

## The Translator's Gender and its Impact on Translation Accuracy of Narrative Style

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**Abstract:** The aim of this study is to identify the role of the gender of the translator on the accuracy of the translation and to determine whether there is any difference between the translations done by female and male translators in terms of translation accuracy. Two English novels: *Wuthering Heights* and *Pride and Prejudice* and two translations for each, one done by a female: Robab Emami and Susan Ardakani and the other by a male translator: Aliasghar Bahrambeygi and Reza Rezayi were selected. Each translation was compared with its source text, sentence by sentence and based on some certain categories, their inappropriate renderings affecting the understanding of the ST and in fact affecting the translation accuracy were extracted. The total numbers of the observed inappropriate renderings of each group of the female and male translators were counted. The data analyzed and statistical analysis was applied then it become clear that the answer to the researcher question was negative and the null hypothesis of the research regarding that there is no difference between the translations done by female and male translators in terms of translation accuracy was supported.

**Key words:** Translation studies, accuracy, gender, translation quality assessment, translation of literary text

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### INTRODUCTION

Translation is a polysemous word which is often used in different senses, even in the same text. Now here is this more apparent than in translation where at every, step decisions must be taken about when to provide explanation and extra detail and how far to depart from the original. A study of translation is a study of language (Bassnett, 1996). In addition, both translators and linguists deal with two linguistic systems, each with perhaps, a different cultural system. So if we agree that 'all communicators are translators' (Bell, 1991), we must remember that the role of the translator is different from that of the normal communicator: the translator is a bilingual mediating agent between monolingual communication participants in two different language communities.

The interest of cultural studies in translation has taken translation studies away from purely linguistic analysis and brought it in to contract with other disciplines and contextual factors (Munday, 2002). Every process of translation involves at least two languages and one message which can be called form and meaning. In fact, the meaning is the message which is transferred by various features and it is the task of the translator to transfer the meaning of the ST into the TT. So, depending on different factors affecting the translator's performance and the way the message is conveyed different translations will be produced. Gender of the

translator is one of the factors that may affect the product of the translator and the accuracy of translation is an important feature in evaluating any translated text.

While many researches have been done about gender studies in translation, the relationship between gender of translator and its impact on translation accuracy of literature or narrative style is not yet clear enough.

The aim of this study was to identify the role of the gender of translator on the accuracy of the translation and to determine whether there is any difference between the translations done by female and male translators in terms of translation accuracy.

This research aim to research on the differences which might exist in terms of the accuracy between the translations done by male and female translators. Thus, the research question is as follows: "Is there any difference between the translations done by female and male translators in terms of translation accuracy"?

In order to investigate the above mentioned research question, the following hypothesis is developed: "There is no difference between the translations done by female and male translators in terms of translation accuracy".

**Development of translation studies:** Translation was initially studied as a linguistic phenomenon as a process of meaning transfer via linguistic transcoding and consequently, translation studies was conceived as a linguistic discipline. Translation Studies has evolved enormously in the past 20 years and is now in the process

of consolidating. TS has gradually evolved into a discipline in its own right or rather as said, into an 'interdiscipline' which draws on a wide range of other disciplines and hence could be effectively described as "a house of many rooms".

One of the first moves towards interdisciplinarity can be considered Hornby (1995)'s "integrated approach". The approach was meant to bridge the gap between linguistic and literary-oriented methods, aiming at proposing a model which would embrace the whole spectrum of language and cull insights from other disciplines such as psychology, ethnology, philosophy as well as cultural history, literary studies, socio-cultural studies and for specialized translation, the study of the specific domain involved (medical, legal, etc.). The Routledge Encyclopedia of translation studies (Baker, 1998) defines 'Translation Studies' as the academic discipline which concerns itself with the study of translation. As Baker points out, although initially focusing on literary translation, TS is now understood to refer to the academic discipline concerned with the study of translation at large, including literary and nonliterary translation.

Bosinelli and Ulrych (1999) described the burgeoning discipline of TS as follows: the term 'multidiscipline' is the most apt in portraying the present state of translation studies since it underlines both its independent nature and its plurality of perspectives. Translation studies can in fact be viewed as a 'metadiscipline' that is able to accommodate diverse disciplines with their specific theoretical and methodological frameworks and thus to comprehend areas focusing for example, on linguistic aspects of translation, cultural studies aspects, literary aspects and so on. According to Hornby (2006) translation studies opens up new perspectives from which other disciplines or more especially the world around might well benefit. It is concerned, not with languages, objects or cultures as such but with communication across cultures which does not merely consist of the sum of all factors involved. And what is not yet adequately recognized is how translation (studies) could help us communicate better, a deficit that sometimes has disastrous results.

**Accuracy of translation** In the process of translating a text, the message of the original should be preserved in the translation and this shows the fidelity or faithfulness of the translator to the original text. Beekman and Callow (1989) believe that a faithful translation is the one which transfers the meaning and the dynamics of the original text and by 'transferring the meaning', they mean that the translation conveys the ST information to the TT reader. According to Beekman and Callow (1989), "only as the translator correctly understands the message can he

begin to be faithful" and it is only then that "he can translate clearly and accurately". In fact, faithfulness and fidelity are two terms which show how much the TT reconstructs the ST.

Some translation theorists believe that the translation should be evaluated by considering its ST as "the yardstick" (ManafiAnari, 2004). ManafiAnari (2004) defines accuracy as "the exactitude or precision of the meaning conveyed" and in fact it "implies conformity of translation with the original text in terms of fact or truth". Also, he defines 'accurate translation' as a translation "which is the reproduction of the message of the ST" (ManafiAnari, 2004). Newmark believes that in translating a text, "the accuracy relates to the SL text, either to the researchers meaning or to the objective truth that is encompassed by the text", etc.

According to the discussion above, accuracy can be considered as one of the representations of the faithfulness in translation, i.e. showing how accurately the translator has managed to reproduce the message of the ST into the TL.

Larson (1984) believes that in every translation, accuracy, clearness and naturalness are of the great importance. Regarding the translation accuracy, she believes that in some cases when the translator tries to get the meaning of the ST and convey it to the TT, s/he may make some mistakes, either in the analysis of the ST or in the process of conveying the meaning and a different meaning may result; then, there is a need for a careful check regarding the accuracy of the translation. According to Khomeyjeni (2005) based on what Larson proposed in 1984, the process of evaluating the accuracy of translation can be done in 2 possible ways: one way is recognizing the key words of the ST and their equivalences in the TT and comparing how close they are i.e., determining whether the translator could convey the same and exact meaning of the ST by selecting the best target equivalents and whether s/he could achieve an acceptable accuracy or not. Another way is using back translation, i.e., translating the TL into the SL, then, carrying out a contrastive analysis and if the retranslated text is reasonably close to the SLT, the translation has got the acceptable accuracy. Also, Waddington (2001) has proposed a translation quality assessment method. model: Waddington's "Method A" introduces three groups of mistakes which may exist in a translation. The first group of the mistakes which consider the understanding of the ST message is related to the accuracy of the translation; it contains inappropriate renderings affecting the understanding of the source text.

Consequently, the term 'translation accuracy' refers to the translator's understanding of the message of the ST and that how accurately the translator has managed to translate a text from one language into another.

**House's model of translation quality assessment:** The evaluation of a translation as good or poor is the main concern of Translation Quality Assessment (TQA) approaches. The main issue is how to measure and express this quality. There have been many attempts to find the ways in order to tackle these issues and evaluate the quality of a translated research. However, it seems that from among these many approaches, a few of them sound promising. One of the promising approaches is the Translation Quality Assessment Model provided by the German scholar Juliane House.

House (1977) suggested a model for assessing of translation. In her study, she started with the purpose of translation which is the preservation of meaning. She regarded three sorts of meaning, semantic, pragmatic and textual meaning. The concept of equivalence was highly important for her. At the same time, she referred the scholars of translation to function of a text. The ultimate goal was functional equivalence. To get to functional equivalence, situational dimensions and linguistic materials were defined (House, 1977). Afterwards, she concluded that if a TT wants to reach functional match with an ST, two important mismatches must be considered. One is overtly erroneous error and another one is covertly erroneous error. From these above mentioned elements, finally, she introduced two types of translation which were suitable for different texts based on their situational dimensions and functional equivalence. These two translational types were overt and covert translations. Overt translation is a kind of translation in which TT addressees are not directly addressed. It is overtly a translation. Overt translation has got less cultural problems than covert one. (House, 2001).

The definition of covert translation indicated by House is as follows: it is a kind of translation that enjoys the status of an original ST in the target culture. This translation type is directly addressed to a target culture audience. In a covert translation, ST and TT are pragmatically of equal concern for source and target language addressees. Covert translation needs cultural filter; hence, there are two kinds of cultural filters. Justified cultural filter is a cultural filter in which the translator thinks that a TT addressee does not share any knowledge of ST culture. Unjustified cultural filter is a cultural filter in which a translator makes some changes in the dimensions of social role, attitude and participation of the addressor vis-à-vis his addressees (House, 2001). Finally, it is vivid that covert and overt translation types include almost all existing texts. Overt translation includes political, simplified, literary, religious texts, etc. On the other hand, covert translation consists of business circulars, scientific texts, journalistic texts, advertisements and information booklets (House, 2001).

**Gender, language and translation:** Language, socially and personally, is a significant part of man's identity. Language and gender are linked and developed through man's participation in every day social practice. It is proved through various investigations that the languages of men and women are really different (Holmes, 1995). In the past, women were invisible, yet today they believe that they possess a different voice, different psychology, different experience of love, etc and also different culture from that of men. Many studies have been conducted so far, regarding the role of the gender "as a determinant of linguistic usage" (Stockwell, 2002). According to Stockwell (2002), today the term 'genderlect' is used to refer to the different lexical and grammatical choices which are characteristically made by males and females.

Through reviewing the languages applied by women and men and also by studying various aspects of their lives, it is revealed that women are considered as the subordinate group and men as the dominant one. Hence, it is for this reason that in recent decades, females are doing their best in order to be heard by the society and express their abilities to males. Over the past several decades and after the women's movement, gender issues got involved in the language issues; meanwhile the translation studies developed more and more. Regarding the translation, it can be assumed that since translation is the product of the language of the human being, it might have the same characteristics as those of language. So, every translation might reflect the characteristics of the language of its translator.

According to von Flotow, "gender refers to the sociocultural construction of both sexes". During 1960s-1970s, feminist thinkers discussed socialized difference between women and men and the cultural and political powerlessness of these two genders. About the concept of gender, Sherry (1996) believes that "gender is an element of identity and experience which, like other cultural identities, takes form through social consciousness". By reviewing the history of translation, we can discover that always there have been "well-known debates over how best to be faithful"; then, it is not astonishing "that fidelity in translation has been consistently defined in terms of gender and sexuality".

For a long time, translation has been employed to explain women's actions in public and as von Flotow has referred to Marguerite Duras, women lived in darkness for centuries, they did not even know themselves very well then while entering the public atmosphere, they had to translate what they mean.

Historically, translation has been considered as a secondary and degraded version of authorship (Sherry, 1996). As Sherry (1996) states, it has been appeared as a great instrument for women providing them to step into the world of literature and writing; translation helps

women to express themselves through their writings and translations for long, women have been limited to just translate and they have been only permitted to enter this specific secondary zone of writing; they have been forced to stand outside the borders of the dominant zone of writing and not been allowed to enjoy the position of authorship.

By the passage of time and through the achievements formed by feminists and their movements, women could express themselves and their abilities in society and in fact, they could establish their identities in the world; just as Simon says, “feminism has also reordered lines of cultural transmission” (Sherry, 1996). By means of translation, translators often females have created new ways of exchange; besides, they have opened new translation markets and according to Sherry (1996), “in addition to the conceptual challenging of translation tropes, feminism has worked to establish new intellectual connections”.

**Literary translation:** It is actually believed that of all the types of translation, literary translation lets one consistently share in the creative process of translation (Landers, 2001). According to Bush, literary translation is “an original subjective activity at the center of a complex network of social and cultural practices (Bush, 1998).

Lambert (1998) asserts that a published translation is the fruit of a substantial creative effort by the translator, who is the key agent in the subjective activity and social practice of translation. Lander also adds that “literary translation entails an unending skein of choices”. In other words, the literary translator must make a choice and from a sequence of such choices the translation comes into existence (Landers, 2001). Different strategies might be necessary to approach a poem or a fiction. A translator of fiction as Bush quotes from Levine (1991) and Bush (1998) has to engage with the different rhythms, the images and symbols an author may use in the course of hundreds of pages.

The process of translation differs slightly from translator to translator and is influenced by the particular work translated. Newmark concedes that it usually happens that the literary translator first has to deal with words set on the page by an author “who may be dead physically or metaphorically and now lives in the variegated readings by a host of readers of the source language”. Then, the literary translator should overcome the conflict between accuracy and elegance by weighing the linguistic individuality of the SL author against the particular features of normal usage in the TL. Since, literary translators translate those works which are selected for translation and which now exist where otherwise there would be silence, they are involved at “a keen point of cultural convergence”. Newmark believes in closely translating the well-written literary language. He

writes that literary language must remain aesthetically pleasing in translation and there should be a constant tension between the informative and the aesthetic function of language.

Considering literature as being the product of the dominant ideology, it is obvious that sign systems cannot be taken on as understood by everyone, for language is dynamic and apt to change quite rapidly. Indeed, the period and culture of the time have direct influence on the language and any literary research is no doubt, the production of its era. It is so significant that Bassenett states “all these elements can be missed if the reading does not take into full account the overall structuring of the research and its relation to the time and place of its production” (Bassnet, 1992).

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

There are different Translation Quality Assessment (TQA) models, each introducing new ideas and novel ways to assess the quality of a translated research. These models, however, approach this task differently based on that theoretical frameworks to assess a translated research integratively, discretely or a mix of them.

In this study, researcher had applied interpretive approaches which are of descriptive nature and had dealt with a kind of text analysis. So, a comparative descriptive approach was adopted. In fact, this research was conducted through a descriptive corpus-based method. The review of the literature on translation quality assessment (Waddington, 2001) shows that almost all the contributions have been descriptive or theoretical and we came across very few contributions which submitted aspects of translation quality assessment to some kind of empirical study.

This research had examined the translations done by male and female translators according to the first part of Waddington (2001)’s “Method A” model which is related to translation accuracy and contains the five categories of the inappropriate renderings which affect the understanding of the source text. In this study had been indicated that accuracy between other measures of assessment appears to be “the more valid measure of translation ability” (Stansfield *et al.*, 1992).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Waddington (2001) has proposed a translation quality assessment method model and this study uses this model as a theoretical framework. The researcher compared some Persian translations with their English originals to discover whether there is any significant difference between the translations of the male and female translators in terms of translation accuracy. So, a comparative descriptive approach was adopted. In fact,

this research was conducted through a descriptive corpus-based method. As the corpus of the study, two English novels and two translations for each, i.e., one by a male and another by a female translator were compared regarding their accuracy. The researcher considered about 10000 words of each English novel and compared the original sentences with their Persian translations. The researcher compared each sentence of the source text with its certain translation according to the first part of Waddington (2001)'s "Method A" which is related to translation accuracy and contains the five categories of the inappropriate renderings which affect the understanding of the ST: fauxsens, nonsense, addition, omission, loss of meaning.

Then their inappropriate renderings affecting the understanding of the ST and in fact affecting the translation accuracy were extracted. The total numbers of the observed inappropriate renderings of each group of the female and male translators were counted and then presented the number of the frequencies of each category of the translations. The titles of the novels and their translations were as follows:

- Wuthering Heights Wuthering Heights translator R. Emami and Ali Bahram Beygi
- Pride and Prejudice Pride and Prejudice translator Susan ardakani Reza Rezaei

Examples below show the way the researcher analyzed the translations. Here, there are:

- MT1: Male translator of the text 1
- FT1: Female translator of the text 1
- MT2: male translator of the text 2
- FT2: female translator of the text 2

**Sample 1:** They could not every day sit so grim and taciturn and it was impossible however, ill-tempered they might be that the universal scowl they wore was their everyday countenance (Text 1/Sentence 100):

- Translator woman (FT1): It may not be every day so sullen and taciturn. No matter how bad they are and Dyrjvsh, it is impossible that every day are dying and are taken (R Emami Badgyrtrjmh Heights)
- Addition: And late Welding/eat/do
- Omission: Sit/countenance/universal/they wore
- Translator man (MT1): They certainly could not hurt every day so silent and sit round the table. They were Dyrjvsh no matter how impossible it tempered and sullen state of shock is his everyday mode (B Begay Heights Badgyrtrjmh AA)

Table 1: MT1's inappropriate renderings

MT1	Frequency
Fauxsens	119
Nonsens	0
Addition	197
Omission	173
Loss of meaning	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>502</b>

Table 2: FT1's inappropriate renderings

MT1	Frequency
Fauxsens	100
Nonsens	0
Addition	140
Omission	131
Loss of meaning	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>377</b>

Table 3: MT2's inappropriate renderings

MT1	Frequency
Fauxsens	94
Nonsens	0
Addition	119
Omission	171
Loss of meaning	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>389</b>

Table 4: FT2's inappropriate renderings

MT1	Frequency
Fauxsens	102
Nonsens	2
Addition	180
Omission	171
Loss of meaning	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>425</b>

- Fauxsens: Grim: Doleful
- Addition: Sure/round table/and late Welding/and Eclipse
- Omission: They wore/universal

The researcher computed and then presented the number of the frequencies of each category of the translations in the following tables. A number of general observations arise from this summaries (Table 1-4).

Regarding the translations of Table 1, the researcher found that the female translator translated more accurately than the male translator, since the number of the observed inappropriate renderings of male translator of the Table 1 was more than that of female translator of Table 1.

But regarding the Table 2, the researcher got an opposite result, i.e., she discovered that the male translator translated more accurately than the female translator for the number of the inappropriate renderings of female translator of Table 2 was more than that of male translator of Table 2.

## CONCLUSION

According to the data analysis and findings obtained through studying inappropriate rendering cases affecting the understanding of the ST and in fact, affecting the

accuracy of their translations which occurred in the translations of the male and the female translators, it was proved that there is no significant difference between the translations done by male and female translators in terms of translation accuracy. Thus, the null hypothesis of this research was supported. Here, it is concluded that the gender of the translator plays no significant role in the accuracy of the translation and that it cannot be said whether female translators translate more accurately than male translators or vice versa. So, this study proved that the gender of the translator cannot be considered as a determinant factor in examining the translation accuracy.

There are some limitations in this study. First, since the translated texts used here were novel, generalizing the finding of this study to the translation evaluation of other kinds of texts can be difficult. It is possible of course that other investigations with different texts may produce entirely different results. Second, our samples were very small because; it was very difficult to find novels in Persian language which had been translated both by male and female translator. In addition, it is important to emphasize that methodological and sampling problems in the research design limit our interpretations. These findings imply that more complex approaches should be used in order to give translators additional understanding in assessing translations.

Thus, this topic may be affective for infusing its findings in training of translation students, translators of literature, publishers, active institutions in the field of translation and particularly for employing translator or second language teacher by educational institutions and making understandable the complexities of gender and translation. These institutions could assume that males and females in the establishing translation or teaching second language have similar performance and thus change their attention from gender of employees to the quality of their performance.

The verifications and substantiations of the findings in this study demand further investigation. One possibility is that researchers may wish to use other TQA models or consider the effect of translator gender over precision, clearness and etc., in translation. Although, other researchers could study the discussion of translator gender and translation accuracy in viewpoint of critical discourse analysis. Another possibility is to replicate the study by comparing other languages, texts and cultures. It may also reveal some nice outcomes if the text types are changed for example, instead of literary texts religious texts can be selected for the study. It can also be done by

having a change in the age group of the selected texts. Finally, another investigation which can be applicable in this field can be led by utilizing other genres like films(dubbing and subtitling), playing, poems, short stories software and even technical scientific texts and etc.

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