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LITERARY TRANSLATION



Seyyed Shahabeddin Sadati

Roosbeh Guitoo

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Preface

The materials in the present textbook are compiled and edited to meet the requirements of the undergraduate literary translation courses through:

- 1) Including the latest theoretical findings on the practice of literary translation
- 2) Containing practical examples of English-Persian and Persian-English translations
- 3) Providing exercises on English-Persian and Persian-English translations
- 4) Being of the suitable size for a two-credit course

This book focuses on the most recent theoretical issues of translating the literary texts in twelve units. Each unit consists of an essay on translation theory as well as a number of examples and exercises which relate translation theory to practice in the class settings.

The present book is published in the hope that it will interest researchers in literary translation, undergraduate students of English Literature, English Translation, Teaching English, and those who are interested in translation of literary texts.

Finally, any constructive comment will be warmly welcomed and appreciated.

Seyyed Shahabeddin Sadati

Faculty Member at Islamic Azad University-Roudehen Branch
sh.sadati@riau.ac.ir

Roozbeh Guitoo

Faculty Member at Islamic Azad University-Roudehen Branch
gitoo@riau.ac.ir



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List of Abbreviations

SL: Source Language

SLT: Source Language Text

ST: Source Text

TL: Target Language

TLT: Target Language Text

TT: Target Text

Unit One

Definition and History of Translation

Translation Definition¹

Translation is an important phenomenon that has a huge effect on everyday life, as Goethe, the great German writer quoted that translation is “impossible, necessary, and important” (Hanne 209). For years, translation is used only as a tool for teaching second language or foreign language. Later on through more profound studies, scholars believed that translation could be used as a means of transferring one nation’s culture and science and ideologies to other countries with different languages.

Etymologically, the word translation is derived from the Latin verb “transferred,” meaning “to carry across.” So translation is to pick up meaning from one country and culture, transported unaltered on the other side. This “carrying across” involves a transfer of not only from one linguistic system to a different linguistic system, but at least as importantly from one cultural system to another” (Hanne 208-209), this is what makes the process of translation problematic. As Larson stated in the transferring source language into receptor language the meaning must be held constant, which is done by “going from the form of the first language to the form of a second language by way of semantic structure” (Larson 3). In a more technical way, Roman Jakobson (1959) defined translation as a substitution of messages from one language into another, “not for separate code-units but for the entire message in some other languages.” According to him translator “recodes” source language message and “transmits” it to the target language (quoted in Venuti 114). Catford (1965) looked at translation only at the text level and stated that “translation is the replacement of textual material in one language by equivalent textual material in another language” (Catford 20). Newmark mentioned SL message as an entity which should be transferred: “Translation is a craft consisting in the attempt to replace a written message and/or statement in one language by the same message and/or statement in another language” (Newmark 7). Each of the above definition emphasizes on a certain aspect of translation, for example transmitting SL message, textual equivalence, transferring meaning, transferring thoughts and ideas, but as it is generally believed translation is a matter of approximation and

¹ From “Translating poetry: based on textual and extra textual analysis”, an essay by Nadia Nobar and Pegah Navidpoor (University of Esfahan, Iran) published in February 2010.

it is not possible to touch all these subjects simultaneously, something always will be lost.

The History of Translation in the Western World¹

For centuries, people believed in the relation between translation and the story of the tower of Babel in the Book of Genesis. According to the Bible, the descendants of Noah decided, after the great flood, to settle down in a plain in the land of Shinar. There, they committed a great sin. Instead of setting up a society that fits God's will, they decided to challenge His authority and build a tower that could reach Heaven. However, this plan was not completed, as God, recognizing their wish, regained control over them through a linguistic stratagem. He caused them to speak different languages so as not to understand each other. Then, he scattered them all over the earth. After that incident, the number of languages increased through diversion, and people started to look for ways to communicate, hence the birth of translation (Abdessalam Benabdelali 1).

Actually, with the birth of translation studies and the increase of research in the domain, people started to get away from this story of Babel, and they began to look for specific dates and figures that mark the periods of translation history. Researchers mention that writings on translation go back to the Romans. Eric Jacobson claims that translating is a Roman invention (McGuire 2). Cicero and Horace (first century BC) were the first theorists who distinguished between word-for-word translation and sense-for-sense translation. Their comments on translation practice influenced the following generations of translation up to the twentieth century.

Another period that knew a changing step in translation development was marked by St Jerome (fourth century CE). "His approach to translating the Greek Septuagint Bible into Latin would affect later translations of the scriptures" (Munday 3). Later on, the translation of the Bible remained subject to many conflicts between western theories and ideologies of translation for more than a thousand years. Moreover, these conflicts on Bible translation were intensified with the coming of the Reformation in the sixteenth century, when "translation came to be used as a weapon in both dogmatic and political conflicts as nation states began to emerge and the centralization of the Church started to weaken evidence in linguistic terms by the decline of Latin as a universal language" (McGuire 4).

The seventeenth century knew the birth of many influential theorists such as Sir John Denhom (1615-69), Abraham Cowley (1618-67), John Dryden (1631-

¹ An extract of "The history of translation", an essay by Marouane Zakhir (English translator, University of Sultana Moulay Slimane, Morocco) published in September 2008.

1700), who was famous for his distinction between three types of translation: metaphrase, paraphrase and imitation, and Alexander Pope (1688-1744).

In the eighteenth century, the translator was compared to an artist with a moral duty both to the work of the original author and to the receiver. Moreover, with the enhancement of new theories and volumes on translation process, the study of translation started to be systematic; Alexander Fraser Taylor's volume *Principles of Translation* (1791) is a case in point.

The nineteenth century was characterized by two conflicting tendencies; the first considered translation as a category of thought and saw the translator as a creative genius, who enriches the literature and language into which he is translating, while the second saw him through the mechanical function of making a text or an author known (McGuire) (5). This period of the nineteenth century knew also the enhancement of Romanticism, the fact that led to the birth of many theories and translations in the domain of literature, especially poetic translation. An example of these translations is the one used by Edward Fitzgerald (1809-1863) for Rubaiyat Omar Al-Khayyam (1858).

In the second half of the twentieth century, studies on translation became an important course in language teaching and learning at schools. What adds to its value is the creation of a variety of methods and models of translation. For instance, the grammar-translation method studies the grammatical rules and structures of foreign languages. The cultural model is also a witness for the development of translation studies in the period. It required in translation not only a word-for-word substitution, but also a cultural understanding of the way people in different societies think (Mehrch 6).

Another model that appears in the period is text-based translation model, which focuses on texts rather than words or sentences in translation process. This model includes a variety of sub-models: the interpretative model, the text linguistic model and models of translation quality assessments that in turn provide us with many models such as those of Riess, Wilss, Koller, House, North and Hulst.

The period is also characterized by pragmatic and systematic approach to the study of translation. The most famous writings and figures that characterize the twenties are those of Jean-Paul Vinay and Darbelnet, who worked on a stylistic comparative study of French and English (1958), Alfred Malblanc (1963), George Mounin (1963), John C. Catford. (1965), Eugene Nida (1964), who is affected by the Chomskyan generative grammar in his theories of translation, De Beaugrand who writes a lot about translation, and many others who worked and still work for the development of the domain.

Nowadays, translation research started to take another path, which is more automatic. The invention of the internet, together with the new technological developments in communication and digital materials, has increased cultural exchanges between nations. This leads translators to look for ways to cope with these changes and to look for more practical techniques that enable them to

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translate more and waste less. They also felt the need to enter the world of cinematographic translation, hence the birth of audiovisual translation. The latter technique, also called screen translation, is concerned with the translation of all kinds of TV programs, including films, series, and documentaries. This field is based on computers and translation software programs, and it is composed of two methods: dubbing and subtitling. In fact, audiovisual translation marks a changing era in the domain of translation.

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Exercise 1: Analyze English translations of the following extracts.

(الف)

در زندگی زخم‌هایی هست که مثل خوره روح را آهسته در انزوا می‌خورد و می‌تراشد. این دردها را نمی‌شود به کسی اظهار کرد، چون عموماً عادت دارند که این دردهای باورنکردنی را جزو اتفاقات و پیش آمدهای نادر و عجیب بشمارند و اگر کسی بگوید یا بنویسد، مردم بر سبیل عقاید جاری و عقاید خودشان سعی می‌کنند آن را با لبخند شکاک و تمسخر آمیز تلقی بکنند، زیرا بشر هنوز چاره و دوابی برایش پیدا نکرده و تنها داروی آن فراموشی به توسط شراب و خواب مصنوعی به وسیله افیون و مواد مخدره است ولی افسوس که تاثیر این گونه داروها موقت است و به جای تسکین پس از مدتی بر شدت درد می‌افزاید. (بوف کور، صادق هدایت)

There are sores which slowly erode the mind in solitude like a kind of canker. It is impossible to convey a just idea of the agony which this disease can inflict. In general, people are apt to relegate such inconceivable sufferings to the category of the incredible. Any mention of them in conversation or in writing is considered in the light of current beliefs, the individual's personal beliefs in particular, and tends to provoke a smile of incredulity and derision. The reason for this incomprehension is that mankind has not yet discovered a cure for this disease. Relief from it is to be found only in the oblivion brought about by wine and in the artificial sleep induced by opium and similar narcotics. Alas, the effects of such medicines are only temporary. After a certain point, instead of alleviating the pain, they only intensify it. (Sadegh Hedayat, *The Blind Owl*, Translated by D. P. Costello)

(ب)

از کنار چند نهر آب گذشتیم و بالاخره نزدیک کوه در باغی را باز کرد و هر دو داخل شدیم. جلو عمارت تازه سازی رسیدیم. وارد اتاق کوچکی شدیم، که یک تختخواب سفری، یک میز و دو صندلی راحتی داشت. چراغ نفتی را روشن کرد و به اتاق دیگر رفت. بعد از چند دقیقه با پیژامای پشت گلی، رنگ گوشت تن وارد شد و چراغ دیگری آورد روشن کرد. بعد بسته‌ای را که همراه داشت باز کرد. و یک آباژور سرخ مخروطی درآورد و روی چراغ گذاشت. پس از اندکی تامل، مثل اینکه در کاری دو دل بود، گفت: می‌فرمایین بریم اتاق شخصی خودم؟

چراغ آباژوردار را برداشت، از دالان تنگ و تاریکی که طاق ضربی داشت و به شکل استوانه درست شده بود و طاق و دیوارش به رنگ اخرا و کف آن از گلیم سرخ پوشیده شده بود، رد شدیم. در دیگری را باز کرد، وارد محوطه‌ای شدیم که مانند اتاق بیضی شکلی بود و ظاهراً به خارج هیچگونه منفذ نداشت مگر به وسیله دری که به دالان باز می‌شد. بدون زاویه و بدون خطوط هندسی ساخته شده و تمام بدنه و سقف و کف آن از مخمل عنابی بود. از عطر سنگینی که در هوا پراکنده بود نفسم پس رفت. او چراغ سرخ را روی میز گذاشت و خودش روی تختخوابی که میان اتاق بود نشست و به من اشاره کرد. کنار میز روی صندلی نشستیم. روی

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.. یک گیلان و یک تنگ دوغ گذاشته بودند. من با تعجب به در و دیوار نگاه می‌کردم و پیش خودم تصور می‌کردم بی شک به دام یکی از این ناخوش‌های دیوانه افتاده‌ام که این اتاق شکنجه اوست و رنگ خون درست کرده، برای اینکه جنایات او کشف نشود و هیچ منفذ هم به خارج نداشت که به داد انسان برسند! منتظر بودم ناگهان چماقی به سرم بخورد یا در بسته بشود و این شخص با کارد یا تیر به من حمله بکند. ولی او با همان آهنگ ملایم پرسید: اتاق من به نظر شما چطور می‌آید؟ («تاریکخانه»، صادق هدایت)

We passed several streams until eventually, near the mountain, he opened the gate of a garden and we entered. We reached a newly-finished building. We entered a small room which had a rollaway bed, a table and two armchairs. He lit the kerosene lamp and entered the adjacent room. A few minutes later he returned wearing a pair of pink pajamas. He brought in another lamp and lit that. Then he unwrapped the parcel he had brought with him. It contained a red lampshade which he placed on the lamp he had brought in from the other room. After a long pause, as if he were not sure whether he should say something, he said, "Would you like to come to my private room?"

Picking up the lamp with the red lampshade, he passed through a labyrinthine, dark corridor with an arched ceiling and a floor covered with dark red, cloth mats. Then he opened another door. We entered a room that resembled the inside of an egg. It did not seem to have any openings to the outside world except, of course, for the door that gave onto, the corridor. Devoid of any geometrical configurations, the concave inner walls, the ceiling and the floor were covered with deep red velvet. Inhaling the dense perfume that permeated the room, I felt somewhat lightheaded. He placed the lamp on the table, sat on his bed which was in the middle of the room and motioned for me to rest on the chair by the table. On the table there were a glass and a pitcher of duq. Astounded, I looked around me thinking that the man must be a mental case and that this room must be his torture chamber. The walls were the color of blood, I thought, so as to camouflage the blood of his victims. Thus he could not be easily caught. Besides, the place did not have any opening to the outside world. No one would know about what transpired in there, let alone come to another's assistance. I was waiting for a club to hit me on the head from nowhere or for this man to attack me with a knife or a hatchet, but with his usual calm tone he said, "What do you think of my room?" (Hedayat, "The Dark House", Translated by Iraj Bashiri)

Exercise 2: Translate the following texts into Persian.

A)

(1) And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. (2) And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. (3) And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. (4) And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. (5) And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. (6) And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. (7) Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. (8) So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. (9) Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth. (*Bible, Genesis 11:1-9*)

B)

A Saturday afternoon in November was approaching the time of twilight, and the vast tract of unenclosed wild known as Egdon Heath embrowned itself moment by moment. Overhead the hollow stretch of whitish cloud shutting out the sky was as a tent which had the whole heath for its floor.

The heaven being spread with this pallid screen and the earth with the darkest vegetation, their meeting-line at the horizon was clearly marked. In such contrast the heath wore the appearance of an installment of night which had taken up its place before its astronomical hour was come: darkness had to a great extent arrived hereon, while day stood distinct in the sky. Looking upwards, a furze-cutter would have been inclined to continue work; looking down, he would have decided to finish his faggot and go home. The distant rims of the world and of the firmament seemed to be a division in time no less than a division in matter. The face of the heath by its mere complexion added half an hour to evening; it could in like manner retard the dawn, sadden noon, anticipate the frowning of storms scarcely generated, and intensify the opacity of a moonless midnight to a cause of shaking and dread.

In fact, precisely at this transitional point of its nightly roll into darkness the great and particular glory of the Egdon waste began, and nobody could be said to understand the heath who had not been there at such a time. It could best be felt when it could not clearly be seen, its complete effect and explanation lying in this and the succeeding hours before the next dawn; then, and only then, did it

tell its true tale. The spot was, indeed, a near relation of night, and when n showed itself an apparent tendency to gravitate together could be perceived in its shades and the scene. The sombre stretch of rounds and hollows seemed to rise and meet the evening gloom in pure sympathy, the heath exhaling darkness as rapidly as the heavens precipitated it. And so the obscurity in the air and the obscurity in the land closed together in a black fraternization towards which each advanced halfway.

The place became full of a watchful intentness now; for when other things sank bleeding to sleep the heath appeared slowly to awake and listen. Every night its Titanic form seemed to await something; but it had waited thus, unmoved, during so many centuries, through the crises of so many things, that it could only be imagined to await one last crisis—the final overthrow. (Thomas Hardy, *The Return of the Native*)



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