

The Analysis of Style in Persian Translations of Pink Floyd Lyrics

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Abstract

The existence of cultural gaps causes problems in translation process and harms the aesthetic aspects of texts. In this paper, it was tried to recognize the factors which cause inconsistency between the style of original lyrics and its translations and also find out which translation strategies increase the rate of this distortion. The framework of the study was translation quality assessment by House. The strategies were analyzed based on Vinay & Darbelnet model. The data included Pink Floyd lyrics as well as their two different translations. The results revealed most of the distortions were in the change of style. Moreover, literal translation caused the majority of errors.

Keywords: Translation Quality Assessment, Style, Lyrics, Strategies, Literal Translation

1. Introduction

Since 1960s, waves of western popular culture has been embraced a significant part of the world. Many countries tended to receive western culture as a pattern of progression. Different policies has been propounded to receive a culture; some nations urged to replace western lifestyle and customs with their own culture, some tried to adopt some adequate western values, and some intended to prevent western culture propagation. In Iran, there have been different standpoints as we look through the history. In 1960 to 1979, Pahlavi regime policies were to westernize Iranian culture, and by Islamic Revolution, different viewpoints were expressed, which meant to remove western factors from the culture. In both phases, media have played a wide role in culture transfer. As it is seen, western media, more specifically films and music, have been an innate part of Iranian radio and television programs.

Since the genesis of media, western music found its place in the taste of Iranian people. In pre-revolutionary era, many copies of Jazz and other popular styles of west had been imported. Even after Iranian Islamic Revolution of 1979, many had been imported illicitly in early years, and even they have been played in radio and television programs e.g. Vangelis in the beginning and the ending of “Gozaresh-e-Haftegi” program, Alan Parsons and Super Trump in economic programs, Modern Talking, Survivor, Pet Shop Boys on sport shows, and Pink Floyd on “Taghvim-e-Tarikh” program.

It has been always considered as a fact that lyrics have been important and determining parts in popular music structure. Due to political and cultural barriers in the past recent years, it has been witnessed that rough and unorganized translation of lyrics into Persian has caused many distortion in style and consequently in meaning.

Due to their global success, and being one of the 10 best-selling popular musicians in history, Pink Floyd, a British band who has a significant emphasis on their simple and conceptual lyrics, has been chosen as a representative of popular music lyrics in this paper.

1.1 Definition of Style:

Many definitions have been expressed for the style. For example, Enkvist (1964) defined style as “the aggregate of contextual probabilities of its linguistic items” (p. 28) Or Leech and Short (1981) defined it as “the way in which language is used in a given context, by a given person, for a given purpose, and so on” (p. 10). Andrea Kenesie (2010) believes that style is a determining factor in aesthetic effect and it is achieved through consciously chosen lexical and syntactic elements. Style is the conscious channel of unconscious thought.

In Longman English dictionary, style is a typical way of writing, painting etc that is used by a particular person or during a particular period of time:

1.2 Style In Translation

As Libo Huang (2000) described style is the choices of language by a writer or a speaker which makes the produced text different from the other ordinary texts. Moreover, all the texts produced by the writer or speaker are to some extent consistent. As far as translation is concerned, three key elements are emphasized in discussing style: (1) regularity of specific linguistic patterns, (2) frequency of specific linguistic items, and (3) a reference taken as a norm for comparison.

The term “translator’s style” was first proposed by Baker (2000) and became one of the major topics for corpus-based translation studies. Baker regards translator’s style as a kind of “thumbprint” linguistically presented in a text or his/her specific way of translating (2000, p.245).

1.3 Style in Poetry Translation

Raffel (1991) believes in the musical mode or inner rhythm of the poetry which makes it difficult to translate. Thus, the poetry translator should convey the message alongside all the stylistic components such as diction, syntax, and so on. To do so, a translator of poetry should be familiar with the stylistic features of the poem to understand the purpose(s) or function(s) of the original poem.

According to Gallagher (1981), “What an English-only reader wants is a good poem in English” (p. 149). Droste (2003) stated that, “He [the poet] does not only want to express his emotions, but is conscious of all possible means that may enhance the beauty, and, consequently, the cogency of presentation”. , p.8

1.4 Research Objectives

In this paper researchers tried to recognize the factors which cause inconsistency between style of original lyrics and its translations and also find out which translation strategies increase the rate of this distortion.

2. Methodology

This study was qualitative and descriptive, and it applied the House (2015) model of translation quality assessment. In her revised model, she (2015, p.64) applied the classic Hallidayan register concepts of 'Field', 'Mode' and 'Tenor'. The dimension of Field captures the topic, the content of the text or its subject matter, with differentiations of degrees of generality, specificity or 'granularity' in lexical items according to rubrics of specialized, general and popular. Tenor refers to the nature of the participants, the addresser and the addressees, and the relationship between them in terms of social power and social distance, as well as the degree of 'emotional charge'. Further, Tenor captures 'social attitude', i.e. different styles (formal, consultative and informal). Mode refers to both the channel – spoken or written (which can be 'simple', e.g. 'written to be read' or 'complex', e.g. 'written to be spoken as if not written'), and the degree to which potential or real participation is allowed for between writer and reader.

For the case of strategies, Vinay and Dorbelnet (1995) model of translation has been taken into account. They represented two broad categories, namely direct or literal, and oblique translation methods. These two categories included seven strategies: borrowing, calque, literal translation, transposition, modulation, equivalence, and adaptation.

2.1 Data Gathering:

The examples have been chosen from 5 different Pink Floyd albums, which were as follows:

A Saucerful of Secrets (1968), Wish You Were Here (1975), Animals (1977), The Wall (1979), and The Final Cut (1983). Their translations are from 2 famous published translated lyric books, The Division Bell (ناقوس جدایی) by Kaveh Basmenji and Pink Floyd Songs (ترانه های پینک فلوید) by M.Azad and Farokh Tamimi, both published in 1998.

2.2 Procedures:

1. the data were gathered manually from Pink Floyd CDs
2. They were sorted out chronologically.
3. Then they were compared with their translation to analyze the translation of the style.
4. The most frequent strategies which caused the distortion of the style were found.

2.3 Data Analysis:

In the following, each example contains a source text, and the two target text examples (TT1 refers to first target text and TT2 refers to the second one) and the explanation:

Example 1.

ST: And I'm much obliged to you for making it clear.

TT1: وبسیار رهین منت توام که این را روشن کرده ای.

TT2: بسیار مدیونت هستم که معلوم کرده ای.

(Jugband Blues - Saucerful of Secrets)

In this example, the expression "being much obliged" often used formally. In TT1, the translator keep the formal style of the original and translate it to the Persian equivalent "بسیار رهین منت بودن", while the second translator tried to save Pink Floyd's informal style by translating it to "مدیون بودن".

Example 2.

ST: Come in here, dear boy, have a cigar. You're gonna go far.

TT1: بیا اینجا، پسرک نازنین، پکی به سیگار بز، تو باید به راهی بس دور بروی.

TT2: بیا اینجا، پسر عزیز، دودی بگیر. به دور ها خواهی رفت.

(Have a Cigar - Wish You Were Here)

In this part, the lyricist tried to show the patronizing attitude of music producers towards young musicians. However, usage of the informal linguistic item "gonna" represents the informality of the sentence. The first translator follow a formal structure (تو باید به راهی بس دور بروی) while in the second rendering, the translator kept the informality of the source text by translating "have a cigar" to "دودی بگیر" but in the last part of the his translation, he translated formally.

Example 3.

ST: So have a good drown as you go down, all alone

TT1: پس امید ، که خوب غرق بشوی ، وقت غرقه شدن، تک و تنها

TT2: پس خفگی به خیر، وقتی که تنها ، پایین می روی

(Dogs - Animals)

In this song, "have a good drown" is a sarcasm which was applied by the lyricist to show the desire of himself about specific person. In the first translation, translators could not save the sarcasm in their translation. In addition, excessive use of literal translation, and preservation of formality ("پس امید که خوب غرق بشوی") caused distortion of style.

Second translator, however, tried to save the sarcasm and informality of the style.

Example 4.

ST: Who was broken by trained personnel?

TT1: آن مرد که توسط کارمندان آزموده اش در هم شکسته شد.

TT2: آن که به دست پرسنل آموزش دیده شکسته شد.

(Dogs - Animals)

In the song, this sentence was a part of frequent rhetorical questions which was asked by the singer, but in both renderings translators did not try to save the literary device and also first translation contains a shift in formality (broken translated to "در هم شکسته شده")

Example 5.

ST: You fucked up old bag, ha ha charade you are!

TT1: ای عجوزه ی زهوار در رفته، چه تحفه ای هستی تو!

TT2: تو ای جادوگر پیر درب وداغان، ها ها، چه مسخره ای هستی

(Pigs (Three Different Ones) - Animals)

In this stage, lyricist tried to show the "pigs" (according to George Orwell's Animals Farm, they are symbol of politicians) true face who are old, ugly and weak but they tend to show themselves glorious. Using taboo elements ("fucked up") showed poet's intense hatred of the politicians. Actually, applying taboo items often regarded as characteristics of rock music, and thus euphemism used in both rendering may harm the sense and consequently the style.

Example 6.

ST: What do you get for pretending the danger's not real?

TT1: تو را چه سود از اینکه وانمود کنی خطر، جدی نیست

TT2: از تظاهر به اینکه خطر، واقعی نیست، چه نصیبت می شود؟

(Sheep - Animals)

In this case, despite the fact that no formal element is seen in the original text, the first translator rendered the sentence into a very formal sentence in Persian while the second translator used less formal element than the first one.

Example 7.

ST: Tell me something eluding you sunshine?

TT1: به من بگو آیا چیزی تو را از آفتاب دور می سازد؟

TT2: به من بگو آیا چیزی آفتاب را از تو پنهان می کند؟

(In The Flesh? - The Wall)

Here, the main character of The Wall concept album called Pink is an oppressive dictator who gives a glorious speech about the hegemony he tries to maintain. He is addressing youngsters as "sunshine", an informal word which means "cute" in English or "گوگولی" in Persian. But the excessive use of literal translation by both translators did harm the meaning as well as the informal style of the lyrics.

Example 8.

ST: Mother do you think they try to break my balls?

TT1: مادر فکر میکنی بکوشند تپله های مرا بشکنند؟

TT2: مادر آیا فکر می کنی آنها بخوانند تپله های مرا بشکنند؟

(Mother - The Wall)

To break someone's balls is a slang expression which means to give someone a really hard time. In this case, government tries to break balls, which can

be referred to torture or imprisonment. Therefore, a literal translation caused this distortion in meaning as well as the style.

Example 9.

ST: Thought I ought to bare my naked feelings.

TT1: پنداشتم که باید احساسات برهنه ام را آشکار کنم.

TT2: گفتم که باید از احساسات برهنه ام پرده بردارم.

(The Final Cut - The Final Cut)

Although in the above example the original sentence is formal and both translators tried to keep the style, by choosing poor equivalents, a paradox (bare something which is naked) could not be transferred.

3. Result and Discussion

As the results revealed, out of 9 examples, in 6 cases shift in style was seen and in 4 cases excessive use of literal translation was observed which has led into distortion of the style. Moreover, in 2 cases ignoring the figurative language caused misunderstanding as well as distortion of the style. It was obvious that shift in style as a result of excessive use of literal translation caused the majority of misunderstanding.

4. Conclusion

After gathering the data manually from Pink Floyd CD's and translation books available, and analyzing them, the researchers tried to recognize the factors which cause inconsistency between style of original lyrics and its translations and also find out which translation strategies increase the rate of this distortion. The results revealed that most of the distortions were in style which harmed the genre, meaning, and aesthetic aspects of lyrics. Moreover, slang, colloquialism and informal elements which have formed major parts of rock lyrics were not observed through the process of alteration in style. Consequently the translations became raw, strange and somehow alien to the foreign audience. In addition, excessive use of literal translation as a translation strategy distorted the true meaning of the lyrics which was different from its outer layer.

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