The impact of ideology on lexical choices in literary translation: A case study of *A Thousand Splendid Suns*

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Abstract

This study attempts to discover ideological differences between Hoseini’s novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and its two Persian translations, by Ganji and Soleimani and Ghebrai. According to Fairclough, ideology in discourse is encoded in the lexical, grammatical and textual items and changes in these items indicate different ideology. Hence, lexical choices of the source book and the two translations were analyzed based on Fairclough’s approach to investigate ideological differences between them. The results of chi-square revealed that there were no ideological difference between the source text and its two translations. Moreover, the translators selected similar vocabularies for representing the ideology of the original author.

1. Introduction

In recent decades translation theorists have viewed translation in a different way and they have focused on different factors that may affect translation. In other words translation is not seen as a finding lexical and grammatical equivalence process, but it is seen as process in which the translator is involved in a challenge of selecting lexical and grammatical choices from a wide range of choices available to him which many factors influence the translator to select one of them. One of these factors can be ideology which many translation scholars and researchers have investigated its role in translation.

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According to Mirza and Khanjan (2006) the first one who propounded issue of impact of ideology on translation was Lefever (1981) who used concept of “lexical refractions” and investigated ideological manipulation in specific text such as children’s literary books. After Lefever (1981) many translation scholars focused on the role of the hidden factors on translation. According to Venuti (1997) who introduced “domestication” and “foreignization” selection of one of these strategies is ideologically based (As cited in Khajeh and Khanmohamad, 2009). Hatim and Mason (1997) also believed “Factors such as politeness, power and ideology have a role to play in the choices we make ranging from the smallest to the largest unit of linguistic expression” (Hatim & Mason, 1997, p. 111). Hatim and Mason (1997) believed that ideology “shapes discourse” and on the other hand discourse “maintains Ideology” and then they illustrated result of ideological choice of translators in translation. Entering concept of ideology in to translation area, translation theorists were no longer interested in linguistic theories of translation. In this regard Karoubi (2005, p. 1) stated that “the linguistics-oriented approaches to translation studies have failed to address the concept of ideology through years of their prevalence, because such approaches are limited to their scientific models for research and the empirical data they collect.” According to Karoubi (2005) Venuti (1998a, p. 1) pointed out that these theories “remain reluctant to take into account the social values [and ideologies] that enter into translating as well as the study of it.” Therefore, CDA “whose primary aim is to expose the ideological forces that underlie communicative exchanges [like translating]” (Karoubi, 2005, p. 1) has been used in translation studies. CDA is a branch of applied linguistics which studies discourse and language in relation to social and political issues to discover how they affect each other. In other words, CDA views language as social activity which social factors influence language users to use specific form of language. Therefore, CDA scholars study language in relation to social conditions and non-linguistic element, such as power relation, hegemony, ideology and so on. In this regard Van Dijk (2003, p. 1) maintained that “Critical Discourse Analysis is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance and inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context.” Many studies have been done based on CDA approaches to investigate the effect of ideology on translation. For instance Khjeh and Khanmohamad (2009) in their article entitled “Transmission of Ideology through Translation” investigated effect of ideology on linguistic features in Persian translations of Chomsky’s “Media Control” and they uncovered the ideologies which are hidden in the source text and the target texts. They concluded, “There is relationship between socio-cultural and ideological constrains of the translator and the potential translation strategies s/he adapts while reproducing the text” (Khaje & Khanmohammad, 2009, p.32).

Sertkan (2007) in his MA thesis studied five Turkish translations of Oliver Twist to investigate how ideology, specially “religious-conservative ideology”, affects lexical choices in translation of children literature by means of Fairclough (1989). He believed intervention of that ideology in Turkish version brings about distortion of the source text” (Sertkan, 2007, p. xi). He concluded that “therefore ideology plays a significance role in the decision making process undertaken by translators and other individuals, such as publishers, who are involved in this process in one way or another” (Sertkan, 2007, p. 4). Sertkan (2007) maintained along with critics, reviewers, teachers and translators’ ideology which control the translation process and strategies, patronage that is individuals, groups, religious and political parties, the media or publishers influences translation. The studies that have been done in English-Persian translations in CDA area focused on linguistic structures of the two languages and not vocabularies used by the writer and the translators. This study attempts to discover ideological manipulation in translation of vocabularies in a literary book based on Fairclough’s CDA approach (1989).

2. Objectives
According to Fairclough (1989) ideology in discourse is encoded in the lexical, grammatical and textual items and changes in these items indicate different ideology. Different lexical, grammatical and textual choices in translations of the same source text are also considered as ideological manipulation in translations. Hence, the present study considered ideology as a factor that may influence lexical choices in translation and it attempted to investigate ideological differences between an English novel and its two translations. The result of the study is hoped to benefit translators to focus on transference of ideology of source text to target text, and translation evaluators to consider ideology as an important factor in translation. As such, the study sought to answers to 1) the ideological differences between an English literary book and its Persian translations and 2) the ideological differences between different translations of the same source text due to different selected words for representing experiential values?

3. Methods

3.1. Materials

For the sake of this study “A Thousand Splendid Suns” written by Hosseini (2007) as well as the two translations were selected. One of them is translated by Ghebrai and the other by Ganji and Soleimanzade. Twenty chapters out of fifty one chapters were selected in such way that even chapters were selected from the source book.

3.2. Framework

Fairclough’s approach (1989) was chosen which investigated ideological differences between discourses, due to different lexical, grammatical and textual items. However, the part which is related to vocabulary was selected in the study to investigate lexical ideological difference in translation. Fairclough (1989) introduced different kinds of values by means of which ideology is indicated. The values are experiential, relational and expressive values; however, this study is done based on analysis of experiential values of source text which show the writer’s experience of natural and social world. There are 4 sub parts in experiential value by means of which experiential values can be investigated which are Classification schemes, ideological contested words, overwordings and meaning relations. Hence, these elements were analyzed in this study. To analyze the data, descriptive and inferential statistical procedures were used. For the descriptive part, the researchers utilized percentage and to find out whether there is any significant differences, chi-square procedure was used. This study tried to answer two different questions. One is related to analysis of the source text and the target text, and the other related to analysis of vocabularies selected by the translators; thus, their analyses and discussions are provided in two sections.

4. Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Section 1: Analysis of the Source Text and the Two Translations

As it was mentioned, in order to investigate differences between experiential values of the source text and its translations, classification schemes, ideological contested words, overwordings and meaning relations of the books must be analyzed.

4.1.1 Classification Schemes

Fairclough (1989, p. 115) explained “classification scheme constitutes a particular way of dividing up some aspect of reality which is built upon a particular ideological representation of that reality. In this way, the structure of a vocabulary is ideologically based.” Percentages of similarities and differences of classification schemes of source book and the two translations showed that their similarities
were more than that their differences. To see if there are any significant differences between their differences and similarities, chi-square procedures were also done. The results show that Hoseini & Ganji has a chi-square value of 105.53 (sig. 0.000) and Hoseini & Ghebrai has 74.6 value (sig. 0.000). There were significant differences between differences and similarities of classification schemes of the source book and the translators. That is, the similarities were much more than differences and the writer and the translators drew the same classification schemes. To clarify the point, an example seems in order.

She was stunned that he'd used that word in the face of all that the Mujahideen factions had done-the murders, the lootings, the rapes, the tortures, the executions, the bombings, the tens of thousands of rockets they had fired at each other, heedless of all the innocent people who would die in the cross fire.

In the above paragraph the writer explained that Mujahideen who ruled in Afghanistan pretended that their government was based on rules, they obeyed the rules and they judged based on rules; however, they committed many crimes. In both translations this reality was shown by means of selected words.

4.1.2. Ideological Contested Words

Fairclough (1989) believed that “some words are ideologically contested” (p. 114) and he stated that they show “ideological struggle”. Percentages of differences and similarities of the books showed that similarities of the ideological contested words were more than their differences. To see if there are any significant differences between their differences and similarities, chi-square procedures were done. The results show that Hoseini & Ganji has a chi-square value (for ideological contested words) of 35.28 (sig. 0.000) whereas Hoseini & Ghebrai has 13.25 value (sig. 0.000). Besides, there were significant differences between similarities and differences of ideological contested words of the source book and the translations. In other words, similarities were much more than differences. So, ideological contested words of the source book and its translations were similar. To clarify the points, the following example seems in order.

And everyone in Afghanistan would be happy too, she said, once the antiprogressives, the backward bandits, were defeated.

4.1.3. Overwordings

The above paragraph was stated by the teacher in the novel who believed that last government had been antiprogressive, because it had made women to wear burqa and had not let women work in the society. She believed that Soviet Union who entered Afghanistan intended to help them to progress. As it is shown the ideological words of both translations were translated the same as source text which conveyed the same ideology.
By overwording, text producers show “ideological struggle” of the text. Fairclough (1989, p. 115) defined overwording as “an unusually high degree of wording, often involving many words which are near synonyms.” Overwordings of the source book and its translations were analyzed. Overwordings demonstrated that similarities of the books were more than differences. Chi-square procedure was also done to see if there are any significant differences between their differences and similarities. The results show that Hoseini & Ganji has a chi-square value (for overwording) of 23.15 (sig. 0.000) whereas Hoseini & Ghebrai has 10.70 value (sig. 0.000). In addition, there were significant differences between differences and similarities of overwordings of the source text and the translations. That is, similarities were much more than differences and the two translations have the same overwordings as the source. To clarify the points, the following example seems in order.

She said she wanted to live somewhere removed, detached.

In the above sentence the writers used two words in above example for describing the place that Afghan man had chosen for the woman who had illegitimate relation with to save his honor. Both translators also used two words for describing the place therefore; their overwordings are similar to the source text.

3.1.4. Meaning relations

According to Fairclough (1989) a text might be written by means of meaning relations in a discourse type and these meaning relations are “ideological determined”. He stated that “in fact meaning relations like synonymy can often be regarded as relative to particular ideologies, either the ideology imbedded in the discourse type, or the ideology being creative generated in a text” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 115). He declared “ideological bases” of meaning relations are related to experiential values. Meaning relations consist of three part; hyponymy, synonymy and antonymy. No hyponymy was found in the novel; however, synonymy and antonyms were found which are analyzed below.

4.1.4.1. Synonymies

Synonymies selected by the author and the two translators were compared and descriptive statistics of their differences and percentages of differences and similarities show that there was no difference between synonymies of Hoseini’s book and Ganji’s translation. However, the similarities of Ghebrai’s translation and the source text were more than their differences. Chi-square procedure was also done for Ghebrai’s translation to see if there is a significant difference between their differences and similarities. Result of chi-square (8; 0.0005) showed that there was a significant difference between differences and similarities of synonymies of source text and Ghebrai’s translation. It means similarities were much more than differences and the two translators used synonymies in their translations. To clarify the points, the following example seems in order.

The anxiety set in on Tuesday nights. Mariam would sleep poorly, fretting that some business entanglement would prevent Jalil from coming on Thursday.

شنبه‌ای، شب‌هایی سخت‌شده شروع می‌شد. مرام به می‌خواهید. دلواپس‌ی که که تنهاد پنج‌شنبه، گرفتاری‌هایی کاری مانع امنیت جنگل شود و

شنبه‌ای سه شب‌هایی دل تنور. خواب مرمی آشفته می‌شد و دلواپس‌ی که که می‌خواست کار و گرفتاری‌برای جنگل پیش بیاد و مانع

امنیت در روز پنج‌شنبه نبود و نه‌چه‌بی‌ادغاب دویک به امید دیدار خبر کند.
In the above paragraph the translators like the writer used synonymy for describing the feelings of Mariam who waited for her father.

4.1.4.2. Antonymies

Antonymies of the source text and the two translations were also analyzed. There was no difference between antonymies of Ganji’s translation and Hoseini’s book. Nonetheless and the percentages of differences and similarities of source book and the Ghebrai’s translation, illustrated that similarities of the source book and the Ghebrai’s translation were more than their differences. Result of chi-square (10.286; 0.001) demonstrated that there was a significant difference between differences and similarities of the source text and the Ghebrai’s translation. In other words, similarities were much more than differences and the two translators used antonymies in their translators as the source text. To clarify the points, the following example seems in order.

The contract. The signing, his sure-handed, hers quavering.

امضاء، دست‌های مطمئن رشید، لرزش دست‌های خودش.

امضاء، رشید با دست‌های محکم و مطمئن و لیلا با دست‌های لرزان

In the above sentence Hoseini used antonymy to show feelings of Leila who had to marry a bad tempered old man who saved her after her parents died in a bombing by Mujahideen. As it is shown, both translators used antonymy. Because synonyms and antonymies of the source text and the two translations were similar, it can be concluded that there were no difference between meaning relations of the author and the two translators. As it was shown there was no significant difference between classification schemes, ideological contested words, overwordings and meaning relations of the source text and its two translations; therefore, in this part it can concluded that experiential values of the source text and its translations were similar. In other words the two translators conveyed the same experience of natural and social world as the author. Hence, it can be concluded that there was no ideological difference between the source text and its two translations.

4.2. Section 2: Analysis of the Two Translations

To answer the second question regarding differences between selected vocabularies by translators for representing experiential values, the vocabularies in classification schemes, ideological contested words, overwordings and meaning relations must be investigated. In this part descriptive statistics, chi-square results and discussions related to second question are provided.

4.2.1. Classification Schemes

Vocabularies selected by translators for classification schemes were analyzed. The percentages of differences and similarities of vocabularies of the translations illustrated that similarities were more than their differences. To see if there is any significant difference between their differences and similarities, chi-square procedure was also done. The results of chi-square test for classification schemes show that Ganji & Ghebrai has 65.46 chi-square value (Sig 0.000). There was a significant difference between differences and similarities of vocabularies selected by the translators in classification schemes. That is, similarities were much more than differences and the translators selected similar words in translation of classification schemes. To clarify the points, the following example seems in order.

"As a matter of policy, we do not interfere with private family matters, hamshira"

"Of course you don't."
In the above paragraph the author by the classification scheme indicated the reality that not only woman do not have any right in society, but also even there is any law to protect and support them from cruelty and injustice. The two translators selected the same words for classification schemes which conveyed the ideology of the author.

4.2.2. Ideological Contested Words

There was a significant difference between differences and similarities (13.52; 0.000) of the selected vocabularies for ideological contested words in two translations. It means differences were much more than similarities and the translators selected different words in translation of ideological contested words. To clarify the points, the following example seems in order.

The twenty-sixth year of King Zahir Shah's mostly uneventful forty-year reign.

4.2.3. Overwordings

Vocabularies selected by translators in translation of overwordings were analyzed. Percentages of differences and similarities of vocabularies selected by the translators showed that differences were more than similarities. Chi-square procedure (4.48; 0.038) was done to see if there is any significant difference between differences and similarities. There was a significant difference between differences and similarities of vocabularies selected by translators in translation of overwordings. In other words, differences were much more than similarities and the translators selected different words in overwordings. To clarify the points, the following example seems in order.

He came home in a sour mood. Hunger made him curt, irritable, impatient, his temples working, the vein on his forehead, full and angry.

4.2.4. Meaning relations

4.2.4.1. Synonymies

In the above paragraph in which the writer showed the man’s behavior, Ganji’s overwording and Ghebrai’s overwording were similar to that of Hoseini, but the two translators used different words in their overwordings.
Synonymies used by the two translators were analyzed and the result of descriptive statistics and percentages of differences and similarities of synonymies of selected by the two translators show that differences of the two translators are more than their similarities. Chi-square procedure (.089; 0.346) was done to see if there is any significant difference between differences and similarities. The result showed that there was no significance difference between differences and similarities of the two translators. That is, the two translators selected similar synonymies. To clarify the points, the following example seems in order.

Some had seven or eight and didn't understand how fortunate they were, how blessed that their children had flourished in their wombs...

In the above paragraph synonymy is used to emphasize how much giving birth to baby is important for Afghans, especially for Afghan women. The two translators also selected similar words for synonymy.

4.2.4.2. Antonymies

Selected words for antonymies of the two translators were analyzed. Percentages of differences and similarities of antonymies of the two translators showed that their differences were more than their similarities. Chi-Square procedure (1.14; 0.285) was also done to see if there is any significant difference between differences and similarities of antonymies used by the two translators. The result of chi-square illustrated that there was no significant difference between differences and similarities of antonymies selected by the translators. In other words, the translators selected similar antonyms in their translations. To clarify the points, the following example seems in order.

I want to see the day the Soviets go home disgraced, the day the Mujahideen come to Kabul in victory. I want to be there when it happens, when Afghanistan is free

In the above paragraph Hoseini by means of antonymy described feelings of a woman who lost her two boys in the war. Although, both translations used antonymy, their vocabularies were different. Thus, for the reason that there was no significant difference between translators’ selected words for synonymies and antonymies, it can be concluded that selected vocabularies by translators for meaning relations were the same. As it was mentioned before, classification schemes, ideological contested words, overwordings and meaning relations of source text and the two translations were analyzed to see whether the two translators selected different words for experiential values. The results showed that the two translations were significantly different in two parts of ideological contested words and overwordings. So, to see whether the two translators had different experiential values descriptive statistics and chi-square procedures were done for these elements. As the result of chi-square (16.71; 0.000) showed, there was a significant difference between differences and similarities of the two translations. It means similarities were much more than differences and the two translators selected
similar words for expressing experiential values. In this part, it can be concluded that translators conveyed the ideology of the source text similarly.

In summary, the two translations had the same experiential values as the source text; because they had the same classification schemes, ideological contested words, overwordings and meaning relations. In the other words, the two translators represented experience of natural and social world of the source text in their translations. In fact, the translations represented ideology of source text in the same way. Regarding second question, the findings of the study revealed that the two translators selected similar words for expressing experiential values. Thus they represented ideology of the source text in the same way.

5. Conclusion

This study attempted to discover ideological differences between Hosein’s novel (2007) and its two Persian translations. The researchers investigated ideological differences between the two translators due to different selected words. Therefore, the source text and the translations were analyzed based on Fairclough’s CDA approach (1989). The result showed that there were no ideological differences between the source text and its translations due to different experiential values. Furthermore, the translators expressed ideology of the source similarly by means of selecting similar words in experiential values.

Researchers such as Kelly (1998), Puurtinenn(1998, 2003), Sertkan (2007) and Khaje and Khanmohamad (2009) and Banhegyi(2009) who investigated ideological differences between some source books and their translations concluded that the translations were ideologically different from the source books. However, the present study found out that translations conveyed the same ideology as the source book. In this regard, it can be stated that the translators of “A Thousand Splendid Suns” selected the book for translations because they were familiar with the issues depicted in the novel and they intended to convey its ideology. That is, they were acquaintance with atmosphere of Afghan society; therefore, they could understand what the author described. Moreover, based on their translations it can be asserted that not only they accepted the realities of Afghans in the source book, but also they observed and felt in their own society. For instance, war and its effects were other issues which were focused in the source book and they have been observed in Iran history and the translators felt its impact on their society too. Thus, the reason for different findings of this study might be that the translators felt every single reality of the source book and they believed in every detail that the author explained in the book and they tried to convey its ideology. Furthermore, most researchers investigated political text like Kuo (2005) or religious text such as Long (2007) or literary books which were based on political or religious idea contrary to their idea in which manipulation of ideology is more inevitable. They found out that the translators conveyed different ideology by means of selection of different grammars or vocabularies than the source book. However, it can be asserted that ideology influences literary translations less than political or religious translations; specially, this literary book whose content is not contrary to idea, point of view and ideology of Iranian translators.

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