

In the Name of God



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Style Translation and Naturalness in Translation of Drama:
A Case Study of *The Importance of Being Ernest* By Oscar Wilde

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
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Dedicated To:

My Devoted Husband,

And Lovely Daughter

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List of Abbreviations

ST: Source text

TT: Target text

SL: Source language

TL: Target language

Abstract

Drama constitutes an important part of world literature and the translation of drama between countries has been going on for many centuries. Yet only limited scholarly attention has been devoted to the translation of drama, probably owing to the special problems confronting the translator for the stage. All through the history of translation study, the concept of naturalness has been changed by different definitions. In this study faithfulness to writer's style and naturalness of translation from different points of view and at different levels in the drama were studied. The main material was *The Importance of Being Ernest* a play by Oscar Wilde and two published translations of it in Persian by Mohammad Saidi (1979) and Farideh Mahdavi Damghani (2000). The researcher made use of Lander's (2001) criteria for style and 6 important theories of naturalness for judgment. Then the collected data were compared and contrasted with the corresponding Persian translations. The statistical procedure applied in this study was measuring frequency of unnatural translations and amount of translators' faithfulness to the writer's style. After examining the frequency of unnatural cases, it was revealed that faithfulness to writer's style decreases the degree of translation naturalness. In these two translations, the first one by Saidi is target-text oriented and his translation is more natural. The other translation by Mahdavi which is source-text oriented is not as natural as the first one because she tried to keep source text structure.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1.Overview

In the first section of the present chapter a brief background of drama translation and different definitions of naturalness are introduced. In the second section statement of the problem and significance of the study will be presented. Finally, in the last section research questions and definition of the key terms are presented.

1.2. Introduction

The translation of literary texts is, as a rule, a difficult task, and it basically requires talent, patience, linguistic and extralinguistic knowledge. Furthermore, drama translation compounds the issue and claims, besides all the above mentioned qualities, the translator's awareness of the dual nature that drama displays: a text written for an audience and performed on stage, or a text written for readers and laid down on page. This dual nature will necessarily be rendered in translation. Generally, most of the studies on translation are predominantly concerned with issues regarding the translation of poetry versus prose, thus overlooking almost entirely the area of drama and its inherent translation obstacles. More often than not, it is assumed that the methodology employed in prose translation is applicable in drama translation too. Anderman writes:

Literary scholars are increasingly beginning to turn their attention to problems specifically related to the translation of drama. In the past comparatists in particular showed limited interest in translations as instruments of mediation and influence among national literatures, but this situation has recently started to change (p. 74).

Clarke (1965, cited in Ghourchian, 2005, p. 9) defines drama as “generally two persons speaking and performing actions representing other people”, this may be considered the

basic requirement of true drama, even if they are heard from radio because they are imagined. This definition is the simplest and the first definition that may come to one's mind, although the core meaning has remained intact but its manifestations have change in modern drama. However, the simplicity of the above definition has not prevented translation scholars from thinking about the complexity of features inferencing drama translation. Almost all translation scholars have reached the consensus that a parody linguistic approach toward the translation of dramatic text is an illusion.

According to Venuti (1998, cited in Aaltonen, 2000, p. 3)

Literature is one of the main channels through which people all over the world share their ideas with each other. Drama is a form of literature which is popular and translation of theatre texts if done appropriately and adequately is an essential task for making cultural repertoire richer.

“ For a long time the methodology used in the process of drama translation was the same as that used to approach prose texts” (Bassnett, 1980, p. 120). But this is not correct since “ unlike the translation of a novel or a poem the duality inherent in the art of the theatre requires language to combine with spectacle manifested through visual as well as acoustic images” (Anderman,1998,p. 71). Translation of theatre text differs a great deal from the translation of prose and other literary genres. In drama translation, the maximum of the translator's sensitivity is required for fresh and plausible dialogues. Translators as well as teachers and critics of translation consider naturalness (or acceptability) and accuracy (or adequacy) as two major criteria in assessing translation (Abdoolahi, 2007).

This thesis intends to study and describe linguistic factors involved in the naturalness in the translation of drama from English into Persian. This study is descriptive- analytical and

does not solely intend to evaluate the linguistic correctness or accuracy of equivalents of translated play. The major problem to be tackled here will be the issue of style as related to naturalness, an issue not adequately addressed in translation studies of this type. The main source in this study is one of the classic dramas by Oscar Wilde "*The Importance of Being Ernest*", the reason that researcher has chosen this play is that it is style dependent. The analysis and assessment of style involves examination of a writer's choice of words, his figures of speech, the devices (rhetorical and otherwise), the shape of his sentences (whether they be loose or periodic), Style defies complete analysis or definition because it is the tone of voice of the writer himself; as peculiar as his laugh, his walk and his handwriting. The style as Buffon put it, is the man. Therefore in this thesis researcher is about to find out whether the translator can be faithful to writer's style and provide a natural and performable translation. Naturalness as well as accuracy and clearness is one of the main features of evaluating translation of literary books. An acceptable translated book is the one which includes all these three factors.

Based on the tendencies of translators to create good and natural translation pieces, and to show the necessity of this action, the researcher in this thesis tries to study the naturalness flow of *The Importance of Being Ernest* in Iran, to reveal some strong and weak points of natural translations of this book. Tendency towards natural translation goes back to translation pieces of St. Jerome and his followers Luther(1530) and Dryden (1684) who favored colloquial and natural renderings of the texts. From then on, great translators tried their best to create translation pieces which seemed natural as much as possible. Tytler (1797), Belloc(1931), Bates(1943), Nida(1943), Jakobson(1959), Levy, Catford, Newmark (1988), and some contemporary translators have emphasized on natural translation a lot. Tytler (1797) is the proponent of the idea that to make a natural translation, a translator must

be free in adding to or retrenching from the original text when it has been rendered into a target language.

Some case studies have been carried out on naturalness/unnaturalness of linguistic elements both in Iran and in other countries. One of the topics studied in Iran is the collocational clash, which deals with acceptability at the sentence level'. Similar analysis on the 'acceptability of translated texts' has been undertaken in other countries as well. My contribution, however, will be on the style translation and naturalness of the translation in drama. Among different theories of naturalness , 6 of them are selected to be the basis of this study which are Belloc`s (1931), Rahimi`s (2004), Tytler`s (1797), Nida`s (1943) and Newmark`s (1988) theories of naturalness:

1. Natural translation must not be a one-to-one or literal translation from any language (Belloc, 1931).
2. A natural translation is so that the receptor language readers do not recognize it as translation at all (Rahimi, 2004).
3. In a natural translation, a translator is free in adding or retrenching from the original text when it is necessary(Tytler, 1797).
4. In natural translation a translator understands what kind of audience the original author had in mind when writing (Nida, 1943).
5. Natural translators adopt communicative translation more than semantic translation (Newmark, 1988).
6. Beekman and Callow (1982) have offered a criterion for assigning the naturalness of translation. Their definition is based on the term ease. They say there is correlation between ease of understanding the meaning of a text and the level of naturalness which it has.

1.3. Statement of the Problem

Drama constitutes an important part of world literature and the translation of drama between countries has been going on for many centuries. Yet only limited scholarly attention has been devoted to the translation of drama, probably owing to the special problems confronting the translator for the stage.

The translator for the stage faces a problem unlike that involved in any other type of translation process. The principal difficulty resides in the nature of the dramatic text itself, for drama is at once literary art and representational art. Whilst interlingual translation involves the transfer of a given written text from the source language to the target language, all kinds of factors other than the linguistic are involved in the case of theatre texts (Bassnett, 1985, p. 87).

Any utterance, oral or written, primary or secondary and in any sphere of communication is individual and therefore can reflect the individuality of the speaker or writer; that is, it possess individual style.

Each writer and therefore each translator, has an individual style, this goes for any genre. But according to Bakhtin literary authors possess the greatest individualism. Therefore in this study the researcher is going to evaluate translatability of style. This is a case study of *The Importance of Being Ernest* by Oscar Wilde. The main reason that researcher has chosen this play is the specific style of writing it. Another criteria to be evaluated in this study is naturalness of the translated play for the audiences. The natural way of expression is the way native speakers use their language. It is described as well-formedness in linguistics, acceptability in pragmatics and sociolinguistics, and naturalness or acceptability in translation studies, and its violation is divided into grammatical, collocational and cultural clashes (or structural, semantic and pragmatic clashes). Interference from the source language (SL) is

said to be the main cause of this phenomenon in translated texts. The major problem to be tackled here will be the issue of style as related to naturalness, an issue not adequately addressed in translation studies of this type.

1.4. Significance of the Study

The researcher's purpose is to check the use of writer's style in translation and survey its role in the naturalness of translated drama. It is a textual analysis, however, this certainly necessitating within a wider Context of situation, i.e. socio-cultural conditions into which the translation is received. Translation is a cultural and historical as well as linguistic phenomenon. Therefore, it is imperative to explore its context and its conditioning factors, and to look for grounds that have shaped and can explain the reasons for the overall product of translation. Each writer in any genre has his/her own style. One of the most outstanding features of every literary work is its style. As Abrams and Harpham (2005) put it "Style has been defined as the manner of linguistic expression in prose or verse - as how speakers or writers say whatever it is that say" (p. 216).

The analysis and assessment of style involve the examination of a writer's choice of words, his figures of speech, the devices (rhetorical and otherwise), the shape of his sentences (whether they be loose or periodic), the shape of his paragraphs - indeed, of every conceivable aspect of his language and the way in which he uses it (Cuddon, 1999, P. 872).

Landers (2001) suggests that "the translator should adapt to the style of each author translated - now terse, now rumbling, sometimes abstruse, but always as faithful to the original as circumstances permit" (p. 90). Therefore, style is one of the defining features of every literary text and should be preserved as faithfully as possible. In this study the researcher want to consider a specific genre and investigate the naturalness of style in the translation.

Translation's naturalness is not a characteristic under the effect of abstract variables. Naturalness represents a real challenge for both novice and professional translators (Mollanazar, 2001). It is evident that culture, language norms and the reader feedback to a translation are determinant features of naturalness for a translation. Being familiar with both source and target culture, enables translator to infer some implied information, that is culture specific terms. Based on the foregoing information, it is significant to stress that the influence of culture on translation's naturalness is undeniable.

1.5. Research Questions

Two main questions which researcher is going to answer in this thesis are as follow:

1. To what extent does style translation in drama affect naturalness in the TT?
2. What features of the TT in drama are more likely to be affected in style translation?

1.6. Definition of the Key Terms

1. Style: "The characteristic manner of expression in prose or verse .How a particular writer says things" (Oxford dictionary of literary terms, 2009, p.653).

2. Drama: "In general any work meant to be performed on a stage by actors"(Oxford dictionary of literary terms, 2009,p.201).

3. Naturalness of translation: means that the text dose not sound like a translation(Rahimi, 2004)

4. Accuracy of translation: means correct exegesis of the source message, and transfer of the meaning of that message as exactly as possible into the receptor language (Barnwell, 1980, p. 15).

5. Clearness of translation: clearness in translation means that the translated piece can

communicate to the people (target audience) who are to use it(Larson, 2001, p. 49).