

IN THE NAME OF THE MOST MERCIFUL



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*The Role of the Translator's Ideology in the Translation
of Literary Texts*

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To

Mum and Dad

who are two angels from the Most Merciful

and to

Hossein

who gave me a true motivation

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Abstract

This thesis attempts to investigate the role the translator`s ideology plays in the act of translation. This is carried out through investigating the ideologically-motivated style of the translators in literary texts, in this case fiction. Following this purpose, two Persian translations of the English novel *Cry the Beloved Country*, belonging to the time span between the 1953 coup and 1979 revolution, are studied closely to spot the instances of the translators` ideology mediating the target text.

The research involves three stages of: first, a brief study of the general social, cultural and political milieu of the translations including an overview of the social and political orientation and activities of the translators; second, scrutinizing the paratexts added by the translators which reveal their obvious ideological positionality; and third, examining the translated texts which are the main site of the translators` ideological intervention or so called discursive presence. These stages will provide the answers to two questions of this research project. The first question addresses the stylistic features of the translated texts that could be revealing of the translator`s ideology, whether conscious or subconscious. The second question attempts to find the ways in which these ideological choices relate to the macro-context of socio-cultural-and-political environment.

Keywords: ideology, voice, style, committed literature, committed writers

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Overview

Linguists, sociolinguists, and discourse analysts have increasingly become interested in the textual or discursive manifestations of power structures and ideologies and in their specific linguistic realizations at lexical and grammatical levels. These approaches mediate between linguistic structures as evident in a text and the social, political, and historical contexts of text production and reception.

Translation is a form of textual practice which is always associated with reflections of power relations and ideological interventions. It is confirmed by Hatim & Mason's utterance that "it has always been recognized that translating is not a neutral activity" (1997, p.145). As asserted by Tymoczko (2003), some of the most important discussions of translation in the last decade have focused on questions of ideology. Indeed, there has been a productive, ongoing academic dialogue about various facets of the issue, extending for years now. Raised principally by those who have an investment in social engagement, questions about the translator as an ethical agent of social change have gone to the heart of both the practice and the theory of translation.

Translation and ideology are two concepts which have come of age. According to Pérez, translation is as old as humankind and similarly ideology is not a new concept (2003). Translation is under the influence of the particular beliefs of individuals and institutions.

Particular ideologies manipulate the texts to achieve special purposes or produce certain effects in translation. A dialectical relationship between ideology and translation can be conceptualized as follows: a translation is under the impact of the dominant ideological discourses of its time and these discourses are influenced by the translation practices in turn. However, ideological traces are more apparent in some genre, e.g. political texts, but less obvious and more insidious in some others, e.g. literary texts.

1.2 *Background of the Problem*

Ideology plays an important role in any process of textual production including translation. Many scholars have acknowledged this fact and much literature of the research in this field has been devoted to the effects of the ideology of individuals or institutions on language in general and translation, in particular. Scholars in different fields such as Critical Discourse Analysis, Critical Linguistics, Stylistics, Narratology, as well as Translation Studies have devoted much time and space to the study of the relationship between ideology and language. They have been aware of the significance of the subject. In translation studies, many scholars discussed the considerable consequences of the translator 's basic orientations in the process of reproduction or better say, recreation of the target text, from early studies like Hermans (1996a), Bassnett & Lefever (1992b), Venuti (1995), Hatim & Mason (1997) to more recent studies like Calzada Pérez (2003) and Munday (2008).

1.3 *Statement of the Problem*

For years translators were considered as imitators of the original author with the position of translation as secondary or derivative as compared to that of the original text. However, under the influence of poststructuralism and functionalism, the translator 's agency has turned to be the focus of attention during the recent years as well as the very act of translation being viewed as a process in which manipulation is inevitable; the field scholars have contended that behind every choice of the translator there is a voluntary act that reveals his history and the socio-political milieu that surrounds him, in other words, his own culture. The translator 's ideology which is under the influence of the sociocultural environment is the focus of this research. Sociocultural environment has a determinative effect on both the process and product of translation. What is to be investigated in this research is recognizing the translators` voice and ideological choices through their style and finding the relationship between these choices and the surrounding sociocultural environment.

1.4 *Significance of the Study*

As it was mentioned, translation is not a neutral task. Different studies have been carried out to investigate the role of ideology in translation. Most of these studies approached ideology as the dominant political ideology of society and aimed at investigating the effects of this ideology on translational choices, but the role of the translator 's own ideology has not received much attention. The number of the studies that have been

processed to analyze the translated texts from the perspective of the translator 's beliefs and worldview is not so large. This study is hoped to be among the few researches which analyze the translated texts in detail from the point of view of the translator 's ideology which may not be identical to that of the dominant sociocultural structures. If this goal is achieved through the research it will be a step to contribute to the visibility of the translator as the "writer of the target text". The study not only tries to spot the ideological traces of the translator through his/her style and voice in literary texts, in this case specified to fiction, but also, it goes beyond the lexicogrammatical level and attempts to relate the translator 's choices to the macrolevel of sociocultural environment. The advantage of such studies is that many related case studies can be brought together, confronted, and consolidated in a bid to advance the study of style and of descriptive translation studies in general.

1.5 *Purpose of the Study*

The aim of this study is to look for the ideological choices of the translators by analyzing the translated texts from stylistic point of view. Munday (2008) believes that since style is the result of the translator's choice, whether conscious or not, analyzing it may reveal the ideological standing of the translator. Since texts function within specific sociocultural and ideological contexts, it can be remarked that the translator's ideological standing in the text is determined by the sociocultural conditions. Therefore, the other goal of this study is to explore the relationship between the sociocultural conditions of

the society and the translations, to look for the role these conditions play in the choices of the translator.

The goals of the study are briefly mentioned below:

- The particular interest is in the close examination of the linguistic choices of the translators in an effort to identify patterns as well as individual stylistic choices and to map these to the macro-contexts of ideology and cultural production.
- This study focuses above all on the perspective of translation and on the analysis of the work of different translators. Thus, style will be studied in the context of the linguistic fingerprint of an individual translator or of translations.
- The other questions of major interest are the cause and motivation of these trends, questions which lie behind the term 'ideology'. Thus, how the ideology of the translator affects the target text that is produced will be probed.

1.6 *Research Questions*

Based on the purposes mentioned above, the following questions are proposed:

- 1- What are the prominent characteristics of the ideologically-motivated style of a translator in comparison with the style of the source text author and of the other translators?

2- How does the ideology of the translators relate to the macrocontext of sociocultural environments?

1.7 *Theoretical Framework*

Adopting an interdisciplinary approach drawing on Descriptive translation Studies, Narratology, Translational Stylistics, and Critical Discourse Analysis, the present work specifically sets out to investigate the style and voice of two Persian language translations of an English novel. Each of these frameworks has provided the theoretical basis of the model in one way or the other. Descriptive Translation Studies emphasizes the descriptive rather than normative comparison between the ST and multiple target texts to find the differences. Critical Discourse Analysis focuses on the role language as discourse plays in the larger macro-context of society. Stylistics provides the model with the theory that individual style is ideologically motivated. And finally, Narratology helps regard the translated text as a narrative. This view provides the model with narrative planes of point of view. These theoretical frameworks together with Halliday`s functional grammar form the theoretical ground of the model.

However, the present study is located generally within descriptive translation studies but goes further by discussing more precise means of evaluating style and relating it to the ideological context. This multiple framework will be described in details in the following chapter.

1.8 *Definition of Key Terms*

1.8.1 *Ideology*

Pérez regards ideology as “not limited to political sphere”. In her view, ideology includes “modes of thinking, forms of evaluating, and codes of behavior which govern a community by virtue of being regarded as the norm” (2003, p. 5).

“From a critical linguistic perspective, the term normally describes the ways in which what we say and think interacts with society. An ideology therefore derives from the taken-for-granted assumptions, beliefs, and value systems which are shared collectively by social groups.” (Simpson, 1993, p. 5) However, this study regards ideology in its semi-political sense as “the ways in which what we say and believe connects with the power-structure and power-relations of the society we live in” (Eagleton, 1996, p. 13).

1.8.2 *Narrative*

Narratives “constitute crucial means of generating, sustaining, mediating, and representing conflict at all levels of social organization” (Briggs 1996, as cited in Baker, 2006, p. 3). Narratives are public and personal stories that we subscribe to and that guide our behavior. They are the stories we tell ourselves, not just those we explicitly tell other people, about the worlds in which we live. The terms ‘narrative’ and ‘story’ are interchangeable in this context.

1.8.3 *Style*

Style is regarded as characteristic linguistic choices of both the author and the translator. In other words, style is “the way in which language is used in a given context, by a given person, for a given purpose” (Leech and Short, 1981 as cited in Munday, 2008, p. 20). Style may be individual (specific to an individual author) or collective (specific to a genre) or it may refer to a period of time (ibid).

1.8.4 *Voice*

Voice is referred to as the “abstract narrative point of view” of the source and the translated texts. “Voice refers to the abstract concept of authorial, narratological or translational presence, while style is the linguistic manifestation of that presence in the text” (Munday, 2008, p. 19).

1.8.5 *Point of View*

Point of view refers to “different authorial positions from which the narration or description is conducted”. Simpson defines point of view as “psychological perspective through which a story is told. It encompasses the narrative framework which a writer employs [...], and accounts for the basic viewing position which is adapted in a story. Narrative point of view is arguably the very essence of a story 's style” (1993, p. 4-5).

1.8.6 *Commitment*

“Commitment (in Persian: ta'ahhod or vazifeh) is a preconceived notion of responsibility to supraliterary concerns, so that the artist enters the creative moment with the intention of conveying an idea, propagating an ideology, converting an audience, defending a cause, or mobilizing a mass” (Dabashi, 1985, p. 150).

1.8.7 *Committed Literature*

Committed or *engage literature* generally refers to the works of writers who are dedicated to the advocacy of certain beliefs and agendas, especially those related to political and ideological efforts in bringing about social reform. (Talattof, 1996, p. 9)

Subsequently, committed writers or in Dabashi's word “the literati” are those writers who address their ideological concerns in literary forms (Dabashi, 1985).

1.8.8 *Paratexts*

Paratexts refer to the explanatory notes added by the translators to the target texts. They include the translators's prefaces, dedications, footnotes and endnotes. Gnezler states that contextual information in translation which is presented in the form of prefaces, interviews with the author, explanatory notes, etc. are important because they establish the position of the translator as mediator (Gentzler, 2002).

1.9 *Scope and Delimitations of the Study*

The present research aims at identifying the translator`s ideologically-motivated style. To attain this purpose, the subfield of literary translation seemed to be more productive, in which shifts of style are more commonly observed. As for the ideology part, it was attempted to select a source text which was inherently politically-laden, and consequently, the translations would have been written from obvious ideological stances.

Although this research does not include the ‘history’ and ‘historicity’ factors, that itself requires much research and study, it is specified to the time span between the 1953 coup and the Islamic Revolution. The reason behind this choice of time is that this period has observed a general atmosphere of the awareness of the people of the imperialistic goals and the commitment of many writers to enhance this awareness, an awareness which finally led to Islamic Revolution. This period, or better say episode, is called ‘the committed literature episode’ in which the socio-cultural-and-political environment of the target texts is almost the same. It means that, both the target texts which are to be studied in this research have been created in a period of the struggle against imperialism and the tyranny of the Iranian kings appointed by the others to help them achieve their imperialistic goals in this country.