and which to discard (Munday, 2001).

Translation can act as a milestone, and can even lead to a cultural revolution, that is *if* it is conducted by a meticulously designed outline. This is how the cultural revolution in China (from 1915 to 1923) occurred which was later known as the New Cultural Movement (Zhao, 2005). The translated text is always considered to affect the readership's thoughts, although the degree of this influence varies. Therefore, the transition of a text can (even deliberately)