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**THE ROLE OF POWER RELATIONS IN THE TRANSLATIONS OF
POSTCOLONIAL FICTIONS: FOCUSING ON ENGLISH
TRANSLATIONS OF PRESIAN WORKS**

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TRANSLATION STUDIES

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IN THE NAME OF GOD

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis represents my own work except where the source of information has been explicitly mentioned within the text. This work has not been submitted for a higher degree at any other educational institution.

Laleh Sheivandi

Dedicated to my family who supported me more than anyone else in every step of my life, who went through the ups and downs with me, and ensured all the unlimited happiness, pleasures and adventures that I had the opportunity to experience.

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Abstract

The present study aimed at investigating how power relations were reflected in the content and structure of Persian-into-English translated postcolonial fictions. For this purpose, at first, one hundred and forty paragraphs were selected from two Persian fictions and compared with their translations to determine to what extent Berman's "twelve deforming tendencies" were justified and to what extent ethnocentric pressure in translations could be identified. Then, to analyze the data, the occurrences of each deforming tendency were counted. The obtained results indicated "Ennoblement and popularization" was the most frequent deforming tendency and "Destruction of vernacular networks or their exoticization" was the least frequent one. This may suggest that the translations, under the influence of ethnocentric behavior, are naturalizations of the original texts. Understanding how much the content and structure of different languages and their values preserve in our today world may be useful to assessment of translation quality. These assessments are useful for students of English translation, teachers and theorists to improve the translation studies.

ABBREVIATIONS

Target Text: TT

Translation Studies: TS

Source Language: SL

Target Language: TL

Chapter one:

Introduction

1.1 . Preliminaries

Translation seems to involve semiotic, linguistic, textual, lexical, social, sociological, cultural and psychological perspectives or elements all of which are being studied nowadays as determining factors in whatever the translator does (Gentzler, 1993). It is also clear that like any other form of rewriting translation involves manipulation and relates directly to ideology, power, value systems and realizations of reality (Lefevere, 1992). Casanova (2002, as cited in Wolf & Fukari, 2007) believes in a more general way, in a way that translation has manifold functions: a medium of mediation and exchange. It may also perform political or economic functions, and form a mode of legitimation, in which authors as mediators may be the beneficiaries. The value of translation not only pertains to the position of languages, but also on the positions of both translated authors and their translators, and each of them in both the national literary field and the global literary space. Thiesse (1999, as cited in *Wolf & Fukari, 2007*) says the translation into central languages forms a veneration that changes the position of an author in his field of source. Finally, literary translation may play a role in the creation of collective identities. Literature, art, and music have played an important part in the creation of national identities in Europe. It,

like any other art form, engages the reader in a complex set of emotional, symbolic, moral, intellectual and social regards (Lye, 1996).

We can realize the variable relations of multicultural spaces through translation. Bassnett and Lefevere (1992) say translation studies, as an interdisciplinary field in nature and parallel with cultural studies, has taken center stage. It means the way translators use different strategies and appoint hierarchies in what they do, overall, has become a metaphor for power relations. In this case, Xianbin (2006) claims that translation studies also looks at the way in which norms and experiences vary constantly and, consequently, there is no fixed notion of “perfect translation” and “absolute text”. Therefore, because translation studies expresses cultural differences, it’s quite understandable that it challenges the notion of absolute texts. Major areas of research include the relations between original texts and translations, the possible power of translation as a cultural weapon, and the external limitations on translation.

Gentzler and Tymoczko (1960, as cited in Tymoczko & Gentzler, 2002) argue that contemporary approaches to translation also tend to be marked by awareness of problems of cultural bias, distortion, ideological concerns and abuses in the past and a commitment to translate in ways that do not cause inequity bias or serve the interests of cultural agendas, especially interests of the powerful at the expense of the powerless. Translators have become more susceptible to ethnic, cultural, gender and other types of manipulation and try to avoid using them in their translations or attempt to use the power of translation to promote what they suppose to be a more just agenda and social structure.

The binding of colonization and translation is companioned by the reasoning that translation has played an active role in the colonization process and in diffusing an ideologically stimulated image of colonized people. The metaphor has been used of the colony as an imitative and inferior translational copy whose repressed identity has been overwritten by the colonizer (Spivak, 1993). Sugirtharajah (2002) points out that translators and translations are seen as tools of imperial ambitions. He moves on to say that “Since the invader and invaded spoke different languages and practiced different religions, translation played a crucial role in conquering and converting the other” (p. 156). Postcolonial translation proposes a framework to study their influence on national and world literature, identities and ideologies by inquiring which works are translated and how is the manner of their translation. Postcolonial translation investigates how language, literature and culture revise national identities in translation. Spivak says Translation studies pays attention to postcolonial criticism in the light of the understanding that translators and translations have played key functions in the development of the interests of modern colonizing empires and has displayed interest in the place that translators and translation can play either in furthering or opposing those interests or in marginalizing or advancing the determined perspectives of colonized peoples (1993, as cited in Venuti, 2004).

1.2. Statement of the problem

Farahzad (2004) claims the concept of multiplicity of meaning in language appeared with the development of post-structuralism in the sixties. Theorists were informed of the power hierarchy and ideological translation effects and economic and political benefits

arising from it by impacts of Post-structuralism on psychoanalytic, Marxist criticism, and feminism. Post-structuralism directs the translation researchers to the power relations and power hierarchy in the society and also marginalization that is behind the meaning of transparent language (Barker, 2004). One of the philosophers that commonly referred to as Poststructuralists is Michel Foucault. Foucault's theoretical contribution is his re-thinking of the notion of power and his model of the relationship between power and knowledge. Foucault (1978) sees power as a weapon by the state and by capital. He believes the production and circulation of discourses are simultaneously mechanisms of social power.

Said (1977) defines the Orient as a system of representations framed by political forces that brought the Orient into Western learning, Western consciousness, and Western empire. Orient is a mirror image of what is inferior and alien (Other) to the West. Said (1977) further believes that Western imperialism's most effective tools for dominating other cultures have been literary in nature as much as political and economic. He comments on the materiality of discourse, its role in structuring power relations and its influence on society and politics.

On the other hand, Spivak (1993, as cited in Venuti, 2004) says translation has an effective role in colonization process and promotion of an ideological image of the colonized peoples. It is rewriting and manipulating of the source text and is in the service of power. In fact, the dominance of English is the structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages; therefore, translation and translation studies from the postcolonial perspective are the ideological implications and the translation of third world literature to English and distortions that have taken place in them. Translation involves

agents who are both conditioned by power structures and who exploit them to serve their own interests (Xianbin, 2006). Elsewhere, Spivak (2000, as cited in Venuti, 2004) adds westerners expect the non-western works to be translated to language of power, English to use of them. Finally, the production is translationese that effaces the individual identities and cultures with less political powers. That translation policy in these days gives prominence to English and the other hegemonic languages of the former colonizers and translators will adapt translation to the target language and population to extreme to be intelligible for the western reader and this causes the viewpoint of the source language society fades in translation. All of these lead us to study the tension created between translation and translation studies by hegemonic struggles.

Rose (as cited in Losa, 1993) believes globalization, democratization, and post-colonial forces continue to powerfully shape our increasingly complex and interconnected world and there is the need for intercultural understanding, and so the study of translation as a powerful means of shaping our understanding of other cultures has finally been recognized. The world literature offers students the opportunity to explore various cultures and literatures through the study of texts, either in their original language or in translation and to develop a more global awareness. According to Postcolonial translation that attempts to understand how language, literature and culture convey national identities in translation, this study aims to see to what extent these national identities and cultures may be conveyed to another language through translation of literary texts. The genre has been selected since literature reflects the art and culture of a time and it is fueled by translation.

1.3. Research question

Accordingly, the following research question was formulated:

- What is the description of power relations reflected in the content and structures of Persian-into-English translated postcolonial fictions?

1.4. Significance of the study

De Swaan (1993, 2001) says awareness of this point that translation process is not as mere process of transferring words from one text to another will result in realizing the importance of the ideology underlying a translation, thing that this study try to work around. To grasp the act of translating, one should in a first step analyze it as embedded within the power relations among national states and their languages. In this regard, Sapiro and Heilbron (2002, as cited in Wolf & Fukari, 2007) believe the means of political, economic and cultural conflicts are unequally divided in these power relations. Cultural exchanges are therefore unequal exchanges that declare relations of domination. In accordance with these analyses, the flows of translations should then be re-situated in a transnational field determined by the power relations among national states, their languages, and their literatures and the issue that have been paid attention to in this study is to find how power relations impose themselves on translation, what are their effects and these findings can show us that translation essentially effaces the source culture during the translating process or not and finally help the scientists decide between passing up these changes or accepting this case that there is a vital need to have a procedure change in translating to the stronger countries and languages.

Understanding the effect of power relations on translation not only helps scientists but also helps the students of translation studies. The study of different texts and cultures will enrich and enhance student's understanding of their own as well as of other cultures. This process is simplified by the systematic comparison of dominant themes and motifs, or in the context of the mutual impact of two or more national or regional cultures. For this reason, always translations are too important to show other culture. When a translator translates a text, because of selecting an especial theory and perhaps manipulating the text, maybe there be a target text in the favor of target readers which eliminates the identity of individuals and cultures and this elimination of identity doesn't have satisfactory consequences. For example, Nida's Dynamic equivalence is based on the principal of equivalent effect. He (1964) believes translation requires making sense. Gentzler (1993) criticizes Nida and denigrates his work for its concept of dynamic equivalence. Gentzler says Dynamic equivalence answers the purpose of converting the receptors, no matter what their culture, to the dominant discourse and ideas of protestant Christianity. The result is that translations don't show other countries' cultures and actually there is no familiarity with other's traditions, literatures and people. This study aims to investigate how much translation maintains these cases.

1.5. Definitions of the key term

1.5.1. Cultural studies

Cultural Studies is the study of how a society creates and shares meaning. It emphasizes culture must be studied within the social relations and within system that produced and consumed it (Kellner 1995). Cultural studies permits us to investigate and analyze the whole

range of culture without prior bias toward other sorts of cultural text, institution and practice (Kellner & Ryan, 1988). According to Johnson (1987), It exercises a large influence on academic disciplines, especially on English studies, sociology, media and communication studies, linguistics and history” (P. 38).

1.5.2. Postcolonial theories

The postcolonial concepts may see translation as just a harmful instrument of the colonizers who protruded their languages and used translation to construct a skewed image of the suppressed people which served to support the hierarchal structure of the colony. However, some critics of post-colonialism, like Robinson (1997), believe the term “postcolonial,” in a very general sense, is the study of the interactions between European nations and the societies they colonized in the modern period.

1.5.3. Power relations

The power relations approach enables people to see the historical and cultural reasons for and the power relations behind translation. It has intense expository power for many translation phenomena, but is much less so for scientific and practical translation. Further, every aspect of translation is not connected with power. It is but one approach in translation studies, integrating rather than replacing all the other methods of translation research, thus making translation studies more precise and objective (Xianbin, 2006).

1.5.4. Deforming tendencies

Berman (2000) deplors tendency to negate the foreign by ‘naturalization’: ‘The suitable ethical purpose of the translating act is to receive the foreign as foreign’ (as cited in Venuti, 2004, p. 285). But target texts have ‘system of textual deformation’ hindering foreignness coming through: a ‘negative analytic’. Further, Berman identified twelve deforming tendencies inherent in most prose translations: 1) Rationalisation, 2) Clarification, 3) Expansion, 4) Ennoblement and popularization, 5) Qualitative impoverishment, 6) Quantitative impoverishment, 7) Destruction of rhythms, 8) Destruction of underlying networks of signification, 9) Destruction of linguistic patternings, 10) Destruction of vernacular networks or their exoticization, 11) Destruction of expressions and idioms, 12) Effacement of the superimposition of languages.

Chapter Tow:

Review of the literature

2.1. Overview

This chapter has four sections. The first section is concerned with the nature, essence and aims of translation and its functions among different cultures. The second section reports on the varieties of cultural studies including three sections of cultural studies and cultural turn, translation and power, and postcolonial studies and translation. The third section describes anti-colonialism, and finally, the chapter ends with a summary of the overall findings of the literature and the identified research gap.

2.2. Translation, culture and identity

A language is a map, a reality representation and an evolutionary device that has made the people's cultural identity possible with the best of its artistic and social modes of expressions. (Munoz & Calvo, 2008). Tymoczko and Gentzler (2002) say it is embedded in culture. Linguistic acts take place in the context and texts are created in the continuum. A writer is a product of a particular time and a particular context, just as a translator is a product of another time and another context. Translation is about language and also about