

## Ideology and Translational Moves: when Culture Overtakes Politics in Translation of Journalistic Texts

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### Abstract

*This study examines the interaction of political-cultural ideology and translation. It examines the effects of exercising ideology in Iranian newspaper translations and compares them with translations of 10 freelancers. Results manifested translators' contradictory behaviors in two aspects, first, in terms of translator affiliation i.e. government translators and freelancers; second, in terms of the contradictory behavior of each group when translating political elements on one hand, and cultural elements on the other. In the light of the salient differences and contradictions in translators' renditions, it became clear that both groups translated under the influence of some strong ideology using different strategies; yet, some preferred or had to prefer to exert their ideology on both political and cultural elements and some preferred to exert their ideology only on political elements. An interview from the participants showed that ideology cannot be ever sidelined from translation practice. As a result of this investigation, the researchers proposed two comprehensive ideological classifications for translations, namely, Universal and Patriotic translations.*

**Keywords:** translation, ideology, media translation, translation strategies

### Introduction

The history of translation is imbued with variety of thorny issues among which the ideological and cultural issues, whether complying with the original or conforming to the target, are of significant value to the field scholars as well as the translators. The famous saying that "every word has an identity" requires the translators to step ahead in a field of "ideo-cultural" battle. A binary cline which is either inclined towards the source text or is inclined towards the target text. Translation phenomenon as a mediator between languages and cultures has always had the potentials to exert its influence. The outcome of such influence usually turns out in two ways: on the first condition, ideological elements as well as linguistic peculiarities are allowed into the target text territory in a way that disturbs the ambiance and equilibrium of the target text and interferes with it. This "intrusion" if remains uncontrolled can, somehow, marginalizes the "ideo-cultural" particles of the target language. The second instance calls for a translation strategy in which the translator picks up the "ideo-cultural" elements of the source text but passes it through a "cultural filter" to eliminate "ideo-cultural" abnormalities and tailors it to the expectations of the target text readers (see Munday, 2001).

However, this "manipulation", though convenient and acceptable to the readers, can be an unwelcome phenomenon in case of the sacrifice of the ST ideology, culture, belief, etc. for the mere sake of the so called "acceptance" or "fluency".

The ideological war in translation has always been an issue for the translators and translation theorists. It is whether to infiltrate into cultures or to defend one through filtering strategy. Translation as a weapon for or against any culture can work well, but in this bitter struggle how is translation spared from corruption? How can the readers count on the fidelity of any translator? What is the role of "politics of translation" and what strategies these politics dictate to translators? Media as a significant medium for the information dispersal has always been subject to its ideological influence. Iranian society as a result of its religious-political condition, especially after the 1978 Islamic Revolution, favors some specific concepts to be translated in parallel with its pre-determined norms and values. This is mostly a matter of government policy which naturally dominates the world of mass media in Iran.

### Review of Literature

Ideology and its impact on translation has become a research focus in the nascent field of translation

studies, and many scholars have contributed to it and ample of explorations have been made. These studies range from personal expressions to the seminal papers widening the scope of the field of translation studies. Bassnett and Lefevere (1990) in *Translation, History, and Culture* dismiss the traditional study on translation which merely focused on linguistic comparisons and did not consider the text in its cultural environment. Lefevere (1992a) put forward the influential theory of rewriting and manipulation. He claimed that translation, historiography, anthologization, criticism, and editing are all different forms of rewriting but among them translation is the most salient one.

Sherry Simon (1996) approached translation from a gender perspective and criticized translation studies for using the term culture as if it referred to an obvious and unproblematic reality.

Another chapter of ideo-cultural perspective towards translation was orchestrated by postcolonialist theorists. Postcolonialism is a broad cultural approach to the study of power relations between different groups, cultures, or people, in which language, literature and translation may play a role (see Hatim & Munday, 2004). Munday (2001) believes the central intersection of translation studies and postcolonial theory is power relations. Spivak (1993) was the avant-garde and in her *The Politics of Translation* questions what she terms as 'translationese' or 'translateese', translations which eliminate the identity and ideology of politically less powerful cultures or individuals. Brazilian cannibalism was a movement within postcolonialism structure. Originated from a story of the ritual cannibalization of a Portuguese bishop by native Brazilian, it was taken by some Brazilian scholars to stand for the experience of colonization and translation indicating that the colonizers (the bishop of the story) and their language are to be devoured and their life strengthens the devourer in a new purified and energized form that is appropriate to the needs of the native people (Munday, 2001). Cannibalism in translation shows the infinite ability of the translators to manipulate the original text in terms of ideology, culture, history and the like to make it acceptable to the target reader. In this situation the concept of loyalty to the original and ethics of translation are out of place. In 1970 Hans J. Vermeer introduced

Skopos into translation theory which is technically a term for the *purpose* of a translation. Skopos theory focuses on the purpose of translation which has a key role in determining the translation strategies and methods so as to produce a functionally adequate result (See Munday 2001, p.79). An upside of this theory is that a text can be translated in different ways according to the TT purpose or the commission given to the translator. The American Lawrence Venuti (1992) in his valuable contribution to translation () questioned the traditional linguistic-oriented approach to translation. He believes this approach has failed to consider the concept of ideology through years of their prevalence. Venuti discussed two translation strategies 'domestication' and 'foreignization'. He preferred the latter in an attempt to resist the dominant 'ethnocentrically violent' values of the publisher and other patrons.

The above manifests the most influential studies and achievements that translation scholars and theorists have made in the realm of translation and its interaction with ideology and culture. Among the major studies reviewed in terms of ideology and translation, one can distinguish two major methods or strategies that are often implemented in translation practice. One method enjoys a positive attitude towards foreign cultural and ideological elements, letting the 'foreign' to shine through in translation.

### **Methodology**

A group of 10 postgraduate students of translation studies were selected to render 15 English sentences that had been already translated by professional newspaper translators. The corpus which comprised the 15 pieces of news includes translated headlines and pieces of news in which the source text had been translated for the Media under question carrying the ideology of the elite. The materials include two randomly selected news articles from each of three Iranian newspapers in the sense that 10 pieces of journalistic reports were examined for ideological alterations. A comparison was made between the original versions of the English sources of the given news and their translations in newspapers. The strategies employed by newspaper translators were classified and the frequency of each category was measured. In the next phase, the materials were given to the population of 10 translators who had the experience of translating news reports to

compare the differences between the two groups of government and freelance translators. They were told that their target readers were to be Iranians. Qualitative and quantitative analysis on how and by what strategies the materials were translated included the next step. Then an interview was set up to further investigate the bottom line of the strategies they employed to make their versions. On the basis of the observations and interview feedback, the authors proposed a new ideological classification dividing translations into Universal and Patriotic ones.

The researchers attempt to find the answers the following questions in this study:

1. How is ideology exercised in translation of Iranian newspapers and how translators render the ideological concepts (politico-cultural) regardless of the powers dominating translation?
2. What justifications translators make for their “faithful” or “unfaithful” translation strategies?
3. Considering the influence of ideology on translation, what approaches can be identified for translating ideological concepts?

Table 1: Samples of ‘additions’ in translations of newspapers

Item	Translation	Analysis
Mecca	مکه مکرمه (The great Mecca)	To show respect to this religious city, the translator added “the great” to suit the expectations in the Muslim community in Iran.
The Qur`an	قرآن کریم (The munificent Qur`an)	To show respect to God`s book, the translator added the concept of “being munificent” in translation.

## 2- Deletion

By deletion we refer to removing a concept or piece of information in translation which exists in the original text and is somehow ideologically troublesome or disparaging to the target community:

Table 2: Samples of ‘deletion’ in translations of newspapers.

Item	Translation	Analysis
The resolution received overwhelming support by members of the UN general assembly.	تصویب قطعنامه ی ضد ایرانی در سازمان ملل (The approval of an anti-Iranian resolution at United Nations)	The translator removed the whole concept of “receiving an overwhelming support by members of the UN, on the other hand, added the concept of “anti-Iranian” to the translation.
Iran was condemned at UN for the alleged terror attempt.	رای سازمان ملل علیه ایران به اتهام توطئه ترور سفیر عربستان (The vote of UN against Iran for the alleged assassination of Saudi ambassador)	The translator omitted the concept of “being condemned at United Nations”.

## 3. Partial Adjustment

Partial adjustment in this study refers to changing parts of a phrase or information in a way that changes the ideological equation in favor or against some community or make it impartial:

## Results

To examine the scale to which ideology has been exercised in translations, firstly, five Iranian newspapers in different volumes were analyzed. Through examining the translations in terms of the effects of ideology, it appeared that certain activities occur on certain words or pieces of information. We can classify these activities in four main categories; addition, deletion, partial adjustment, and total change of a word or information. Having analyzed the corpus, we found that 55 translated sentences had undergone ideological alterations in which at least one of the activities above has taken place. The followings are some examples that were salient enough to be mentioned.

### 1- Addition

By addition, it is meant to bring a concept, an element or a whole sentence in translation that does not exist in the original text and has ideology-biased intentions:

Table 3: Samples of 'partial adjustments' in translations of newspapers.

Item	Translation	Analysis
Arabian gulf	خليج فارس (Persian gulf)	The translator perhaps considered it necessary to change Arabian into Persian as he himself was an Iranian and was translating for his fellow citizens.
The Iran-Iraq war	جنگ تحمیلی (The imposed war)	The translator used the most common form of addressing the eight-year-war in Iran.

#### Total Change

As the name implies total change refers to changing an item in the original text with an entirely new item which does not correspond lexically and ideologically with the original:

Table 4: Samples of 'total change' in translations of newspapers.

Item	Translation	Analysis
Israel	رژیم صهیونیستی (The Zionist regime)	Perhaps to comply with the government's policies, the translator has used another word referring to Israel.
Central Intelligence Agency	سازمان جاسوسی آمریکا (Espionage Organization of America)	The translator changed a neutral concept (Intelligence) into a negative one (Espionage).

Examination of the translated texts of 10 volumes from 5 Iranian newspapers showed that the translators have applied different strategies and techniques to change the ideological equation into the government or readers' favor. Analysis indicated that among the 55 translation violations, in all 10 volumes, in terms of ideological propensities, 52% went for partial adjustment, 21% for addition, 19% for deletion, and 8% for the total change.

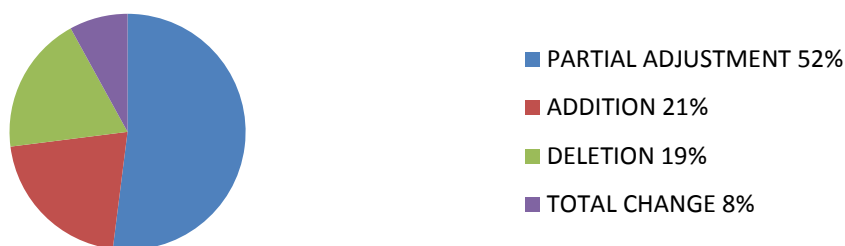


Figure 1. The percentage of strategies used by translators of Iranian newspapers.

In the next phase of this study, 20 random sentences that were once ideologically translated or actually manipulated by Iranian newspapers in the above section were given to the population of 30 translators. Results showed that 84% of the translators rendered the political elements in line with the ideology of the original text. On the contrary, 16% of the remaining translators preferred to render very similar to newspaper translations i.e. they employed at least one of the activities mentioned as addition, deletion, partial adjustment, and total change which this time, too, partial adjustment was of the highest frequency. However, the results showed that our freelance translators had similar behavior with newspaper translators in terms of Iranian cultural and religious elements to the point that 96% of the translators employed alterations to magnify Iranian heritage and Islamic elements, quite similar to newspaper translators.

**EXTRACT 1:** SAMPLES OF PARTICIPANTS' TRANSLATIONS OF **POLITICAL** ELEMENTS; THEY ALL PREFERRED TO KEEP "ISRAEL" IN THEIR TRANSLATIONS .

Israel expresses its gratitude to US for increasing monitoring in the middle-east.	اسرائیل مراتب قدردانی خود از آمریکا در قبال بررسی اوضاع خاور میانه ابراز داشت
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**EXTRACT 2:** SAMPLES OF PARTICIPANTS' TRANSLATIONS OF **POLITICAL** ELEMENTS; THEY ALL PREFERRED TO KEEP "IRAN-IRAQ WAR" IN THEIR TRANSLATIONS.

Iran-Iraq war officially began on Sept. 22, 1980 with an Iraqi land and air invasion on western Iran.	جنگ ایران و عراق بطور رسمی در 22 دسامبر 1980 با حمله ی زمینی و هوایی عراق به مناطق غربی ایران آغاز شد.
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**EXTRACT 3:** SAMPLES OF PARTICIPANTS' TRANSLATIONS OF **POLITICAL** ELEMENTS; THEY ALL PREFERRED TO KEEP THE PERSIAN EQUIVALENT OF "REGIME" IN THEIR TRANSLATIONS.

The Iranian Regime is trying to negotiate with the protesters at the first place.	حکومت ایران در بدو امر در تلاش برای مذاکره با معترضان است.
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**EXTRACT 4:** SAMPLES OF PARTICIPANTS' TRANSLATIONS OF **CULTURAL** ELEMENTS; THEY ALL CHANGED RELIGIOUS-CULTURAL ELEMENT OF "QUR'AN" TO "HOLY QUR'AN".

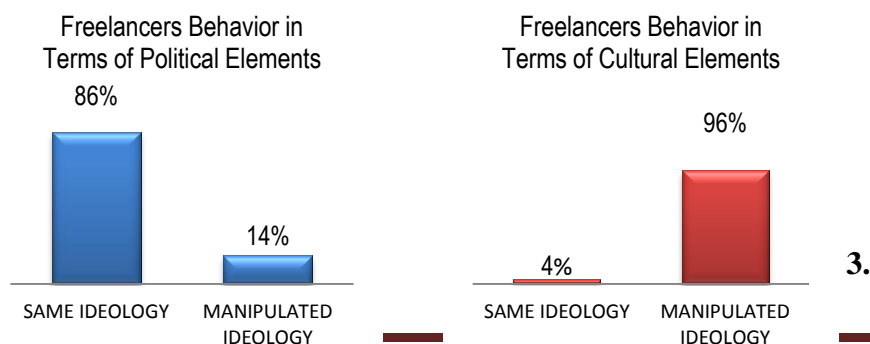
Afghan anger over Qur'an burning an emblem of nation's culture war.	خشم افغان ها بخاطر سوزاندن قرآن کریم نمادی از جنگ فرهنگی ملت افغانستان علیه غرب است
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**EXTRACT 5:** SAMPLES OF PARTICIPANTS' TRANSLATIONS OF **CULTURAL** ELEMENTS; MANY OF THEM PREFERRED TO CHANGE RELIGIOUS-CULTURAL ELEMENT OF "ZOROASTER" TO "PROPHET ZOROASTER".

Most of Zoroaster's life is known through Zoroastrian texts.	بخش اعظمی از دانسته های ما از حضرت زردشت از طریق نوشته های زردشتی حاصل شده است
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**EXTRACT 6:** SAMPLES OF PARTICIPANTS' TRANSLATIONS OF **CULTURAL** ELEMENTS; ALL OF THEM PREFERRED TO CHANGE RELIGIOUS ELEMENT OF "SHIA'S FIRST IMAM" TO HIGHLY GLORIOUS FORMS OF "THE HOLY SHRINE OF IMAM ALI (PBUH)".

The bomb exploded near the shrine of Shia's first Imam.	بمب در نزدیکی مرقده مطهر امام علی (ع) منفجر شد.
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The results extracted from newspaper translations and translations of freelancers revealed that newspaper translations were in line with some ideological domination, in a way that all five newspapers had to deal with certain concepts in certain ways. However, reflection on the translations of freelancers revealed that there were significant differences in the translations of these two groups. Above all, some significant contradictions in freelancers' behavior were visible. They rendered political elements as close as possible to the original ideological perspective i.e. the author's ideology. However, in case of cultural elements, Iranian freelance translators employed another strategy which was changing the ideologically neutral concepts into positive concepts. Although this can be due to freelancers' stronger tendency to their own Iranian culture rather than politics, it does not change the fact that both groups i.e. newspaper translators and freelance translators activated some sorts of manipulation in their translations.

Analysis of translation corpus depicted several strategies by which the translators managed to deal with their translations: In the first occasion, translators might not have much liberty in their choice, for they were following the policies of their employers and they had to observe the dictated norms. The second instance depicted a situation in which translators freely rendered the text in accordance with the ideological inclinations of the source text. The third situation was the manifestation of patriotic feelings of translators to the point that convinced them to exercise changes to glorify their culture or fit the translation to the Iranian society. In the coming section we attempt to classify and categorize four ideologically-based strategies which might be employed in translation work.

### **Interview Feedback**

After the translation analysis finished, a questionnaire plus the preliminary results of this analysis were emailed to the participants and they were asked to justify the discrepancy which was observed in their employment of strategies. With regards to the strategies used in their translations, the collected responses can be summarized as follows:

- Translations should be trustworthy in the sense that should not hide the truth or lie to its readers.
- Political arguments and power relations should not affect translations.
- Readers have rights to read what the original text author has said even if it is not favorable to some.
- There are, however, cases in which some concepts are respected to the target society and should be translated with such perspective otherwise they cause problems.
- Translators can make a judgment whether to choose between faithful translations and modified translations, however, establishment of all-accepted criteria is a hard task to accomplish.
- No one can deny the subjectivity of these types of ideological translations, ideology never ceases to exert its influence on translation practice.

Reflections on translators' responses can clearly show that translators are not determined in terms of the strategies they employ while translation. They indicated that there are not all-accepted criteria for translators which we assume might not be the case for government translators who follow a much clearer path.

### **Introducing a New 'Ideological' Categorization**

Analysis of the literature and our case study plus translators' responses to our question revealed the existence of several methods through which the translators rendered the texts. Some translators preferred to render in line with the ideology of a text, however, some others preferred fitting the translation into their readers' taste sometimes willingly and sometimes due to the influence of some powers. Taking both Ideology and Translation as well as the undeniable influence of power plays into account, we can distinguish two kinds of approaches on the basis of the tacit ideology, which stirs up the translator to act in a certain way and manipulate the SL text towards or against some norms, and classify them in a new terminology of Universal and Patriotic translation. Universal Translation (UT) is a kind of translation that its loyalty lies with the original text political-

cultural ideology and tries to tell the things as they were told in the original. In this translation, ideological and cultural viewpoints are kept intact i.e. the translator does not make changes to the best interest of some power plays, rather it stays with the author and does not manipulate cultural elements unless misinterpretation is expected. In this approach, respect to the standpoints of author, SL ideology, and culture is of the highest priority. Universal translation is a reliable source for its readers, but at the same time it is more likely to be somehow awkward or frank.

On the contrary, in Patriotic Translation (PT) the translator plays the role of a patriot for his group of readers and his loyalty lies for them in a way that is likely to be a disfavor to the author. In this kind of translation the translator does whatever it takes to adapt the original to the taste of the target readers. He may put to use measures of manipulation, normalization, euphemism, deletion, etc. to achieve a favorable translation. This sort of translation usually costs at the sacrifice of ideology, culture, or even style of the original. This kind of translation, however, is not reliable enough to the readers and seems likely to blacken the very nature of translation and translators' accountability. Patriotic translation purports and pretends to be the original by covering it up via massive alterations that the translator applies to make it sound like native, as Dryden would say 'make Virgil speak such English as he would himself have spoken, if he had been born in England, and in this present age' (Munday, 2003; p.25). Take an instance of Patriotic Translation, aiming for the maximum naturalness of the TT in the Arabic translation of Louisa M. Alcott's Little Women (2010). In this translation, the translator has tried to eliminate the cultural differences by neutralizing 'Christmas' into just 'the new year': "A few days later it was Christmas Day. On Christmas morning the girls woke early."

" جاء عيد الميلاد بعد عدة ايام . فى صباح يوم العيد استقيظت الفتيات باكرا."

The crucial point is that Christmas is one of the most significant cultural symbols of the western world and serves as some kind of their identity in the same way that Norooz is a cultural symbol for Iranian and a few other Middle Eastern countries. The translator has eliminated this concept to make it fit to the expectations of an Arab reader. These

sorts of manipulations which deliberately marginalizes or excludes the ideo-cultural attributes so as to meet the so called 'naturalness' criterion, however, may be devastating and unbearable to the originality of any work-to-be-translated. The overriding issue in UT and PT is to examine how far the translator is willing to safeguard the author's ideology and the implicit or explicit political views. This "ideology" is the touchstone of the distinction between this, newly proposed, categorization and the previous categorizations. The more a translator will be trying to achieve the SL ideology, and if possible or necessary the stylistic peculiarities, the closer s/he will be to achieve the aspirations of a Universal translator.

### Conclusion

The inter-connection between translation and ideology has been acknowledged by translation scholars very long ago. However, it was not until recently that scholars began to analyze it more systematically and assess it more comprehensively. This study ran through the analysis of various strategies and techniques applied by Iranian newspaper translators in three Iranian newspapers and 10 freelance translators that depicted huge discrepancies between the two groups. The first group due to the influence and domination of government protocols, seemingly, had to render political concepts in certain neutralizing ways while the second group preferred to translate according to the ideology of the original texts. Yet, in terms of cultural concepts, both groups rendered similarly; they manipulated and glorified religious concepts and Iranian culture and heritage. Interview feedback also substantiated the point that there is not an absolute yardstick to determine the strategies toward which translators seek help. Discussing the strategies applied by translators, the researchers presented a new, ideologically-based, classification under the title of Universal and Patriotic translations (Jelveh, 2011). Universal Translation aims to go in line with the original ideology of the text and Patriotic Translation aims to modify certain concepts to consider the expectations of its readers.

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