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# A CULTURAL AND DISCOURSAL PROSPECT TOWARD PERSIAN LITERARY TRANSLATION ASSESSMENT

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## ABSTRACT

THE ROLE OF DISCOURSE AND DISCOURSAL ELEMENTS IN THE FORMATION OF ANY TEXT IS VERY IMPORTANT. MANY SCHOLARS HAVE CARRIED OUT STUDIES RELATED TO THE ISSUE. TRANSFERRING THESE ELEMENTS FROM ONE LANGUAGE TO ANOTHER IS SUCH A GREAT WORK THAT TRANSLATORS FIND IT DIFFICULT TO RENDER AND TRANSFER THE ELEMENTS COMPLETELY. THE LACK OF PERFECT KNOWLEDGE OF THE DISCOURSAL ISSUES AND OTHER CONTEXTUAL ELEMENTS OF A TEXT LEADS TO SOME MISUNDERSTANDINGS AND MISTRANSLATIONS. TRANSLATORS OFTEN RESORT TO ADAPTATION IN ORDER TO DEAL WITH THE SL SITUATIONS THAT DO NOT EXIST IN THE TL BUT IN THIS PROCESS SOME DISCOURSAL AND CONTEXTUAL ELEMENTS OF THE ST COULD NOT BE TRANSFERRED. IT COULD BE CLAIM THAT A NATION'S LITERATURE IS A PART OF ITS DISCOURSE AND CULTURAL ELEMENTS ARE EMBEDDED IN THE LITERATURE. THESE TRANSLATIONAL CONFLICTS ARE MORE OBVIOUS IN CONTEMPORARY PERSIAN LITERATURE. IN THIS STUDY, THE SELECTED PARTS OF "THE GAMBLER" BY "FYODOR MIKHAILOVICH DOSTOEVSKY" WERE COMPARED WITH ITS ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS BY SALEH HOSSEINI TO FIND OUT WHETHER THE DISCOURSE AND OTHER CONTEXTUAL ELEMENTS OF THE SOURCE TEXT HAVE BEEN CONSIDERED IN THE PROCESS OF TRANSLATION.

**KEYWORDS:** DISCOURSE ANALYSIS, TRANSLATION STUDIES, LITERARY TRANSLATION

## 1. Introduction

In the world of literature every nation has its own poems, novels, fables and other written masterpieces which inevitably reflect the discourse, ideology and cultures of that nation. Having subtle look or it is better to say having critical view towards these masterpieces reveals some facts either of different discourse or mere characteristics of the author or poet.

Meanwhile the Russian literature is not the exception. Regarding the Russian literature, one of the great prose writer is Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky who was close contemporary with Leo Tolstoy. Considerably twentieth-century thought and world literature is deeply influenced by his works. His novels mainly discover the psychology of human in the disturbing social, political and spiritual context of Russian society in 19<sup>th</sup> century. Most of his works present a preoccupation with Christianity, explore into the prism of the individual confrontation with beauties and hardships of life. A novel named *The Gambler* by Fyodor Dostoyevsky is about a young teacher employed by a formerly wealthy Russian general. His addiction to roulette is reflected by the work. Under a strict deadline, Dostoyevsky completed the novel to pay off his gambling debts.

As Al-Mohannadi (2008) states in her research article, the translator is thought to transfer the concepts of the ST writer which were written in another language into TT. Translators have to accept the fact that "translation is a process of decoding and recoding, or analysis and restructuring, during which the translator tries to reach the author's ideas before putting them into words" [1]. Also she outlines that the translation process, "in turn, implies the transfer, consciously or unconsciously, of the author's discourse which carries his ideology, cultural and social attitudes to the target text readers and this discourse may or may not be the author's discourse" [1].

During this transfer and regarding the issue of discourse which carries ideology, cultural and social attitudes of the author, the intended meaning of the original author/poet sometimes distorted or altered due to some factors such as limitation of translator knowledge, unfamiliarity of the discourse of author, ideology, ST culture, different stances of the author/poet and translator and also being in different time-era with author. This study tries to assess the translator's intervention or manipulation in the translated text. The discourse analysis, nowadays, has brought into the field of translation studies and has become one of the crucial factors which influence the translation systematically.

### **1.1. Statement of the Problem**

The problem is that sometimes in translation process, discursual factors, textual elements and culture-specific concepts are inverted and distorted due to the translator's unfamiliarity with the ST; therefore, the intended meaning of the original author is changed or lost.

### **2. Review of Related Literature**

In this part, the research may define and elaborate some key notions related in the subject matter.

#### **2.1. Cultural Translation**

In her book "Translation Studies", Susan Bassnett (2002) outlines that parts of a cultural turn that in the humanities generally in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century have made the cultural turn in translation studies, and the shape of many traditional subjects have been altered [4]. Bassnett (2002) believes that:

[C]ultural studies in its new internationalist phase turned to sociology, to ethnography and to history. And likewise, translation studies turned to ethnography and history and sociology to deepen the methods of analyzing what happens to texts in the process of what might be called 'intercultural transfer, or translation [4].

To sum up, it can be concluded that culture is a relational subject and scholars have dealt with it inversely. For example, some of the translation scholars does not believe in such a considerable opportunities and restrict culture to a complex of attitudes, beliefs, rules, and values which a society share.

#### **2.2. Literary Translation Process**

A process oriented approach to literary translation is more theoretical and maybe termed as cognitive-pragmatic as Baker and Saldanha (2008) stated in Routledge Encyclopaedia of Translation Studies. "The analysis of literary translation processes here maybe informed by literary cognitive stylistics and the pragmatics of translation" [3]. These researches tried communicate between a source language writer, the translator as a reader, the translator as a writer and a target language reader.

One of the most prominent factors, by which a transition of message from one culture to another can be drifted, or in some cases manipulated, is the ideology of one, who, as a medium between two cultures (ST & TT), carries the message i.e. Translator. It is inevitable for a translator not to be that much mute by the point of view and just dumping the message by its own culture's ideology and author's manner, therefore referring to a conveyed idea, transfused within someone else's philosophy as a translator rather than the author itself needs a specific attention to the stream of possible manipulations that the translator might have on the message in the procedure of translation.

Hereby, the way a translator may change the direction of a text by the favor of his own ideology is illustrated and the aspects by which a translator can commit this kind of manipulation such as:

1. Choice of words -- selecting lexical equals for ST vocabulary/expressions according to the translator's set of beliefs, value systems, world view, culture which all make up ideology. Word choices have been recognized as a key resources of ideological manifestation.
2. Change of specified names (brought by the author for certain and specific aims) into other names, which reflect another connotation or denotation in the TT text.
3. Deletion of some words or phrase or sentences of the ST in the process of translation (in some cases even a whole paragraph or part of it) which can be the result of certain goals and ideals that a translator (who is both an individual & a member of society) might have.

##### **2.2.1. Literary Translation in Modern Iran**

As Azarang (2008) states the history of publication in modern Iran dates back to the Qajar era when the printing machine arrived in Tabriz around 1816 under prince Abbas Mirza patronage. Translation was started with translating European texts into Persian by Iranian students who were abroad. But insatiable



appetite for translation mostly has showed itself since Pahlavid era and after World War I as Karimi Hakkak (1998) argues. As Pahlavid era encountered with the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century and was influenced by many modernized thoughts and societies, there were several reformations on social life in Iran especially on education modernization. Tehran University is one of the outcomes of that reformations which was founded in 1935. Haddaian Moghaddam (2015) in his book "Literary Translation in Modern Iran" stated that "translation had progressed during the period of Reza Shah due to his general policy of modernization in Iran" [9]. He believes that most of the reformations shaping contemporary translation activities in Iran can be accredited to the period of Mohammad Reza Shah (1941-1979) [9]. It was during that period which the first modern Iranian publishers, were established, translations of novels from both English and non-English published, and translation considered as a policy for the active political parties of the time [11]. After Islamic Revolution in Iran, the policy for publication has got regulation and as Haddadian Moghaddam (2014) argued in his book the publishing process has gone through a censorship named "Momayyezi". "The issue of censorship during this period has remained a controversial issue, defining the way agents of translation find their position in the field of publishing, and how they exercise their agency" [9].

### **2.3. Discourse Analysis**

Fairclough and Wodak (1997) defined discourse as a form of social practice which indicates a dialectical association between a specific discursive event and the situations, institutional and social structures that outline it. They formed the discursive event, but it also forms them [8].

### **3. Methodology**

Qualitative research employed for the present study, is involved with descriptive method of investigation and analysis of social phenomena. It draws on an inductive process in which themes and categories develop through data analysis. Samples are small and often purposively selected. The researcher using this method, is focused on the difficulties and problems which translator faced and different strategies which used due to the ideological/theosophical gap.

#### **3.1. Statement of Research Questions**

Many considerable questions could be raised considering this study but researcher asks herself a few questions which are common in literary translation. The questions are:

1. Does the translator need to understand the discourse of the original author in order to achieve a successful translation?
2. Is it necessary to analyse the discourse and textual elements before starting the process of translation?

The researcher tries to answer these questions through the analytical study using some samples which collected randomly.

#### **3.2. Design**

Since the ongoing study tries to investigate the discursual approach of the translators in the literary works it can be claimed that the most suitable research method for reaching the supposed goal of this study is qualitative method, which the researcher tries to associate with. Therefore, the study demands a well-established explanation on the issue and precise comparison of the selected scripts from corpuses; i.e. the Gambler by Dostoyevsky and its Persian translation by Saleh Hosseini.

Based on firm theoretical background and logical discussions, 30 different sentences of the original novel (in English) has selected and its translations will be analysed regarding the discourse in order to see how and to what extend a certain meaning of the text could change the direction of translation process and the process of conveying the message.

#### **3.3. Corpus**

For the present study, as mentioned above, the researcher has selected 30 different sentences of the "Gambler" by Dostoevsky and its Persian translation by Saleh Hosseini as the corpus. The corpus of this study as mentioned consists of certain parts of the "Gambler" by Dostoevsky and its Persian translation by Saleh Hosseini which is selected purposefully and its translation extracted from the abovementioned corpuses; and they discussed in a contrastive analytical manner, i.e. discourse analysis.

#### **3.4. Procedure**

In the following part, the overtly erroneous errors are dealt with. Overtly erroneous errors are categorized into three categories: 1) Under Translation; 2) over translation and 3) Distortion of Meaning and also the translated text discussed in discourse level [10].

In this process, first, the original text is written. Second, the translation of the text is written under the original text. The researcher applied the above mentioned three categories then the researcher analysed the original text and translation in the discourse level.

#### 4. Data Analysis and Discussion

The researcher analysed the original and translated texts regarding their different discourses that have crucial role in conveying the message, which has been the main idea of the author. Two texts in the textual level and second discusses all problem in the discursual level. In this process the researcher first analysed, first the original sentences are written and the Persian translations are written respectively. At the textual level researcher is dealing with three points i.e. 1) under translation, 2) over translation and 3) distortion of meaning. Then the researcher analysed all the original and translated texts in the discourse level. For clarifying the analysis, three outstanding samples are elaborated here as a representation of data.

##### 4.1. Sample One

###### 4.1.1. Original Sentence

"It will be case of fare well, Mlle Blanche, "I remarked"; for in such an event she would never become Madame General. Do you know? I believe the old man is so much in love with her that he will shoot himself if she should throw him over. At his age it is a dangerous thing to fall in love" [6].

###### 4.1.2. Persian Translation

"گفتم: مادموازل بلانش را بگو که دیگر زن ژنرال نمیشود! آخر به نظر من ژنرال به قدری دلباخته اش است که اگر سرکار علیه رهپیش کند خود را به تیر میزند. این جوری عاشق شدن، آن هم در سن و سال او خطرناک است." [7]

##### 4.1.3. Discussion at Textual Level

###### 4.1.3.1. Under Translation

The translator has not translated the sentence "It will be case of fare well" and has not mentioned. The sentence means, "این مورد باعث جدایی مادموازل بلانش خواهد شد". Translator again has not translated the phrase, "for in such an event" which means, "به خاطر این که در چنین مواقعی". Translator also has not translated the interrogative sentence "Do you know?", and omitted completely.

###### 4.1.3.2. Over Translation

Translator added the element "آخر" and also added the element "آن هم" in the translated version which does not exist in the original piece.

###### 4.1.3.3. Distortion of Meaning

Translator translated the phrase "I believe the old man" to "آخر به نظر من ژنرال", and also the sentence "he will shoot himself" to "خود را به تیر میزند" which according to the Cambridge dictionary (2008), the meaning of the original sentence is "to kill somebody" which is translator has not recognized and result in distortion of meaning.

##### 4.2. Sample Two

###### 4.2.1. Original Sentence

"'Yes it is very horrible', she interrupted with a shudder. 'Consequently', I am the more surprised that YOU should be so cheerful. What are YOU so pleased about? About the fact that you have gone and lost my money?" [6].

###### 4.2.2. Persian Translation

"به میان حرفم درآمد و از سر انزجار گفت: "همه اش مفت و پاره است. تعجب هم از این است که زده ای بر طبل بی عاری. از چه این قدر خوشحالی؟ نکند چون دار و ندارم را باخته ای؟" [7]

##### 4.2.3. Discussion at Textual Level

###### 4.2.3.1. Under Translation

The translator has not translated the phrase "about the fact that" and has not mentioned. The sentence means "تو رفته". Translator again has not translated the phrase, "you have gone" which means, "تو رفته". Translator also has not translated the interrogative sentence "Do you know?", and omitted

completely. The translator has not translated the word "Consequently" and has not mentioned. The word means "در نتیجه".

#### 4.2.3.2. Over Translation

Translator added the element "طبل بی عاری" in the translated version which does not exist in the original piece.

#### 4.2.3.3. Distortion of Meaning:

Translator translated the phrase "YOU should be so cheerful" to "زده ای بر طبل بی عاری", and also the sentence "Yes it is very horrible", to "همه اش مفت و پاره است" which according to the Persian language and literature, the meaning of the original sentence is distorted.

### 4.3. Sample Three

#### 4.3.1. Original Sentence

"I explained to her that the game was carried on in the salons of the Casino; whereupon there ensued a string of questions as to whether there were many such salons, whether many people played in them, whether those people played a whole day at a time, and whether the game was managed according to fixed rules" [6].

#### 4.3.2. Persian Translation

"در مقام توضیح گفتم که میزهای رولت را، در چند سالن، توی قمارخانه گذاشتند. بعد سوالات بیشتری کرد، از این قبیل که میزهای رولت تعدادشان زیاد است؟ خیلی ها باز میکنند؟ از صبح تا شب قمار میکنند؟ میزها را چطوری کار گذاشته اند؟" [7]

#### 4.3.3. Discussion at Textual Level

##### 4.3.3.1. Under Translation

The translator has not translated this part of the first sentence "the game was carried on" and has not mentioned in the translated text. The translator also has not translated the sentence "and whether the game was managed according to fixed rules" and has not mentioned in the translated text.

##### 4.3.3.2. Over Translation

Translator has added the sentence "در مقام" in the translated version which does not exist in the original piece. Translator has added the sentence "میزهای رولت" to the translated. Translator has also added the element "میزهای رولت تعدادشان زیاد است" in the translated version which has not exist in the original piece. Translator has also added the sentence, "میزها را چطوری کار گذاشته اند؟" in the translated version which has not exist in the original piece.

##### 4.3.3.3. Distortion of Meaning

The translator has translated the sentence "I explained to her to" "در مقام توضیح گفتم" and the translator has not mentioned the phrase "the game was carried on in the salons of the Casino" to "میزهای رولت را، در چند سالن" and he also translated the phrase "whereupon there ensued a string of questions to" "بعد سوالات بیشتری کرد؟" which result in distortion of the meaning of the original text.

Now, by drawing a table, this research is going to show the "Under Translation", "Over Translation" and "Distortion of Meaning" rates in 30 selected sentences.

Table One. Textual Analysis Level

Textual Analysis	Under Translation	Over Translation	Distortion of Meaning
Number of Mistakes	92	64	56

#### 4.4. Discussion at Discourse Level

Here we discuss the all 30 selected sample sentences in accordance with discourse. In most of the part, the translator is dealt with translation only at the word level and has not realized the cultural factors but in some other parts his translation is a fully free translation. The other factor to be mentioned is the original text is written in formal language but the translator has not recognized the point and failed to render the formality. In the translation process, translator has also added some elements which do not exist in the original version and caused over translation. In this case, number the high frequency usage of the words in the TL lexical scope, has encouraged the translator to use them, instead of finding an equivalent item in

the TL. He translated some part of the text in formal language and then moved towards the informal one. Also the translator attempted to be faithful to the original text and endeavored to convey the same impact that the original text has on readers of target text but somewhat it made the translation abnormal. In this process, the translator also mixed the formal translation with literal one which resulted in a limited proficiency in translated text. In the above examples, the translator has translated some of the SL phrases into sentence in the target language. In those sample, it is obvious that, translator not only has not considered the textual level of the text but also discourse level. He has also not recognized the author's intended meaning which has result in to distortion of meaning.

### **5. Conclusion**

In previous part some samples of "The Gambler by Dostoyevsky" with its Persian translation by "Saleh Hosseini" analysed. We presented original sentences with their Persian translation. Then the samples and its translation were analysed at the different level as mentioned earlier. Then each sample was analysed in the category such as textual level (under translation, over translation and distortion of meaning). Then a table is drawn to show the number of mistakes in 30 selected sample sentences. Then a discussion went through at discourse level for all of the samples. This was the whole process which has done in the previous part.

In the following section we are going to discuss the results and conclusions of the work. As it was mentioned, we proposed some questions to be analysed and discussed through the work. The research questions are restated again in this part and then we are going to discuss the answers of them. Our research questions are:

1. Does the translator need to understand the discourse of the original author in order to achieve a successful translation?
2. Is it necessary to analyse the discourse and textual elements before starting the process of translation?

As it is stated in the previous part, the related level which has analysed is under translation, mistranslation, over translation, distortion of meaning and discourse level. In almost all samples these strategies could be found and translator through using these techniques tried to handle the intended meaning. After inserting these strategies, translator adapts source texts into the situations of the target texts but in some cases he handled the translation poorly. The examples which analysed above reveal that translator has not focused on the discourse and other textual elements i.e. he only considered the textual level and mainly translated the work mostly freely and mostly used the word-to-word translation.

The translator ignored the discourse of the original work and used different strategies to handle the translation which resulted in creation of his own text in the translated version. So, the meaning of the original text has changed and distorted in the process of translation. Cultural and ideological differences among the other factors in on hand and the lack of enough knowledge of the discourse and textual elements which carries ideology and cultural attitudes of the original author in the other hand result in lots of difficulties for the translator. The translator was unable to recognize the cultural and ideological aspects of the work. The translator frequently used different techniques to handle the translation and creates some situations that do not exist in the TT. The translator due to the mentioned techniques, in some cases also added some sentences to the translated text and in some cases omitted a large part of the text and has not translated. In this process, the intended meaning of the original author has changed or has not been reflected and also some cultural elements of the original text have violated. It can be concluded that due to cultural differences, the translator has failed to understand the author and text properly. Furthermore, cultural gaps that exist between Persian and English languages hindered the translator to extract properly the intended meaning of the author.

So it could claim that translation and discursal approaches are linked together and translator, as mentioned before, must not only have proficiency of two languages but also feel at home in two cultures. Translation quality assessment has not been an undisputed issue in the field of Translation Studies. The main problem seems to exist in the way to express quality and equivalence or the measures which should be employed for the quality and equivalence proficiency of a translation. This matter has been normally argued with many differences. The target text (TT) may be assessed and evaluated by linguists and experts such as professional translators, translation or language teachers, postgraduate students of translation studies and linguistics, and others including researchers.

Otherwise, target texts may be designated in accordance with several systems which is motivated theoretically, stated clearly and discussed previously to the analysis. Those systems also serve to define the source text (ST) so that, through independent analysis, source texts and target texts can be associated. In such a way, the quality of target texts is generally presented as a degree of similarity of its description in relation to that of the source text.

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