

Elements of Translation Acceptability

Fateme Araghi and Mostafa Ramezanpoor

Dirjand University and University of Kashan

INTRODUCTION

According to Raffel (1973, as cited in Miremadi, 1991, p. 10), as long as the need to know other cultures is great, the need for translation will be great. This is because “the more one knows other cultures, the more one knows of one’s self.” Translation has been playing an important role from the beginning of human existence to our era that we are obliged to translate to dig for information and to know about the new explorations to not be retarded and to proceed along with other developed countries. Today that is the era of information, every translator has to translate great bunch of information every day in a short time. In fact translators are the kingpins of every society. Of course literary translation is somehow different with technical translation, and the goal of each kind of text may differ with the other but when a translator start to translate, no matter what kind of texts, he should observe some points to create a great work or masterpiece, which can absorb the attention of audiences for whom he is translating. A masterpiece that would be known both by those who are considered as the specific audiences and those who are not. Sometimes what to translate is more important than how to translate and sometimes it is completely vice versa. How does a translator understand the proper time of translating a book and how does he choose a decent topic, are questions that will be answered in this essay.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Fortunately so many researches have been done on literary translations and the effects these translations have had on the writers and translators and sometimes the public of that country, but unfortunately not much has been done on the reason of this impression. In 1828, Mr Villemain was the first person who sometimes in his classroom, talked about mutual effects of English, Italian and French literature on each other and encouraged his students to evaluate the literature of other countries. The next one continuing

this lesson was J-J. Ampere. He started to talk about the literature of different countries. After some time he was known as the one who based the comparative literature by Sainte_ Beuve. The first book written about the familiarity of French with the orient is 'L'orient dans la literature francaise au XVII et au XVIII siecles' by P.Martino that is published in 1906.¹ Javad Hadidi is an Iranian writer who has written some books and articles about the effects of Persian poets and writers on French literature. In his book 'Az Sa'di ta Aragon', first, he introduces great Iranian poets and writers and then he mentions those who have been impressed by these Iranian poets and writers. Why Iran and French interacted with each other in the area of literature is because of relations between these two countries. In this time most of Iranian youth travelled to France to educate there, so they were familiar with French more than any other country. The other valuable book is written by Amir Ismail Azar, 'Iran literature in world literature' that has paid special attention to great Persian stories and novels and the impacts these works have had on western cultures and stories. In this book the writer has introduced the first translation of great works to foreign languages such as French, English, German and other European languages.

TOURY AND TRANSLATION ACCEPTABILITY

Toury distinguishes between three kinds of translation norms, indicating different stages of the translation process, namely the preliminary norms, operational norms and initial norms. Preliminary norms are concerned with such things as the choice of the text to translate, i.e. the translation policy of a given culture. They also relate to the directness of translation. Operational norms guide the decision-making during the actual process of translating. They are either matricial or textual. Matricial norms are related to the completeness of the TT (target text). In other words, they determine the macro-structure of the text and thus govern features such as omissions, additions and text segmentation. Textual norms affect the text's micro-level and are generally linguistic, stylistic or specifically literary.

Initial norms control translators' choices and Toury distinguishes between two polar alternatives. Translators can subject themselves to the source text and rely on what he calls 'adequacy' or they can subject themselves to usage in the target culture and rely on 'acceptability'. At this point, it seems reasonable to say that subjection to either pole can lead to either survival or distortion of the source text's style.

1. Javad Hadidi, *Az Sa'di ta Aragon* (Tehran: Nashre Daneshgahi,1994).

Toury also established translational laws in the sense of ‘observable behavioural activities’. He thus offers two laws: the law of growing standardisation, also known as the law of conversion, which results from adhering too much to the “use-values” in the target culture, thus creating an “acceptable” translation and the law of interference deriving from being watchful of the source text features and the original style.²

KHAYYAM’S RUBAYIAT

The first person who used the name of Omar Khayyam was Thomas Hyde; he was the professor of Oxford University. Of course Khayyam’s popularity was not because of his poems in eighteenth century, but because he was also a great mathematician and astronomer and he was one of those eight people who were involved in the compilation of *Jalali* calendar. After some time, in 1858, Ed. Fitz Gerald (1809-1883), the most famous translator of Khayyam’s Rubaiyat became familiar with Khayyam’s poems. We can say that the most important reason of his interest in translating these poems was similarity of Khayyam’s behaviours and beliefs to Fitz Gerald. May be this sympathy with Khayyam helped him to create a great work that has been published times and times. The popularity of both Khayyam and Fitz Gerald owes to both of them.³ Of course except English, Khayyam’s Rubaiyat has been translated to different European languages.

An example of Fitz Gerald translation⁴

Now the New Year reviving old desires,

The thoughtful Soul to Solitude retires,

Where the WHITE HAND of MOSES on the Bough

Puts out, and Jesus from the Ground suspires.

Persian poem:

اکنون که جهان را به خوشی دسترسی است
هر زنده دلی را سوی صحرا هوسی است
بر هر شاخی طلوع موسی دستی است
در هر چمنی خروش عیسی نفسی است

-
2. Gideon Toury, “*The Nature and Role of Norms in Translation*”, in *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1995), pp 53-69.
 3. Amir Ismail Azar, *Adabiat e Iran in Adabiat e Jahan* (Tehran: Sokhan, 2008)
 4. Amir Ismail Azar, *Adabiat e Iran in Adabiat e Jahan*.

THEME

“Theme is a statement, or series of related observations, about some aspect of the human condition, interpreted from the unique viewpoint of the author.”- Dean Koontz

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, theme in literature is “the subject of a piece of writing.” Like morals or messages, themes often explore historically common or cross-culturally recognizable ideas and are almost always implied rather than stated explicitly. A work of literature would be universal if and even if it has a universal theme and subject. A universal theme is a theme beyond specific time, place and race. It should have a message for all people in the world and this message should be concurrent with human nature, a message that is not contrary to the beliefs, interests, concepts, values and features of special group of people and does not humiliate and scores some races or nations. Not only works of literature but also paintings and movies and scenarios that are pieces of art would become universal and famous in the same way. Some examples of universal works are as follow: Sa’di’s *Gulistan*, Rumi’s *poems*, *One Thousand and One Night or Arabian Nights*, Firdausi’s *Shahname*, *Fables of Bidpai*, Hafiz’s *poems* and so on.

Some points should be mentioned here. The first example is Sa’di’s *Gulistan* which is somehow the first work that European has become familiar with it. Andre du Ryer was the first person who translated some parts of Sa’di’s *Gulistan* to French in early seventeen century. Sa’di is the teacher of morality for us. He has wonderful poems and stories in his books that somehow organize the relations between people. The concepts of life and training ethics are expressed in his books so simply that absorb the attention of both adults and children.⁵ Nearly all the translations have been done in order to use it as the book of ethics. The simplicity of his poems is the most fantastic feature of them because those who read them think that it is easy to create something like him but when they try, they realize that it is impossible.

The other example is the *Fables of Bidpai*. It is an ethical myth and the reason of its popularity is the admiration of good behaviour and deeds and proscribing ungraceful and unfavourable deeds; so because morality is something absolute and it is the same for all people around the world, in all eras, all people try to access the best and most useful training ethics. The other reason is the way the actions and scenes have been described in this story which was so interesting for western countries. This book was first translated in thirteen century by John of Capua and soon become famous in Europe.

5. Amir Ismail Azar, *Adabiat e Iran in Adabiat e Jahan*.

The story of *One Thousand and One Night* is popular both for its theme and style. The theme of it is mostly moral. The admiration of justice, the respect of parents, remembrance of God and the veneration of relatives are some themes that exist in this story. The style of it will be discussed in next parts.

The last example that the authors explain about it here is Firdausi's *Shahname*. *Shahname* was translated by Joseph Champion for the first time in 1785, but one who made Europeans familiar with Firdausi was Sir William Jones.⁶ Firdausi was not only a philosopher and scholar, he was also a missionary. He was a pioneer in valuing the role of women in society. *Shahname* is universally popular, but something that should be mention here is that Mongolians Turks were not so interested in *Shahname*, because in it there is a tribe called 'Turanian', they were Mongolian Turks and in their battles among Iranians and Mongolians, they were the loser most of the time. We can say that some parts of epic books cannot become universal, because it is limited in location, it is only about the people and the heroic acts of only one country, and however it is not time limited.

SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND CULTURAL SITUATION

When a translator decides to do a translation, he should first examine social, political and cultural situation of both source and target countries. He should consider some points for example the relations between two sides in past and present, how the cultures of both sides are similar or different, does the theme of the book adapt to the cultural and social situation of the target country, what is the beliefs of both sides about each other, whether political, cultural or social turns have boon occurred or not. If a translator looks to the above mentioned points carefully, he will have a successful book. France Great Revolution and Russia Revolution happened in 1789 and 1905 respectively, and these two Revolutions were so influential in Mashruta Revolution in Iran. The best way to motivate people in Iran to band and demonstrate was translating books which were about the revolutions in other countries such as France and Russia. By translating these books people were made ready to accept the new ideas and belief in their society. Effective translations in Iran were history books and novels. For example Abbas Mirza who was a politician and translator in Qajar Era, tried to translate some books like *Sharle davazdahom*,

6. Amir Ismail Azar, *Adabiat e Iran in Adabiat e Jahan*.

petr kabir, *eskandar maghduni* which were very effective. The other book that gives Iranian a new policy is *booseye ozra* by George Reynolds.

TIME AND PLACE FACTORS

By time and place factors we mean both the time and era and the place and the country to which a translator want to translate. The authors of this paper have studied several successful universal books and novels, some books like *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Bronte, *Jude the Obscure* by Thomas Hardy, *Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorn, *Anna Karenina* by Leo Tolstoy, in these book the time and place factors are of special importance.

Not only stories but also poems can be translated in some special time and place that can warranty the success of that translation. Suppose there is a war between two countries, the government of both countries organize some plan to dispirit the morale of the opposite side and to impulse its own soldiers to militate as potently as possible. He achieves his aim by translating some poems and stories that is about courageous acts and love for their homeland.

STYLE

The impression of style of writers to writing style of translator and the writers of target language is an unavoidable phenomenon. Whether the target language tries to be an exception and not be affected by the writer style or not, they are affected anyway. Translators and writers should be watchful about the style of their writing and not to let junky style affect their own style. Of course not all these impacts are negative, positive impacts may be greater than negative ones. The prevalence of translation was not free of effects in Iran. The style of Iranian writers was so difficult and only educated classes of society were the audience and others were not able to understand the books, but after cultural and social turn that caused changes in Persian literature, the style of writing changed considerably. The new style was so easy and fluent that even uneducated people could understand it completely. So a translator who wishes to have a successful translator should choose a book with a style that is similar to his own style and if it has an impact on his own style, it should be positive. As we mentioned above about the story of *One Thousand and One Night* is a good example. We can say that the style of this story is

somehow unique. One of the reasons of its popularity is the style of it, how the events have been told in a consecutive form. All the parts of the book are interrelated and when someone starts reading, he would become eager to read the whole book. This story has been famous not only for its theme, but also for its style. The other example is Hafiz's *Ghazaliat*; it is not as famous as it is in Iran. We enjoy listening and reading Hafiz's *poems* mostly because of its style, but because this style cannot be translated to other languages and also cannot create the same effects on foreign audiences as it create on Persian ones, it could not become universal for example like *Gulistan* or the stories of *One Thousand and One Night*. So a translator should pay great attention to both the style of the writer and the taste of his audiences in style.

SPEAKER FACTOR

Who is the writer? What's the idea of audiences about him? What's the idea of audiences about his work? Was that idea positive or negative? Did he have other books translated to the target language? Was (were) that translation(s) successful or not? By speaker we mean the writer(s) of the book. If you notice when someone wants to buy a book, first he notices to the title and the writer(s) of the book. We talked about the success of Sa'di's *Gulistan*. *Gulistan* was first translated to French in 1634, and after some time when this translation absorbed so much attention, about twenty years later, Sa'di's *Bustan* was translated by Thomas Hyde to Latin.⁷ The acceptability of *Bustan* was somehow owed to the acceptability of *Gulistan*. Even sometimes when a translation become successful, other writers and translators do some immoral acts and publish their own book under the name of that famous writer or translator. An example the authors can mention here is 'Stefan Zweig'. He was an Austrian writer that his books were translated to Persian after 1944. Soon he became famous in Iran; some insincere translators used the popularity of his works and published their weak works under his name.⁸

SPECIAL LANGUAGE OF THE BOOK

Every book has a special language. Has it been written for adults? Has it been written for children or teenagers? Are the words archaic or they are used by contemporaries? Is

7. Amir Ismail Azar, *Adabiat e Iran in Adabiat e Jahan*.

8. Rahmat Elahi, *Raz* (Tehran, 1964).

it satire, severe, bald, elegant, pictorial or narrative? The translator should first answer to all of these questions, change their answers to strict rules and try to observe all of the rules in order to have a good translation. Suppose that a book has been written for children but the imprudent translator choose words in a way that children cannot understand it. Suppose a situation in which the beauty of the book is in the archaism of words, but a translator does not pay attention to this point, he produce a book which is nothing more than strings of words that have no beauty. A translator should understand the special language of the book and try his best to produce it in the target language in order to create the same effects on the audiences as the original writer created on his readers.

CONCLUSION

In this essay so many universal works have been studied, they were examined from different perspectives such as the theme of the book, the topic, the title, the writer(s), the time and place of translation, the style of book, the language of the book, the audiences and many other factors. We placed examples to make the discussion clearer. The universal works were not only translated several times, but also it created effects on both the readers and other writers of the target language. For example those who have been affected by the stories of 'One Thousand and One Night' are innumerable. We can say that the first translator of this book has paid great attention to the above mentioned factors.

REFERENCES

- Azar, Amir Ismail. (2008). *Adabiat e Iran in Adabiat e Jahan* (Tehran: Sokhan).
Elahi, Rahmat. (1964). *Raz* (Tehran).
Hadidi, Javad. (1994). *Az Sa'di ta Aragon* (Tehran: Nashre Daneshgahi).
Tourey, Gideon. (1995). The Nature and Role of Norms in Translation, in *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins), pp.53-69.