Translation Criticism and Berman’s Translation Project

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Abstract: The present article deals with Persian translation of Austen’s Pride and Prejudice based on Antoine Berman’s approach. In the area of translation criticism, Berman (1995) believes that every translator will develop his/her own translation project which cannot constitute the obligatory framework for textual analysis. In this study, the researcher assesses the corpus at two levels of micro and macro analyses of translational phenomena. Given the researcher’s translation project, the general result shows that the translator has been successful to convey the content and the form of the original to the target with cultural considerations.

Key words: translation criticism, Antoine Berman, translation project

1. Introduction

Translation criticism is defined as the evaluation and review of published translations. This simple definition has a difficult question: How do we determine degree of goodness of a translation? This article deals with different approaches to translation criticism briefly and then reviews Persian translation of Austen’s Pride and Prejudice based on Antoine Berman’s approach.

Nida as a pioneer in response-based approaches (1964; Nida & Taber, 1969) defines quality in terms of dynamic and formal equivalence: “Formal equivalence focuses attention on the message itself, in both form and content…the message in the receptor language should match as closely as possible the different elements in the source language” (Nida, 1964, p. 159). In the dynamic equivalence, “the relationship between receptor and message should be substantially the same as that which existed between the original receptors and the message” (Ibid, p. 159). Nida presents three criteria for an optimal translation: general efficiency of the communicative process, comprehension of intent, equivalence of response. However for House (1997, 2001), these criteria are vague and non-verifiable to measure a good translation.

The critical assessment and the concomitant issue of quality have created the concept of Translation Quality Assessment or TQA. Among linguistically-oriented (e.g. Catford, 1965; Wilss, 1974; Koller, 1979; Baker, 1992; Hatim and Mason, 1997), the first systematic approach to TQA is related to the early work of Reiss (1971). Based on Karl Bühler’s categorization of text, Reiss presents a text typology for the specific goals of translation. She identifies four major
text-types that are ‘content-focused’, ‘form-focused’, ‘appeal-focused’ and ‘audio-medial’. As Lauscher (2000; as cited in Hewson, 2011, p. 4) points out, there are several weaknesses in this approach, such as the vague notion of optimum equivalence. The translator may be amazed how they can really consider for complexities of the literary text which is dominated by both function and form (Hewson, 2011). Moreover, informative texts may contain a large number of literary devices.

In literature-oriented Approaches, a translation is evaluated in terms of its forms and functions inside the system of the target culture and literature. Accordingly, Toury (1995) offers the clearest dichotomy between adequate and acceptable translation. When a translation closely observes the “norm” of the source culture, it is adequate and when a translation adheres to the norm of the target culture, it is called an acceptable translation. As House writes (2001, p. 246) “the approach does fail to provide criteria for judging the merits and weaknesses of a particular case” such as a dependent text.

Given functionalist approaches to translation (e.g. Reiss, 1981; Vermeer, 1989; Nord, 1997), House (1997, 2001) deals with TQA through an analytic framework for analyzing and comparing original and translation texts which is called “a functional-pragmatic model of translation evaluation” (2001, p. 247). The analytic framework is based on three levels of Hallidayan register, genre and text. Then she makes a distinction between covert and overt translation. As she points out, what sets the distinction separate from other similar concepts (i.e. dynamic/formal equivalence; semantic/communicative; adequate/acceptable…) is the fact that “it is integrated into a coherent theory of translation criticism, inside which the origin and function of the two types of translation are consistently described and explained” (Ibid, p. 249). An overt translation is a case of “language mention” based on the four analytical levels (Function- Genre- Register-Language/Text), that an original and its translation are to be equivalent at these levels. A covert translation is a case of “language use” that the translator must attempt to re-create an equivalent speech event by applying a ‘cultural filter’ which modifies the cultural elements. A ‘cultural filter’ is a means of “capturing socio-cultural differences in shared conventions of behavior and communication, preferred rhetorical styles and expectation norms in the two speech communities” (Ibid, p. 251).

Among different approaches, Antoine Berman has a philosophical approach to translation criticism. He (1995) believes that there may be many different methods for translation criticism as there are many translation theories; therefore every translator according to the specific objectives can define a translation project. In the following Berman’s view is explained in more details.

2. **Berman and Translation Project**
For Berman (1995) criticism is in essence positive and purely negative criticism is not real criticism:

The very expression ‘translation criticism’ may cause misunderstandings since it appears to refer only to the negative evaluation of translations. Since the Enlightenment, criticism has always dealt with negatives, regardless of its object. But we should not forget that the other face of the negative is the positive (1995, p. 1).

Berman mentions that the basis of the evaluation is meant to remain neutral and avoid being dogmatic by a certain respect for the original (ethical aspect) and the poetic nature of a translation in the textual work of a translator.

Accordingly, Berman (1995) points out that if literary criticism is an essential part of the life of literary works, then translation criticism must consider in the same way, and as seriously as literary criticism. He claims that every critic can make his own analytical path as a translation project, which can be modulated based on the specific purposes and adapted to all standardized text types. Then Berman draws the framework of a translation analytical pathway which is divided into a number of steps. The main steps of Berman’s framework involve:

*The reading of target text (TT) and source text (ST)*

The actual reading of the translation as a reader and of the original as well as the many related readings that support those of translation and original.

*Rereading of Translation and Original and textual pre-analysis*

It is rereading of translation as a translation and original. The type of reading let to know if the translated text ‘works’: it works within the ‘norms’ of standard writing practice of the target culture; and does the translation work as an actual text. It reveals ‘problem spots’; and uncovering ‘miracle spots’ that is translational writing that no target language author could have produced. These spots are to prepare for the upcoming comparison. Textual pre-analysis focus on all the stylistic aspects, locating certain types of phrasing, certain meaningful ways of connecting clauses, certain uses of adjectives, adverbs, verb tenses, prepositions, etc.

*Selecting stylistic examples*

It is selecting its weak and its strong points. There is an interpretation of the work that allows these significant points to be selected.

*In search of the translator*

It is important to know whether the translator is a writer and or just a translator; what languages, the genre, linguistic and literary domains he/she works, the background of his/her translations etc.
The translator’s position

It is ‘compromise’ between the recognition of the translation task and the way the translator has ‘internalized’ the contemporary discourse on translation (the norms).

The translation project

The translation project is the manner in which the translator will accomplish the actual work of translation. It is a conscious intention which is determined both by the translational position and by the specific constraints set by the work to be translated.

For the first time, Berman in his presentation at ATLAS’ ‘Journée Freud’ in 1988, (as cited in Berman, 1995, p. 22) tries to reveal the concept of a translation project:

The happy combination of autonomy and heteronomy in a successful translation can only be the result of what could be called a translation project, a project which does not need to be theoretical […] On the basis of a pre-analysis the translator determines what degree of autonomy or heteronomy they will confer on their translation – I say pre-analysis because you have never truly analyzed a text before you translate it. It is the pre-analysis of a text to be translated.

The implementation of a project can be presented by different translators. The critic needs to see a project from its own definition. Only through the translation itself and the type of literary transfer, the project will really be available. Then the entire critic says or writes is a reality in the translation based on translation project itself. The translator does not grasp something beyond its project. In fact, the translation “goes where the project leads it and as far as the project takes it” (Ibid, p. 24).

The translator’s horizon

As Berman (Ibid, p. 26) defines, the translation’s horizon is “the constellation of all the linguistic, literary, cultural and historical parameters that ‘determine’ how a translator feels, acts, and thinks”.

Analyzing Translation

It compares a number of bases that have been created from of the original with its translation.

The forms of analysis

The form can be one translation or translation of a collection, entire pieces and not on isolated extracts; one translator or comparison with other translations of the same text.

Comparing the Texts
The comparison carries out at four levels: comparing certain selected elements, comparing ‘problem spots’ with the original, comparing with other translations, and finally the work of translation in terms of its project and revealing what the project resulted in.

**The style of the comparison**

Communicative function or readability of the analysis (not to be difficult to read) must take into account.

**Productive criticism**

The final stage of criticism only really happens when the analysis demands a re-translation, because of too defective or unsatisfactory, or because it is outdated.

3. **Methodology**

3.1 **The corpus**

The corpus developed for this study was Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* and its Persian translation by Reza Rezaei. He has translated the all Jean Austen’s works and also six books from Bronte family into Persian.

3.1.1 **Austen and Pride and Prejudice**

Jane Austen (born 1775 – died 1817) was an English novelist of romantic fiction. Her realism, biting irony and social commentary have gained her historical importance among scholars and critics (Southam, 1968). Her work was between the melodramatic style of the eighteenth century and the realism of the later nineteenth century. She used humor and a description of the society to show a woman’s place in English life (Hacht and Hayes, 2009).

Her major work involved *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), *Mansfield Park* (1814), *Emma* (1816), *Northanger Abbey* (1818) and *Persuasion* (1818). The story of *Pride and Prejudice* followed the main character Elizabeth Bennet as she considered issues such as manners, upbringing, morality, education and marriage in the society of England in early nineteenth century.

3.2 **Procedure and Data collection**

After reading the translation and original, the translator dealt with a textual pre-analysis to select a certain number of fundamental stylistic characteristics of the original; As Berman (1995) mentions, unless the source is short and everything can be analyzed, a rigorous criticism must be based on examples. Therefore, the researcher collected certain passages and elements from the ST and compared them with the corresponding passages of the translation.
3.3 Method of data analysis

In this study, the translation project which is defined by the researcher is focused on two levels. The first is micro which considers the lexis and grammatical aspects of selected cases from the both original and its translation. In the macro, stylistic matters and translation competence will be discussed briefly. Some examples in the two levels and the related analysis based on appropriate theories in translation are given below.

4. Micro level analysis of the corpus

**Example 1:** Then the two third he danced with Miss King, and the two fourth with Maria Lucas, and the two fifth with Jane again, and the two sixth with Lizzy, and the Boulanger.

Beud hem do dor som ra ba dovshiye keheng reyassie, do dor jeham ra ba maria lokas, do dor penche ra baz ba jin, do dor

**Analysis:** ‘Le Boulanger’ was a repetitive and mixed dance where each person got to dance at least a little with every member of the opposite sex. ‘Le Boulanger’ was derived from an eighteenth-century cotillion figure and was danced by a circle of couples. When the SL word is transferred directly to the TL, it is called borrowing (Vinay and Darbelnet, 1958/2004), through-translation (Newmark, 1988) or repetition (Aixela, 1996). But the reader cannot understand the meaning very well. Although the translator has tried to explain the Boulanger in footnote, his definition is wrong. For translation of the Boulanger, The researcher suggests that the translator coins a new word as a neologism and explains the dance correctly in the footnote to provide additional information pertaining to the limits of the translation, the cultural background, or any other explanation. Given the word is not effective in the whole story, the researcher suggests a translation such as:  

**Example 2:** What a fine thing for our girls!

**Analysis:** changing one word class with another without changing the sense is called Transposition (Vinay and Darbelnet, 1958/2004). To obtain a better stylistic utterance in the TL, the translator changed the part of speech of a fine in the translation:

- A fine (noun) → جان می دهد (verb)

**Example 3:** You want to tell me, and I have no objection to hearing it.

Toom mi khawahi ye men begooi. Bashd goosh mi kem.

**Example 4:** It is more than I engage for, I assure you.

Ain kari az man sakhte nist, kihalt raahat bashd.
**Analysis:** If the translator changes the semantics and point of view of the SL, it is called *Modulation* (Negation of opposite, Reversal of terms, Active to passive and vice versa, Abstract for concrete, etc). This strategy can be obligatory or optional, though linked to preferred structures of the two languages (cf. Vinay and Darbelnet, 1958/2004). In examples 4 and 5, the translator used the negation of sentence that has made a natural meaning in TT.

**Example 5:** Mr. Bennet was so **odd a mixture** of **quick parts**, sarcastic humour, reserve, and caprice…

**Analysis:** Rewriting ST in an indigenous target culture is *cultural transplantation* (Aixela, 1996) or *naturalization* (Hervey and Higgins, 2002).

**Example 6:** “Mr. Bennet, how can you **abuse** your own children in such a way?

**Example 7:** But we must **stem the tide of malice**, and pour into the wounded bosoms of each other the balm of sisterly consolation.

**Analysis:** Changing the cultural reference when a situation in the source culture does not exist in the target culture is called *adaptation* (Vinay and Darbelnet, 1958/2004) or *communicative translation* (Hervey and Higgins, 2002). The literal translation for the underlined items in example 6 is unknown in Persian, then the translator created a new equivalent situation. Likewise, in example 7, **stem the tide** is an idiom. If people try to **stem the tide**, they are trying to stop something unpleasant which is happening a lot. The translator has tried to keep the meaning of **stopping** and translated it literally. Therefore the two translation procedures, **couplets translation**, were combined for dealing with the single element (Newmark, 1988).

**Example 8:** She told me **all about it**.

**Example 9:** It is a truth **universally acknowledged** that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.

**Example 10:** One cannot know what **a man really is** by the end of a fortnight.
Analysis: According to Newmark’s *descriptive equivalence* (1988) and Aixela’s *intratextual gloss* (1996), the translator used equivalent expression with humor sense to restate the same semantic information in another way. When the concept in the source language is not lexicalized in the target language, the translator can paraphrase it by using unrelated words (Baker, 1992).

*Example 11:* Don’t keep coughing so, Kitty, for Heaven’s sake!

Analysis: if the ultimate purpose of translation should be to achieve an ‘equivalent effect’ (Newmark, 1988), then a translator should achieve a similar effect on the target receiver as the source text has on the source receiver. In English language, the phrase *for Heaven’s sake* is used for exclamation of exasperation. Given the strategy of *cultural equivalence*, the translator substituted the SL cultural word by the TL cultural word (Ibid). Baker (1992, p. 31) points out that the advantage of ‘cultural equivalence’ is that “it gives the reader a concept with which s/he can identify, something familiar and appealing”.

*Example 12:* “Yes; these four evenings have enabled them to ascertain that they both like Vingt-un better than Commerce...

Analysis: When the target language lacks a specific term (hyponym), a translator goes one level up in a given semantic field and uses a more general word (Baker, 1992). In example 12, Commerce is a game in which cards are traded to get the best hand of three cards. As the game is unknown in TL, the translator preferred to use a general word to compensate the relative lack of specificity in the TL. Likewise, in example 13, Quadrille is a special card game played by four persons. The translator used the super-ordinate semantic filed of the game that is ورق پازی.

*Example 13:* She had also asked him twice to dine at Rosings, and had sent for him only the Saturday before, to make up her pool of quadrille in the evening.

Example 14: *Sir* William Lucas had been formerly in trade in Meryton

Example 15: *Lady* Lucas quieted her fears a little...

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**Analysis:** As Newmark (1988, p. 119) stated the translation of a ‘cultural word’ depends on “the particular text-type, requirements of the readership … and client and importance of the cultural word in the text”. In the last two examples, the word *Sir* is an honorific address while the word *lady* is a civil term of respect for a woman. The translator used the same strategy of *borrowing* for both translations of titles. The presented translation for *Sir* is acceptable but in the case of *Lady* the best translation based on *cultural equivalence* is *ﺑﺎﻧﻮ*.

**Example 16:** His sisters were fine women, with an *air of decided fashion*.

خواهرهای زن های نازنینی بودند حالت مصمم متمیزی به نفس داشتند.

**Analysis:** An *air of decided fashion* is not a metaphor; it means that the sisters were definitely fashionable. Grammatically, *air of fashion* is a phrase that is the object of *with*. The translator has not recognized the real meaning of the phrase. A good suggestion for translation of this sentence is:

خواهرهای زن های نازنین بسیار خوش بوشی بودند.

**Example 17:** Mr. Bingley, his two sisters, the husband of the eldest, and another young man.

آقای بینگلی، دو خواهرش، شوهر خواهر بزرگترش، یک مرد جوان دیگر

**Example 18:** They perceived *a chaise and four* driving up the lawn.

دیدند کالسکه ای با جهار اسب از چمنزار به طرف شان می‌آید.

**Analysis:** Catford (1965) makes a distinction between formal correspondence and textual equivalence: A *formal correspondent* is “any TL category (unit, class, element of structure, etc.) which can be said to occupy, as nearly as possible, the ‘same’ place in the “economy of the TL as the given SL category occupies in the SL” (p. 27). A *textual equivalent* is “any TL text or portion of text which is observed on a particular occasion . . . to be the equivalent of a given SL text or portion of text”. Catford used the term *shifts* for the small linguistic changes that occur between ST and TT. His definition of shifts is “departures from formal correspondence in the process of going from the SL to the TL” (p. 73).

In most examples presented so far, departures from formal correspondence have occurred. But we focus on the last two examples. In example 17, the textual equivalent for *the husband of the eldest* is *ﺷﻮﻫﺮ ﺧﻮﺍﻫﺮ ﺑﺰﺭﮔﺘﺮﺵ*. Therefore translation shift has happened clearly. The main reason is the presence of the article *the* behind of *husband* which comes back to the older sister. In example 18, ‘*a chaise and four*’ commonly known as a carriage with four horses in English
language. Given the syntactical differences between two languages, the translator had forced to add the *horses* in his translation explicitly.

5. **Macro analysis of the corpus**

After analyzing the comparison of ST and TT corpus samples, in this part the stylistic matters and translation competence regarding the corpus are considered.

5.1 **Observation of the style**

There has been always the debate on content over form or vice versa. Should content be faithfully rendered at all cost and form only if the translation of content allows (Hatim and Mason, 1990)? As Nida (1964) stated “the standards of stylistic acceptability for various types of discourse differ radically from language to language” (p. 169). But some scholars believe that the style is an indissociable part of the message to be conveyed (cf. Meschonnic, 1973).

According to Berman (1995), the critic must know the idea of the translator about its translation in order to make a better judgment about the whole translation. The translator (Rezaei, 2014) believes that regarding the ST was written in 19 century, we have to keep the oldness of the original, but the sentences should not sound very odd for readers. Therefore he has tried to do so but in some cases the translator did not observe this matter. Consider this sample:

*Example 19:* ...and already had Mrs. Bennet planned the courses that were to do credit to her housekeeping

احتا بنت داشت کارها را طوری رتقات و فتقات می کرد که در شان کدبانو گری اش باشد.

*Analysis:* The phrase *errasht va riss* is a old that uses rarely today. Given to the word of *planned* in the original (which is simple word that has been yet using), the researcher suggests the phrase of *رخت و رسس*.

Most scholars believe that the reproduction of literary style of the original in translation is necessary and possible. If we consider style as the characteristic manner of expression, the analysis of style would be examination of a writer's choice of words, his figures of speech, the devices the shape of his sentences and so on. Despite different characteristics of languages, people in all languages have more or less similar concept to convey their reasons, feelings, thoughts etc. Therefore the selection of these concepts in translation is important. Notice the following example:

*Example 20:* Mrs. Bennet said only, ‘*Nonsense, nonsense!*’

احتا بنت فقط گفت “حرف مفت، مزخرفا!”
Analysis: *Nonsense* is repeated two times but in its translation, the translator prefers to use two words with same meaning. This is deviation from the style of the author.

5.2 Translation Competence

Translation competence is the underlying system of knowledge and skills required to translate (PACTE, 2000). Among all subcomponents of translation competence, the survey of communicative competence (linguistic, contextualization, discourse and sociolinguistic competence), extra-linguistic competence (general world knowledge and specialist Knowledge) and strategic competence (all the individual procedures, conscious and unconscious, used to solve the problems) are more important in this translation project (cf. Bell, 1991; Hatim and Mason, 1997; PACTE, 2000; Pym, 2003; Malmkjaer, 2009).

It should be significant for a translator to deal with the relevant cultural or functional setting in both SL and TL. In the Austen’s Pride and Prejudice translation, the translator has tried to illustrate the same situation to present the best equivalent translation (contextualization). As Rezaei (2014) mentions, He has spent most of his life translating. The assessment of the researcher from the whole translation is that the translator could use his world knowledge and experiences during this work (extra-linguistic competence). He has also tried to make decisions and to solve problems when there was no one to one correspondence between two languages (strategic competence). Consider these examples:

**Example 21:** Elizabeth immediately recognizing the livery, guessed what it meant...

**Example 22:** The horses were post; and neither the carriage, nor the livery of the servant who preceded it, were familiar to them.

Analysis: *Livery* is the special uniform of servants, which distinctively identifies the family that they work for. *Livery* is a specific cultural item in English language and there is not a simple *word-for-word correspondence* between two languages in this case. Given languages are embedded in cultures with different traditions and standards, the translator decided to solve the problem by using the concept that the word transfers (gloss translation). Therefore the translator considered the context and co-text of the word and translated the given word differently.
6. Conclusion

As Berman (1995) mentions, contrary to some notions for example by Vinay and Darbelnet that translation is ‘applied linguistics’, no one type of ‘textual analysis’ can constitute the obligatory framework for a translation, not even the analysis that a translator could carry out if they were capable. It is therefore quite impossible to say “that seems a good project, but let’s wait for the results” (Ibid, p. 24). Then these results are nothing more than the outcome of the project. If the translation does not “work,” the fault is related to only the project.

Regarding the analysis of the translation, the translator has used his style in translation plus cultural consideration in the target language. A good point about the translation is that the translator did not interpret his own interpretation of the event and dealt with the story as it was. He has tried to transfer the humorous style of Austen; even so in some case there is some exaggeration to use of it. Apart from some defectives in translation of selected samples and other cases that were not covered here, the translation seems to be acceptable in the project the researcher defines for himself.

Reference:


