

## **Tracing the Reflection of Differences in Belief in Translation \***

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### **Abstract**

This paper is to identify translators' feeding-in of their own worldviews which can be also indicative of the cultural diversities between the source text producer and the translator. Likewise, it can reveal the dissimilarities in terms of the cultural views between the various translators of the same text. The framework introduced by Norman Fairclough which furnishes an accommodating set of analytical questions for the analogy is benefited in this study. Data was collected by sending a request for translating an English passage on the subject of feminism to almost twenty-five adult Iranian men almost half of whom have been living in the West for over two years. The participants are all Persian native speakers who are proficient in English as a foreign language. The results demonstrate that TS included discourse structures that revealed contrasting cultural views of men residents in Iran versus those Iranian having been living in the West.

**Keywords:** English-Persian Translation, Ideology, Culture, Critical Discourse Study.

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### **Introduction**

Cultural orientations of every society are to a great extent visible and noticed in a number of manners including a variety of linguistic forms. Thus, such cultural tendencies manifest both *implicitly* and *explicitly* in a wide scope, ranging from language of mass media to everyday text and talk produced by each and every member of the society. However, when it comes to a transitory period when a community is undertaking a passage from one social stand with certain norms and values to a different one with varying and sometimes opposite values and beliefs, the explicit expression of cultural norms and beliefs necessarily does not correspond and at often times differs from the implied worldviews and norms. Such an obscured contrast is particularly likely to manifest and appear between the lines of discourse—written or spoken—as a social practice (Fairclough, 1989) produced by the members of the (speech) community.

### **Literature Review**

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) or more commonly these days referred to as Critical Discourse Study (CDS) stems from a critical theory of language which sees the use of language as a form of social practice. CDA analyzes real and often extended instances of social interactions which take a full or partial linguistic form; therefore, they sum up one of the major tenets of CDA to be the notion that discourse does ideological work (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). CDA is especially interested in the ways in which ideology is mediated by language in various social institutions (Wodak, 2001).

Fairclough has proposed a model for critical study of discourse which encompasses three inter-related processes of analysis that is, text analysis (description), processing analysis (interpretation) and social analysis (explanation). It is recommended that a series of ten main questions to be asked for the purpose of critical and textual analysis of discourse. His model of analysis has been used by many scholars for a variety of critical purposes and it has been able to stimulate a huge amount of data and that is why it is believed to be too prolific for larger quantities of discourse. The majority who has based analysis on his model has incorporated a reduced number of his questions (Fairclough, 1989, 1992, 1995).

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Many scholars have studied the role and effect of culture, ideology and social variables on translation and the translator. Hatim and Mason (1997) illuminate the issue of ideology in translation and how ideology impinges on the work of the translator. They cite scholarly works (Bassnett & Lefevere, 1990; Hermans, 1985; Venuti, 1995) which reveal the traces of translator's views in translation and the fact that the translator's (cultural and otherwise) preferences and orientations result in marked consequences in the translated text. In this regard, many scholars see the choices translators make as lying between two polarities—'free' versus 'literal', 'dynamic equivalence' versus 'formal equivalence' (Nida, 1964); 'communicative' versus 'semantic' translating (Newmark, 1981). Newmark also argues that opting for semantic or communicative translation is a choice towards mass readership or single voice of the text writer. This option is believed to be implicitly ideological, and Hatim and Mason name this visible trend as 'mediation' or "the extent to which translators intervene in the transfer process, feeding one's own knowledge and beliefs into their processing of a text" (p. 147). They demonstrate the range of this mediation on a continuum with three posts: minimal, maximal and partial mediation. They also maintain that "there is a host of textual device which may serve as the vehicles for a discourse and provide evidence of the assumptions which compose an ideology" (p. 148).

### **Purpose of the Study**

During this study two goals were pursued. One of the objectives of the study was to study whether the translator's cultural orientations would be represented in the translated discourse resulting from culturally influenced translational decisions; in other words, the question was to identify whether the translator would feed in their cultural beliefs and orientations during the process of translating the source text into the target text. A subsequent purpose of the study was to determine whether the exposure of the translators to durable contrasting cultural settings can lead to different translational decisions and opting for different choices during the process of translation.

### **Participant Selection**

At the outset, twenty five Iranians were cordially invited for cooperation with the research. Considering the qualitative design of

the study, the case determination was based on purposive criterion technique; thus, certain eligibility criteria were set for the subject selection. The cases were chosen from among Iranian males who have a perfectly operational command of reading comprehension in English (IELTS Reading score band 7.0 or equivalents). They also have a first degree in an area of English Studies and/or have successfully completed a graduate thesis in a program in which the medium of instruction is English. As the participants are not professional translators, these criteria were included in the study to make sure that their translational decisions do not originate from a poor command of reading the source text. As for the target language, both being all Persian native speakers and being socially mature members of the speech community with successful academic background are sufficiently reassuring facts that would qualify their translation and composition decisions to be genuine choices that are not caused by insufficient L1 or L2 competence. Having collected the data, as five of the participants' translations tasks were fairly incomplete their contributions were not included in the study. As one aim of the study was to examine the effect of constant exposure to contrasting culture on translators and accordingly the decisions they make during translating, half of the participants were male Iranians who have been residing in the West in the past few years. These ten participants are referred to hereafter as the West group. The other ten as the control group were male Iranians who were born and have been living in Iran. They are all Persian native speakers and know English as a foreign language.

### **Instrument**

In the present research, an English passage under the title of "Votes for Women" with 574 words in seven paragraphs portrays the Suffragette Movement. The movement was a campaign for votes for women which is most commonly associated with the Pankhurst family in the early twentieth century. It was used as the source text to be translated into Persian. The text in specific describes the process of the initiation of the movement, its political, social and commercial strategies to achieve its claim. The description is composed in a way that would appeal to women and the follower or those who sympathize with believers of Feminism and women's entitlement of

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votes, and therefore it qualifies as mirror for men to reflect on and reflect their thoughts.

### **Procedures**

In a preliminary stage of the study, a questionnaire on demographic information and a letter of request to almost forty people were sent to cordially invite them to participate in the study. Having received their replies, twenty five of them who had volunteered to do the translation and qualified based on the eligibility criteria were sent the translation task. Subsequently, ten volunteers who had completely translated the text for every comparable group were selected, making up a total of twenty translation cases. The participants were asked to take as much time as they could use on the translating and they were highly encouraged to use any references like dictionaries and encyclopedias to help them out.

Having collected the twenty cases of the translation of “Votes for Women”, to look for the indices and representations of ideologies of translators as rewriters of the source text and probable instances of manipulation of the original text in terms of covert ideology of source text producer and subsequently comparison of such potential instances between the two comparable groups, a selection of analytical questions of model of Fairclough for Critical Discourse Analysis was used.

### **Results**

Considering the amount of analysis this model is able to generate, the same as most other critical analysts who a reduced number of questions were used in this study as it makes sense to concentrate detailed analysis to areas which are the most applicable and revealing.

- What *experiential* values do words have?
  - What ideologically significant meaning relations are there?

One of the first points that attracts the attention when critically comparing the obtained translation cases is the translation of the title of the text and the difference of perception of the *experiential* value

that lies in the title for each group of translators. “A formal feature with experimental value is a trace of and a cue to the way in which the text producer’s experience of the natural and social world is represented. Experiential is to do with *contents* and knowledge, and beliefs” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 112). The Persian translation of the title “Votes for Women” by the translators in the control group was mostly a literal word for word translation. But, beside two instances in the control group, the majority of the translators in the West group included the term ‘*right*’ in Persian into the title as well as an instance of the added phrase of ‘*defending the right of ...*’. It seems that the male Iranian with constant Western cultural exposure somehow either consciously or unconsciously felt to stress the fact that women certainly have to be ‘entitled to’ the civil right of voting in social and political elections and play their roles in the forthcoming changes.

- What *relational* values do words have?
  - Are there markedly formal or informal words?
  - Are there euphemistic expressions?

“A formal feature with *relational* value is a trace of and cue to the social relationships which are enacted via the text in the discourse. Relational value is to do with *relations* and social relationships” (Fairclough, 1989). In terms of the changes after the translation, in the translated texts by the West group quite vividly there are more frequent uses of the single and plural forms of a Persian word closely equivalent to ‘*lady*’ or ‘*ladies*’ as more formal and more respectable substitutes for the Persian equivalents for the words ‘woman’ and ‘women’. While in the control group mostly the equivalents of woman and women in Persian were chosen which has the same level of formality as they have in English. Despite the fact that these more formal equivalents were not dominantly frequent, it can be safe to assume that some of participants in the West group by doing so transferred or tried to transfer a higher degree of respect to the members of the opposite gender.

Moreover, even though many bilingual English to Persian dictionaries offer less tense and more euphemistic equivalents (e.g. inflexible) for the term ‘militant’ an adjective in the first paragraph modifying the

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activities attributed to the Suffragette Movement, almost all the participants except one rendered this adjective with one of a number of words more or less denoting 'violent and aggressive'. Somehow euphemism, a word substituted for a more conventional or familiar one as a way of avoiding negative values, for the term would make sense considering the fact throughout the whole text not one single instance of even a slightly aggressive act is mentioned or even referred to outside the text. However, all male translators except one and interestingly a participant from the control group decided to pick the first definition available which is at the same time the harshest equivalent for their translation.

- What metaphors are used?

Metaphor is a means as Fairclough (1989, p. 119) states for representing one aspect of an experience in terms of another, and is not limited to the literary discourse as it normally tends to be stereotypically associated with. Translation of a (dead) metaphor 'war chest' and how it was handled by the participants of the two groups is of special attention. Fairclough with regard to including analysis of metaphor in his model asserts that the ideological significance of metaphors is that they tend to take dominant interests to be the interest of all. Even though like many other monolingual and bilingual dictionaries, *Farhang Moaser Living English-Persian Dictionary* as one of the most popular translation references defines 'war chest' as both 'a fund accumulated to finance a war' as well as 'a fund assigned for a specific purpose, like an election campaign', more than half of the participants of both the two groups pick the literal translation of a budget for war and not for a political campaign. Unless this choice of the majority germinates from an unconscious (or conscious) perception that the male Iranian feel that the suffragette movement literary had declared a historical war against them, the poor command of language of the participants can explain this choice. However, given the fact that they have a quite operational level of command of reading in English with either having graduated and/or completed a dissertation in English, blaming the choice on their language command is safely out of question.

- What *experiential* values do grammatical features have?

- Is agency unclear?
- Are nominalizations used?
- Are sentences active or passive?

The experiential aspects of grammar concerns how grammatical features code events and relationships in the world, the people or animals or objects engaged with those happenings or relationships and their spatial, temporal conditions and manner of occurrence (Fairclough, 1989, p. 120). He further asserts when one wishes to represent actions, states, events or relationships textually, there is often an option among the various types of process and participants. Such a selection can be ideologically significant.

As for clarity of the agency, one infrequent yet curious translation instance by one participant in the West group and two in the control group was manipulation of the grammatical structure of this string of words through the process of translation. “The newspapers produced by the Women’s Social and Political Union ...”, originally a noun plus a reduced relative clause in which the predicate is in passive form with the agent or doer of the action of producing introduced in a by-phrase at the end to a simple noun phrase through a process that Fairclough calls ‘nominalization’. Through nominalization that string was translated into a noun phrase, something close to a word for word translation of ‘The publication of the Women’s Social and Political Union ...’ through which it deemphasized the role of the Women’s Social and Political Union as the independent and competent producer of the daily paper that had a significant role in the whole success story of the movement. By doing so the clarity of the agency is quite diminished. Given that the poor language command of the participants is already out of question, still assuming option of coincidence to explain this grammatical transformation through translation, one might wonder how come no incidence of the opposite did not happen and the process of publication of the daily papers did not get translated in an active voice resulting in topicalization and foregrounding the role of the Women’s Social and Political Union. The gravity of the change resulted in the translation doubles when noticing the pivotal position of the phrase—the subject of the first sentence which practically begins a whole paragraph with all the topicalizing effect on the perception of the readers through the rest of the paragraph or



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particularly a reader who is simply skimming the text with no time or intension of reading the paragraphs intensively.

- What larger scale structures does the text have?

The discussion on the unit of translation has been germane to certain controversies, yet the sentence is what the majority of scholars adhere to. Nevertheless, paragraphing is also a significant tool for classification of the content of a text. Besides, it can be a means of foregrounding certain supporting statements into a topic sentence by attracting more attention and focus both for the intensive and skimming reader. Therefore, when rendering concepts of the source text unit by unit into the target text, whether a paragraph holistically is got across or not deserves the attention of the translator and the translation audience since whenever a text producer has more than a single option for creating a message textually, the choice can be ideologically significant (van Dijk, 2006, 2009) and so can the choice of a translator in deciding to keep a paragraph intact or merge with others or even split one into two smaller paragraphs. In total, the source text in the present study comprises of seven paragraphs. A curious incidence of merging of two paragraphs in a few of the translation cases in both group strikes to be meaningful in some way. The fourth paragraph begins with the topic sentence, “the newspapers produced by the Women Social and Political Union, first Votes for Women and later The Suffragette, played a vital role in this communication.” Interestingly, this paragraph by a few of the translators is merged with the third paragraph, resulting in diminishing the topicalized status of a sentence highlighting one of the most vital achievements of the movement. In other words, some of the translators manipulated the ideological view of the text producer in one of the key sentences with a passive format by which the source text producer seem to have foregrounded the importance of the patient of the action process (production of news papers by the movement) to absorb the most attention, specially of those skimming readers who will not scrutinize the text intensively.

### **Discussion of the Findings**

The first objective was to determine whether the translator’s cultural orientations would be represented in the translated discourse resulting

from culturally influenced translational decisions. In these translation cases of one common source text, there appeared several manipulations that can be rather readily interpreted as support for the assumption that translators would feed in their cultural beliefs and orientations during the process of translating the source text. Based on the results in this study, men during translation made selected textual choices that would serve their lack of appreciation for the success of women in achieving the right to vote and try to entertain their patriarchal inclinations. Some of the manipulations which attempted to deemphasize the accomplishments of women's movement that were obtained based on a few number of analytical questions from the framework of Fairclough are enumerated below.

- The majority of the translators in both groups somehow displayed their implicit understanding of the Suffragette Movement as an ever ongoing war declared against them by taking the least euphemistic equivalents for the term 'militant' an adjective attributed to the Suffragette Movement, as 'vigorously active and aggressive'. Hardly did any of the male participants try to avoiding the negative value of the term by choosing a milder equivalent for the term as it would make sense considering the fact that throughout the whole text not one single instance of even a slightly aggressive act is mentioned or even referred to outside the text.
- The male Iranian seem to reckon that the Suffragette Movement literary had declared a historical war against them since although many monolingual and bilingual dictionaries define the metaphor 'war chest' as both 'a fund accumulated to finance a war' as well as 'a fund assigned for a specific purpose, like an election campaign', more than half of the translators of both the two groups pick the literal translation of a budget for war and not for a political campaign.
- One infrequent yet curious instance of alteration in the translation cases by one participant in the West group and two in the control group was manipulation of the grammatical structure of this string of words originally a noun plus a

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reduced relative clause in which the predicate is in passive form with the agent or doer of the action of producing introduced in a by-phrase at the end to a simple noun phrase through a process called 'nominalization'. Through nominalization that string was translated into a noun phrase through which it deemphasized the role of the Women's Social and Political Union as the independent and competent producer of the daily papers that had a significant role in the whole success story of the movement. By doing so the clarity of the agency is quite diminished. The gravity of the change fed into in the translated text doubles when noticing the pivotal position of the phrase—the subject of the first sentence which practically begins a whole paragraph with all the topicalizing effect on the perception of the readers through the rest of the paragraph or particularly a reader who is simply skimming the text with no time or intension of reading the text intensively.

- A curious incidence of merging of two paragraphs in a few of the translation cases in both group strikes to be meaningful somehow. The fourth paragraph begins with the topic sentence, "the newspapers produced by the Women Social and Political Union, first Votes for Women and later The Suffragette, played a vital role in this communication." Interestingly, after translation this paragraph by a few of the Iranian male is merged with the third paragraph, which leads to diminishing the topicalized status of a sentence highlighting one of the most vital achievements of the movement. In other words, some of the translators manipulated the ideological view of the text (and the text producer) in one of the key sentences with a passive format by which the source text producer seems to have foregrounded the importance of the patient of the action process to absorb the highest level of attention, specially of those skimming readers who will not necessarily scrutinize the text intensively.

Whether the exposure to contrasting cultural setting can result in a change in the translator's cultural inclinations and accordingly opting for different translational decisions and representing that by different textual choices during the process of translation was another purpose

that was followed in the present research. That's why the participants were assigned to two groups based on their residence in the past few years. An alternative hypothesis could be that since living in a diverse cultural setting at often times results in acculturation or even assimilation of the individual to the recipient cultural setting; accordingly, the recent cultural preferences would influence the behavior and decisions of the individual and the translator in our case. However, the results obtained from the translation cases and the type of the residual manipulations performed in the target text by the translators of the West group who have been a resident of a European or North American country did not furnish much evidence for marked differences between their translated discourse and that of the control group who were the Iranian male living in Iran overwhelmed with all the given traditional customs and cultural norms which could stand substantial comparison with that of the West with regard to women and feministic world views.

The only considerable translational decisions which contributed to a rather different target discourse from the one produced by the control group were the following.

- The Persian translation of the title "Votes for Women" by the translators in the control group was mostly a literal word for word translation. However, except for two of the resident translators in Iran, the majority of the translators in the West group included the term '*right*' in Persian into the title as well as an instance of the added phrase of '*defending the right of ...*'. It seems that the male Iranian with constant Western cultural exposure somehow either consciously or unconsciously felt to stress the fact that women certainly have to be 'entitled to' the civil right of voting in social and political elections and play their roles in the forthcoming changes.
- In terms of the changes after the translation, in the discourse by the West group quite vividly there are more frequent uses of the single and plural forms of a Persian word closely equivalent to '*lady*' or '*ladies*' as more formal and more respectable substitutes for the Persian equivalents for the words women and women. While in the control group mostly

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the equivalents of woman and women in Persian were chosen which has the same level of formality as they have in the source text and in English language in general. Despite the fact that these more formal equivalents were not dominantly frequent, it can be safe to assume that quite a number of participants of the in the West group by such a choice seem to have transferred or tried to transfer a higher degree of respect to the members of the opposite gender.

### **Conclusion**

Having accepted the capability of Fairclough's framework of CDA in unveiling the covert world views and cultural attachments of the source text producer as well as the translator, one way of understanding the results of the comparison between the translations of the two groups can be that a few years long residence in a different cultural context may not be long enough to provide the conditions for an individual to abandon their own social norms and cultural tendencies and acculturate into the recipient society. Norms and beliefs that age decades and have roots in the history and traditions of the homeland of an individual may not be replaced by new ones in a short run and in case of any change, they would only show up at the most basic pragmatic functions like addressing and at word level in the linguistic communications, but they cannot delve any deeper.

From a pedagogical perspective, the outcome of the study can furnish support to consider that translation is a kind of rewriting in which the underlying views of the source text producer can be substantially distorted while seemingly the message at the surface level is meticulously rendered. Given that this manipulation can be easily suspected to happen not necessarily at a conscious level, it makes sense that the prospective translators in translator education programs be taught the basics of critical study of discourse for an in-depth comprehension of the message of the source text. As well familiarity in relevant training programs with such discursal devices and their potential ramifications in case manipulated can help refraining from representation of a distorted ideological message in the translated text.

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