



A Study of Saleh Hosseini's Style in Three English Novels Translated into Persian through Universals of Translation

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Abstract

This paper aims to reveal how the universals of translation (henceforth, UsT) can be regarded as a manner to examine the translator's style in the TL. In doing so, this paper examines how Saleh Hosseini, as an Iranian literary translator, made his style through the changes he completed at each micro-and macro-levels shift to result in his discursive presence and/or style in the novels he has translated into Persian. After having reviewed the main theories on shifts including Nida, Catford, Leuven-Zwart, and Baker, this paper takes Baker's definition of style as the translator's 'thumbprint' as a way to approach the UsT in Hosseini's Persian translations. Having occurred with the translated texts than with the original, the UsT are: 'explicitation', 'normalization', 'levelling out', and 'simplification' (Baker, 1996). Having selected 44 sentences from the three translated novels into Persian by Hosseini as a corpus, this paper indicates that the ratio of 'normalization' is much higher than the other three universals, meaning that Hosseini, through adhering to the norms of the Persian language, came to this universal as one of the signposts of his discursive presence, voice, and style in his translations.

Keywords: Explicitation; Normalization; Shift; Translator's Style; Universals of Translation

1. Introduction

As various and multifaceted as it is the concept of style both in the source language (SL) and the target language (TL), as well as the translation of style itself, this paper examines the translator's style through what has been termed by the scholars of the translation, Baker (1996, 2001) included, the "Universals of Translation" (UsT, henceforth), due to the lack of a better term. As some common features in different translations by different translators, the "UsT" occurs because translators tend to create the translated texts much more coherent and familiar with receptors and also according to the linguistic norms of their TL. Here, some issues are raised. First, by its nature, the UsT is a kind of shift produced by the translator, much more optionally than with obligation, while translating from one language into another. However, the type and the number of shifts are various and complex as is the name of the scholars who have proposed and designated them, including but not limited to Nida (1964), Catford (1956), Leuven-Zwart (1989, 1990), Popovich (1970), among others. So, if the UsT is a shift, and shifts are various and numberless, it seems a little challenging to come to some standard and specific features of any translated language being designated as such. Second, as Baker (2000) puts it, the UsT is an occurring shift both in the SL as well as the TL; however, some believe that it is hard, both in the ST and the TT, to come to some standard features designated as the UsT. Tymoczko (1988) believed that, due to some changes in attitudes in different cultures and the different understanding of the concept of translation in these cultures, it is nonsensical to formulate some universal rules for the translations. Third, much as an optional than obligatory, a shift, especially if it gets frequent, can be regarded as a sign to show that to what extent the translator has been (in)visible in his translation; hence as a signpost of the translator's discursive presence, voice, and style in the translated texts. If so, as a shift, the UsT can be taken as a way in which the translator puts his fingerprint in the translated text. As Baker puts it (2001), not only is style the writer's fingerprint, but it will also be the translator's fingerprint, as we shall see later. However, some have challenged this idea by saying that style as a fingerprint shows that one is born with language, while language is not innate but required. Fourth, shifts, as put by Leuven-Zwart (1989, 1990), occur both at the micro and macro levels of any translated texts. Having compared and contrasted *Don Quixote's* German translation, Leuven-Zwart suggested two models for analysing both shifts in the SL and the TL: comparative and descriptive models. The former compares the SL and the TL items at the micro-structure level; the latter at the macro-level. Leuven-Zwart concluded that any shift in the micro-structure of the SL text would have effects on the macro-structure of the translated texts in the TL. As complex and a little vague as her two models looks like, she did not designate under which main or subcategories of her two models the UsT can be subsumed. Despite these problematic and challenging issues, one can take the UsT as a



working model to study the discursive presence of the translator as his fingerprint and/or his “style” in the translated text.

The style has been such an elusive and challenging term that it would resist any clear-cut definition, and, as [Murry \(1922\)](#) puts it, “six books would not suffice for the attempt” (p. 4) to define it. The difficulty of definition then relates in part to the multidimensional nature of the term. It is such a flexible and vulnerable term that it can be defined based on which viewpoint it is looked upon. Different perspectives lead to different criteria for defining style. Of course, these criteria overlap with each other, so it is not such an easy task to make exact borders among them. Therefore, from ancient times on, the style has been defined based on its functions and purposes. Taking Jacobson’s communicative model as a base, the style can be a writer-, reader-, and message-oriented.

[Baker \(2000\)](#) believes that style is the linguistic habits or the “thumbprint” (p. 245) of the writers. However, some believe that it is rather the footprint of the writer’s footprint rather than his thumbprint. [Bosseaux \(2004\)](#) believes that the notion of style is at least a way to elaborate on the translator's voice and presence in translated texts "as a channel for recognition of the transformations brought about by the translation" (p. 21). What is important is the way or the manner a writer, as well as a translator, use language in SL and TL, respectively. By doing so, both the writer and the translator try to put their thumbprints on their products. As [Baker \(2000\)](#) states, style is

a kind of thumbprint expressed in a range of linguistic - as well as non-linguistic – features [...] More crucially, a study of a translator’s style must focus on the manner of expression that is typical of a translator, rather than simply instances of open intervention (p. 245).

Here, Baker is looking for some recurring patterns or distinctive features of the translator’s linguistic habits and expressions occurring much more unconsciously than consciously out of the translator’s control. Suppose the style is regarded as some unconscious and uncontrollable patterning of the translator’s linguistic manner of language usage, in that case it is possible to make a linguistic profile of this patterning for any individual translator. This linguistic profile paves the way for us to see to what extent a translator can show certain patterns for employing specific ‘lexical items, syntactic patterns, cohesive devices or style of punctuation where other options may be equally available in the language’ ([Baker, 2000](#), p. 245). However, a problem is raised here: if the style is a profile of some recurring patterns of language usage of a translator, how is it possible to put it into practice? [Baker \(1993, 1996\)](#) considered the corpus-based studies to show that applying corpus strategies would help elaborate the nature of translated text ‘as a mediated communicative event’

(1993, p. 243) in the different areas of translation studies. Also, she believes that corpus-based studies will help translation scholars determine what she terms 'universal features of translation', generally occurring in the translated texts than the original, and are 'not the result of interference from specific linguistic systems' (Baker, 1993, p. 243).

Baker (1996) used the term 'universals of translation' for the first time. Before Baker, some scholars have referred to the standard features of any translated text in one way or another: Simplification (Blum-Kulka & Levenston 1983; Toury, 1995); explicitation (Klaudy, 1996); naturalization (Toury, 1995), among others. The idea underlying UsT is not as complex as it looks like at first glance: all language is patterned, purpose-based, and contextualized; i.e., by using language, we use some patterns for a specific purpose and in a specific context (Baker, 1996). This patterning brings some regularities in the SL, and by following those regularities, we can communicate with each other (Klaudy, 1996). Sometimes, this patterning is influenced by a given purpose in a given context. This is the case in translation too: translation is a language activity quite influenced by the different translators' purpose and the context (Baker, 1996). Every translator has got his idiosyncratic way of using language. This specific use of language may bring some specific patterns or regularities in the form of some common features we may call the universals of translation (Baker, 1996). If it is possible to trace some patterns of an original writer in using language, it is also possible to trace some patterns in the way a translator may employ language in the TL (Baker, 2000). It happened because "different contexts and communicative goals may require different translation methods" (Baker, 1996, p. 176). What facilitated the way to look for these specific patterns of language usage by the translator has been conducted by computer-assisted corpus studies.

Baker (1996) determines four distinctive, universal features: Explicitation, Levelling out, Simplification, and Normalisation. The table is self-evident:

Table 1

Four Distinctive, Universal Features by Baker (1996)

Universals	Definition
Exploitation	the 'overall tendency to spell things out rather than leave them implicit in translation' (Baker, 1996, p.180).
Leveling out	the 'tendency of translated texts to gravitate towards the center of a continuum' (Baker, 1996, p. 184)



Simplification	the ‘tendency to simplify the language used in translation’ (Baker, 1996, p. 184)
Normalization	a tendency to ‘exaggerate features of the target language and to conform to its typical patterns’ (Baker, 1996, p. 183)

This paper argues and tries to show how the UsT can be a way to study the translator’s style in the TL. In doing so, this paper tries to show how Saleh Hosseini, as one of the prominent Iranian literary translators, got his style through the changes he has done at both micro-and macro-levels shifts to bring about his discursive presence and/or style in the novels he has translated into Persian.

2. Review of the Related Literature

As a theoretical concept, the UsT has been dealt with, developed, and formulated by Mona Baker (1993, 1996, 2000), among others. Following Baker, some scholars (Laviosa-Braithwait (1998), Klaudy (1998), Mauranen & Kujamaki (2004)) have dealt with the UsT in much more technical ways. However, as some kinds of shift taken place in the process of translating from SL to TL, the UsT has been rooted, in one way or another, in the ideas of Nida (1964), Catford (1965), Newmark (1981), Popovich (1970), Vanderauwera (1985), Leuven-Zwart (1989, 1990), and Baker (1993, 1996, 2000) among others.

According to Baker, the "universals of translation are linguistic features which typically occur in translated rather than original texts and are thought to be independent of the influence of the specific language pairs involved in the process of translation" (Baker, 1993, p.243, in Laviosa-Braithwait, 1998, p.288). In general, the universals of translation refer to the "specific patterns that have been in translation texts and seem to characterize translation uniquely." (Baker 1993. P. 243)

Also, Horri (2007) tried to investigate the style of Saleh Hosseini in his Persian translations of Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse* and Faulkner’s *The Sound and The Fury*. Moreover, in a tripartite paper, Horri (2009a; 2009b; 2010) examined the translator’s presence in the translated narrative texts through the proposed shifts by Leuven-Zwart (1989, 1990). Along with Leuven-Zwart, Horri concluded that any shift in the microstructure of a narrative text would affect on the macro-structure of the translated narrative texts. In addition, Horri (2009c) studied Saleh Hosseini’s Persian translation of Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse* through the UsT. His paper is the most related work to the present study. Horri

concluded that normalization is among the most frequent universals, as found in Hosseini's Persian translation.

Also, in their paper, [Vahedikia and Oliaeinia \(2016, p. 82\)](#) attempted "to investigate lexical explicitation in English translations of modern Persian literary works in different genres, namely prose, poetry, and drama/" Their results revealed that 1) "different lexical explicitations are typical of all literary genres except for the extension of proper nouns and filling of elliptical structures, which did not show typicality in poetry" and 2) "narrowing is the most frequent of these explicitations in fiction and poetry, and addition of conjunctions the most common in drama translation"(p. 82). Concerning explicitation in drams, they concluded that "the outwardly rather conscious tendency to undergo such a shift accounts for compensating for characterization and/or performability in translation, i.e., some of the characteristic features inherent in the genre in question" (p. 82). Drawing on 'optional explicitation' as described by [Klaudy \(2001\)](#), also, [Bosseaux \(2001\)](#) studied the style in translation in both her unpublished MA thesis and Ph.D. dissertations (2001; 2004), respectively. In the former, she investigated the style of Woolf's *The Waves* in its three French translations. In the latter, she showed how point of view and FID, as two narrative devices, have been translated in two French translations of Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*.

Along with the above-mentioned works, this paper tries to study the translator's style as the discursive presence of Saleh Hosseini in the three novels he has translated into Persian. However, as opposed to [Horri \(2009c\)](#), this paper considers Hosseini's other Persian translations of different English novels into consideration. In doing so, the main question is how Saleh Hosseini, through the UsT, has shown his style as his discursive presence in his Persian translations of three English novels. It seems that naturalization would be of his style's signposts as his discursive presence.

3. Method

3.1 Corpus

As for data collection, 44 sentences have been selected from the three novels Hosseini has translated into Persian. Since one of the Persian translations was 44 pages, an attempt was made to select the same pages from the other two novels (one sentence corresponding to one page for each translation). The Persian translations are as follows: [Ghaleye-Heyvanat \(Animal Farm by Orwell, 1382\)](#), [Dele-Tariki \(The Heart of Darkness, by Conrad, and 1984 by Orwell\)](#).

3.2 Procedure



As for data analysis, the following analysis was retrieved from the three Persian translations by S. Hosseini:

1. Out of 44 sentences chosen from 44 pages of the Persian translation of *Animal Farm*, the number and the kinds of the UsT are as follows: (1) Explicitaion (9), Normalization (9), Simplification (6), Levelling out (0), and (5) No shift (14).
2. Out of 44 sentences chosen from 239 pages of the Persian translation of *1984*, the number and the kinds of the UsT are as follows: (1) Explicitaion (4), Normalization (14), Simplification (4), Levelling out (0), and (5) No shift (26).
3. Out of 44 sentences chosen from 74 pages of the Persian translation of *Heart of Darkness*, the number and the kinds of the UsT are as follows: (1) Explicitaion (8), Normalization (12), Simplification (4), Levelling out (0), and (5) No shift (24)

3.3 Research Design

From the 1990s, when it was introduced and applied mainly by Baker (1993; 1995; 1996; 1999, 2000), among others, in translation studies, and especially since the 2000s onwards, there has appeared, among translation researchers, an increasing interest, hopefully of course, in employing computer-assisted corpus-based studies. As defined by Baker (1995), the corpus is “any collection of running texts (as opposed to examples/sentences), held in electronic form and analyzable automatically or semi-automatically (rather than manually)” (p.226). In this sense, the corpus-based investigation will be a particularly effective tool for uncovering the distinctive features of not only the translator’s discursive presence, voice, and style at the micro-level, also a way to make visible and observable what has been left, consciously or unconsciously, unobservable and hidden at the macro-level of the translated texts. However, such strategic tools cannot be employed as fully and comprehensively as possible in this paper because such useful and strategic tools have not yet been made and programmed for the Persian language. Therefore, it is obliged to take some selected passages, as enough as they would be reliable and valid though, from both original and translated texts for data collection, and examine and analyze them manually rather than electronically. Although data analysis will be a far cry from corpus-based tools, it will be limited to the selected sentences of the translated novels by Hosseini into Persian. Therefore, for collecting data, the paper will use those selected samples of the Persian translations as the textual indicators of the UsT to see how Saleh Hosseini has treated them in his translations.

4. Results

The following table is self-evident:

Table 2

Universal of Translation in Three Persian Translations by Hosseini

Universals of Translation					
Novels	Explication	Simplification	Normalization	Levelling out	No shift
<i>Animal Farm</i>	9	6	9	0	14
<i>1984</i>	4	4	14	0	26
<i>Herat of Darkness</i>	4	4	12	0	24
Total	17	16	35	0	64

Table 2 demonstrates the frequency of Universals of Translation, including “explication,” “simplification,” “normalization,” “levelling out,” and “no-shift” in three novels of *Animal Farm*, *1984*, and *Heart of Darkness*. As the table revealed, “no-shift” is the most frequent used in both analytic and holistic views of translations, with a total of 64.

5. Discussion

Believing that the novel got a poetic language, a mixture of elevated and colloquial language, Hosseini implicitly declared that he did his best to keep the middle ground: being faithful to both the original style of the book as well as his discursive presence and style as an Iranian literary translator who has devoted a lot of time to write and rewrite the translation to come to a satisfactory result. This is along with the higher frequency of “Normalization” as one of the universals of his Persian translations. Also, the result of this paper is in line with what Mollanazar (2001) found about the “norm of naturalness and expectations of the readers” (p. 317) in the Persian novel Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*: {Hosseini has} resort{ed} to certain strategies more or less consciously; among them are transposition, modulation {normalization}, explication, implicitation, and change in the type of cohesion” (p. 317).

As for *Animal Farm*, Hosseini added no preface to its Persian translation, but by adding a lot of footnotes, he tried to put his fingerprint in the translation. Hermans believes that there has always been the “translator’s voice” in his



translations, but “the ideology of translation, the illusion of transparency and coincidence, and the illusion of the one voice (1996, p. 27) do not allow us to see the presence of this other voice in the translated texts. Along with these works, this study showed that Hosseini’s discursive interference in his translations in the form of the footnotes appeared in the universals of “simplification” and “explicitation”. In this sense, these universals showed that the translation “always implies more than one voice, one discursive presence, in the text” (Hermans, 1996, p. 27). In addition, in use with this paper, Horri (2007, 2009a) showed that normalization could be regarded as one of the signposts of the discursive presence, voice, and style of Saleh Hosseini in the novels by Woolf and Faulkner he has translated into Persian.

Close to Normalization, there stand two other universals: Simplification and Exlicitation. It is possible to regard re-translation as one way, among others, in which the second translation becomes much more explicit and/or simplified in the process of re-translating. Or else, in the preface written for the Persian translation of *Animal Farm*, Hosseini stated that he committed some errors in the first edition of the translation. By the second edition, he wanted to correct those errors and give “a much more purified translation than the first edition” (p. 4). This is why the total ratio of simplification and exlicitation are pretty much higher than the total ratio of the same universals in two other Persian translations of the same novel. However, one important issue is raised here. Although Hosseini used these two universals along with normalization, the way he employed them is not the same as in his different translations but is entirely dependent upon the style of the original text and writer. In this sense, the frequency of explicitation and simplification is relatively less than those of simplification and explicitation in, e.x., the Persian translations of Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse* and Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury*, both translated by Hosseini. One possible reason is that the two latter belong to a much more complex stream of consciousness novels that seem quite resistant to translation, if not impossible. For this, Hosseini did not want to simplify and/or make explicit the complex structure and meaning of those novels in the process of translating into Persian. The analysis revealed that what distinguished Hosseini’s former translations (as discussed in this paper) from the latter translations (as discussed by Horri, 2007, 2009a) can be the latter use of implication rather than the former use of explicitation and simplification. Interestingly enough, compared Hosseini’s later translations with three other Persian translators, i.e., Keyhan, Bejanian, and Sholevar of the same novels by Woolf and Faulkner, who also translated the latter two novels into Persian, it was revealed that these three translators employed explicitation and simplification in a much higher frequency than Hosseini.

In addition, although it is true that Hosseini, as a literary translator, used naturalization as his discursive presence, voice, and style, the nature and manner

of using naturalization in these novels are completely recognizable. In other words, since Hosseini's translation of these novels is an example of "a duet between the style of the writer and the translator" (Pekkanen, 2010), he tried to use naturalization, among other universals, in line with the goals and stylistic features of the original authors. Hosseini's naturalizations are based on a continuum of different spectra. The intensity of this classification depends entirely on the stylistic features of the author of the original text as well as the idiosyncrasy and the stylistic features of the source texts. Since, for example, *Herat of Darkness* has some mystical and intuitive themes, "a miniature of various major literary genres", as declared by Hosseini in the preface, Hosseini also tried to recreate the space of mystical, intuitive themes, in his translation through lexical, syntactical, and stylistic naturalization. And that is why the explication and simplification in this novel, as well as two others, do not show high frequency. Or else naturalization and its types are the main strategies of Hosseini in the translations of two other novels, but the types of naturalization used are different. The use of naturalization in other Hosseini translations (Horri, 2007, 2009a) also showed the highest frequency.

Another noteworthy point is that Hosseini used "no-shift" to a great extent in these translations. The phrase "no-shift" may raise some issues in the translation of these novels, but it can be said that the relatively significant amount of "no-shift" itself can indicate that the translator tends to show the characteristics of the original text in the target language with minimal change. In other words, Hosseini has done his best not only to keep the fidelity to the style of the original writers but also to try to keep his discursive presence, voice, and style, by adhering to the norms and rules of Persian text in the target language, in the Persian translations of the novels. In sum, as an ambidextrous second writer, Saleh Hosseini produced some translations as the TT in the ST that, on the one hand, are bound to the original, and on the other, since no two languages can be identical, the translation, as a new text brought to the new readership in the new context of the translator's cultural system, is supposed to follow the norms and rules of the Persian language.

6. Conclusion

This paper began with this claim that the translators may put their fingerprints in their translations, and the universals of translation are one way among others, to investigate such traces as the translator's discursive presence, voice, and, at best, style in the translated texts. Generally speaking, it can be inferred that 'explication' and 'simplification' were used more frequently in the novel *Animal Farm* than in the other two, *1984* and *Heart of Darkness*, in which both explication and simplification, the frequency is even for both with 4 each. The reverse is the case for 'normalization' where *1984* and *Heart of Darkness* have more normalizations than *Animal Farm*; *1984* has 14 normalizations while



Heart of Darkness has 12 and *Animal Farm* 9. As a final note, holistically, the frequency of no shift with 64 and normalization with 35 use have the most frequency while other universals are used less than those above two, and *1984* with a total of 24 applications of Universals of Translation, holds the record. The results of the study can be fourfold. Firstly, it may help the translation teachers how to teach the students to deal with the stylistic issues on the one hand, and assess the quality of the translation through the UsT on the other. Also, it may help the teachers find the appropriate ways to come up with the issue of style regarding the “literary translation” course for the literature as well as translation students. In addition, the results of the study may help both novice and professional translators of the literary text to be aware of the stylistic issues in the translation process. More importantly, the results may help the translation critics to have some criteria at their disposal to deal with the criticism as well as translation quality assessment. Last not least, the result of such a study may help software programmers to find some ways, at least for the Persian language, to be accomplished with such electronic tools employed in corpus studies due to some advancements in using new technological tools and devices in what it is called “corpus linguistics”.

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