



DRAMA TRANSLATION from PAGE to STAGE

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Abstract

This study is the result of an attempt to investigate the differences between the Persian translated drama text (page) of each English drama text with its performance on the stage (stage) in Iran. In other words, the present researchers tried to find the implemented changes in page which make it real on the stage in the target language and culture in order to show that in drama translating and conducting it on the stage two different systems are at work: the literary system and the theatrical system. The Kowzan's model (cited in Robert, 2009) has been chosen as the framework for this study. It introduces thirteen basic theatrical features which are used as the criterion for the comparison between the pages and stages. Five English drama texts, five translated drama texts (pages), and their stage performances (stages) in Iran were selected. After the analysis, the researchers found that most of the changes were in the systems word and movement. So, finding a stage performance different in some ways from its translated drama text is not the cause for the non-performability of that text, rather, it is because of the nature of the stage.

Keywords: Drama, Drama Translation, Translated Drama Text (Page), Stage Performance (Stage)

Introduction

Translating specialized text is a collaborative activity in which the translator and experts work together. According to Raffel (1988), "while in most other artistic collaborative ventures either partner could proceed on his own, in collaborative translation neither could operate without the other. Each possesses knowledge and abilities that the other does not have" (p.130). So, it could be argued that translation in such a way is related to other disciplines and skills. Drama translation is not exceptional in this case. In drama translating, the translator works with persons specialized in the field of drama to achieve an ideal translation or, in better words, to achieve the best stage performance. This collaborative activity in translating drama as mentioned above is not so com-

mon in Iran and it is often conducted in a way in which a translator translates the original drama text into the target language and culture and then a director with his/her group makes it real on the stage. In some cases the translator and the director are one person. In other words, the translator director translates the drama text and then conducts the translation on the stage.

Drama translation as Chan (2004) mentioned "has to suit the playwright, the needs of the actor, the director and the reader/audience" (p.64). It could be mentioned that the process of translating drama mainly consists of two parts: first, the original drama text is translated into target language and culture (translated drama text) or page, then this process continues the transposition from the written (translated) drama to the performed work of art or stage, in company with a translator and a director or a translator director. The first

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one works in the literary system and manifests itself in the printed form and the other works in the theatrical system and its manifestation is on the stage. Riera (2009) said "the target text, therefore, may fall into the hands of the reader or the student, as well as of the actor" (p.7).

Drama displays the performing situation and the most important characteristic of it of course is its performability. This performability could be seen in both of the two steps mentioned above, on the page and of course on the stage; in the literary system and in the theatrical system. But the definition of performability for these two systems is somehow different and this makes a translated text of drama different from its performance on the stage.

When a translated text of a drama goes on the stage, it is exposed to several changes. Such changes are due to factors which mainly emanate from the consideration of the time and place of the performance. According to Aaltonen (2000), "theatre translation is more tied to immediate context than literary translation as experience in the theatre is both collective and immediate. Unlike readers, who can take their time in forming their individual reading of a text, a theatre audience functions as an item in a severely restricted time and place" (p. 40-41).

Several aspects of translating drama are still unknown and unclear and there are different ideas in this area of study and these obscurities made this work hard. It could be said that because of such intricacy and vagueness, research in this area has been carried out rarely.

In performing an original drama text on the stage in another language and culture, many factors and people are at work. One of the important ones is the translator. The translator transfers the meaning and elements of the original to the target and implements any necessary changes, and then the translated text goes on the stage, so knowledge of the translator about this process is so essential. By doing such study, i.e., by comparing the page with its stage, the differences between them due to two different systems (literary and theatrical) became clear. And this helps not only future drama translators but also students in the field of theatre in their appreciation of the language of drama. Such a study shows the unclear path of performing a drama text on stage in another language and culture and the changes, omissions, and additions of it in a graphic way. The findings are hoped to enable the translators attain higher standards in their works day after day.

Research Question

Based on the aforementioned points, the present study endeavours to answer the question: What are the differences between Persian page and its stage in Iran?

Theoretical Background

As mentioned in the previous part, drama has performative nature. This characteristic is peculiar to drama and separates it from other literary kinds, so the translation of drama could be seen from a perspective other than that of other literary works such as novel or poetry. The translator must be conscious about this performability and the elements which make the text performable and keep them in the target text. Translating drama, because of this prominent characteristic, is far more complicated than other literary works. The translator must travel farther and deeper and be attentive to extralinguistic and performability features of the text besides its textual and linguistic ones. In the sixties, Hamberg (as cited in Suh, 2005) outlined certain principals for the drama translator as follows,

Drama is action [...] and in translating for the radio, television and the theatre it is important to realize what the dramatic theoreticians above all demand from the spoken line. It must characterize the speaker and thus seem genuine; it must characterize time and place as well as social class, it must not be ambiguous; and it should have been given or one should be able to give it the right emphasis so that it leads the attention of the audience in the desired direction. [...] It goes without saying that an easy and natural dialogue is of paramount importance in a dramatic translation, otherwise the actors have to struggle with lines which sound unnatural and stilted. [...] Even where the author does not indicate in brackets how a line is to be spoken, the translator as well as the stage manager must be able to know how.

[...] A translator must be especially careful with entrance lines and exists. (p.39) In the eighties, Wellwarth (as cited in Suh, 2005) enunciated some guidelines to be followed by the drama translator. This scholar asserted that, The dramatic translator [...] must have a sense of rhythm of speech patterns, particularly colloquial ones, as well as the ability to recreate the tension of dramatic situations without falsifying the playwright's intention or losing dramatic credibility within the new context. [...] It is

absolutely imperative when translating a play to translate it aloud and to listen carefully to -even to savour - the various versions into which every conceivable line can be translated in English. Having done that, he should read his translation aloud to someone totally unacquainted with the play, preferably an actor. [...] what the dramatic translator must watch out for particularly is an excess of sibilants in a sentence, or awkward consonantal clusters that may make a line hard to pronounce rapidly and thus may cause difficulties in sound projection [...] the language must fall easily and familiarly on the ears of the audience. (p.40)

In drama translation as Mateo (2006) mentioned "the text is one element among many and one component of the whole theatrical process, in which kinesic and paralinguistic signs complement the verbal text". The translator must be alert to any elements in the text whether they can be seen or not such as language, culture and also beyond the text, i.e. performance. As Aaltonen (2000) elaborated, Theatre text, and therefore also their translations, do not necessarily follow the same rules as texts in a literary system. As theatre translation may use strategies which would not be acceptable in contemporary literary translation, a number of justifications have been developed in their defence. The most common explanation for the decisions and choice made usually involves concepts such as speakability and playability (or performability) as well as the more generic requirements of the stage. (p.7)

It could also be argued that performability has never been defined clearly. As the researchers in the field of drama we may face with the concept of theatre translation. Theatre translation mostly refers to what is performed on the stage, so performance on the stage is a kind of translation. Drama translated text is on the page and theatre translation is on the stage. Both of them, because of their nature as being dramatic, are performative and the distinction is only because of the staging issues and directing problems.

Pavis (1992) made the distinction sharper between the dramatic text and the performance, by two definitions, The dramatic text: the verbal script which is read or heard in performance; we are concerned here solely with texts written prior to performance, not those written or rewritten after rehearsals, improvisations or performances. The performance: all that is made visible or audible on stage, but not yet perceived or described as a system of meaning or as a pertinent relationship of

signifying stage systems. (p. 24-25)

Pages and the stages have their particular addressees; readers and spectators, "readers who are committed to learning more about another culture may have no problem with translated novels that offer explanations in footnotes or that inspire them to research unfamiliar references. Spectators in the theatre must grasp immediately the sense of the dialogue" (Zaltin, 2005, p.1).

Zaltin also emphasized the role of translators in performing a page on the stage, in the rehearsal process. The translators' works may be as a dramaturg -a consultant to a theatre company who knows the text well and can guide the actors and director (p.5). He emphasized on the issue of taking advantage of the stage and collaborative work by telling his experience "Because of the interactive nature of performance, many of the respondents have participated in rehearsals and have found the process to be not only beneficial but essential. Several of the academic translators have never had this experience, and a few people mention directors who appropriate the text, making unwarranted changes to work of author and translator alike, but most would agree with Cabal, who says that the more collaboration, the better" (p.33). He also added that "translators need to familiarize themselves with terminology and style for stage directions in the target language" (p.67).

Semiotics in Theatre

Spadaccini and Talens have explained the Kowzan's model and stated that, in the process of moving from the page to the stage, there is no change in meanings, and that just signifiers change (1993, p.67). For more elaboration on this issue, Marinis (1993) offered the following example:

The system that Kowzan defines as facial mime represents a class of elements that share the same signifying medium (the expressive continuum of the human face) and are thus available various types of simultaneous sign-correlations. At the same time, however, this system seems to be presented as a full-fledged code (we could call it the mime code) capable even of forming different materials from the continuum of the human face for example, those proper to various types of mask. (p.102)

Semiotics has an essential role in drama translating, and as Dawson (1999) stated "every basic unit of meaning, or sign, adds cumulatively phenomenon of seeing, hearing, and experiencing the reality of the stage or, for that matter, reality in general. Theatre semiotics, therefore, furnishes

useful tools to focus attention upon important levels of meaning in multifaceted plays such as those found in the documentary theatre” (p.29).

Elam (1980) on the issue of theatre communication asserted that “The semiotician of theatre, in brief, will be equally concerned with modes of signification and with the resulting acts of communication and will wish to provide a model that accounts for both. It is clear that accounting for the rules which permit theatrical meanings to be generated and communicated is an all-but-boundless enterprise, since the entire gamut of social and cultural constraints is potentially involved” (p.20).

Method

The corpus for this study includes the five English drama texts, five pages, and their stages in Iran. Because of the limited capacity of this study, six minutes of each stage and the related parts in English texts and their respective page were selected. The English dramas adopted for this investigation were as follows:

“I Ought to Be in Pictures” written by Neil Simon, translated by Shahram Zargar and directed by Nader Borhani Marand.

“The Mouse Trap” written by Agatha Christie, translated and directed by Davoud Daneshvar.

“Catastrophe” written by Samuel Beckett, translated and directed by Ali Akbar Alizad.

“The Hairy Ape” written by Eugene O’neill, translated by Behzad Ghaderi and directed by Akbar Zanjanpour.

“A View from the Bridge” written by Arthur Miller, translated and directed by Manijeh Mohamedi.

The original drama texts and the pages of this study were chosen based on availability of stages which were averagely low and therefore narrowed the selection. Besides, because the aim of this study was generally showing the differences be-

tween page in the literary system and stage in the theatrical system, there was no need for the performances to be homogeneous.

The linking agents are English language in original drama texts, Persian Language in pages and performing location that in these cases is Iran. These stages are in different genres, with different contents which were performed in different years to prove that the differences which this study wanted to display exist in various works. The point that was taken into account in choosing the corpus is that there is one work of each of the dramatists, translators and directors. This was decided due to the fact that the works with repeated dramatists, translators and directors could decrease the validity of the study.

This study is a comparative corpus-based study (comparative page-stage) and of course qualitative in the area of descriptive studies. The aim of this study is not the presentation of statistics but just elaboration on the topic of the research, and the related tables and graphs are there for more clarification on the issue.

This study follows Kowzan’s model for determining the constituent parts of theatre. Nicolarea (2002) in her article pointed out that the Polish semiotician Tadeusz Kowzan followed the principles laid by the Prague School of Semiotics. She stated that Kowzan emphasized the basic Prague School principles - the semiotisation of the object and the transformability and connotative range of the stage sign - and tried to establish a typology of theatrical signs and sign systems.

According to Robert (2009), “Kowzan identifies thirteen basic theatrical systems including language, tone, facial mime, gesture, movement, make-up, hairstyle, costume, props, décor, lighting, music and sound effects” (p.25)

Table 1.
Thirteen Basic Theatrical Systems Proposed by Kowzan (1968)

| | | | | | |
|-------------------|------------------|----------------------|----------------|----------------|--|
| 1. word | spoken text | | auditive signs | time | auditive signs- (actor) |
| 2. tone | | | | | |
| 3. mime | expression of | actor | visual signs | space and time | visual signs - (actor) |
| 4. gesture | the body | | | | |
| 5. movement | | | | | |
| 6. make-up | actor's external | | visual signs | space | visual signs - (actor) |
| 7. hairstyle | appearance | | | | |
| 8. costume | | | | | |
| 9. props | appearance of | outside the actor | | space and time | visual signs - (outside the actor) |
| 10. decor | the stage | | | | |
| 11. lighting | | | | | |
| 12. music | inarticulate | | auditive signs | time | auditive signs- (outside the actor) |
| 13. sound effects | sounds | | | | |

Data Analysis

At first the researchers chose five English dramas whose Persian pages and their stages in Iran were accessible. Then for each drama, six minutes: first two minutes, middle two minutes and last two minutes of each stage and of course the related parts in the original drama text and page were selected. The chosen proportions in stages were viewed and the related parts in the pages were perused. The main concern of this study was the items which were changed during transposition from page to stage. To present the differences tangibly, the results are shown in tables and charts.

The first two minutes of each of the performances, or in better words, established scenes, are usually pictorial and the focus normally is more on the appearance of stage and actors, in the middle two minutes the focus is more on the words, i.e. dialogue and in the last two minutes, the focus is on both of them and therefore is more expansive.

Here, there are some examples for more elaboration:

* A door leads to a small backyard, with three trees.

یک در به حیاط کوچکی با سه درخت باز می شود.

There is no such door on the stage and instead, we can see a curtain. Also, there is no yard with three trees or any signs of them on the stage. It can only be inferred in dialogues in the next parts of the performance. The researchers' interpretation about this issue is that in Iran, verbal convention is more usual than pictorial convention. Therefore, pictorial elements come in dialogue.

* Her name is LIBBY TUCKER. She has an energy and a vitality that will soon make them selves apparent.

اسمش لیبی تاگر است. او صاحب انرژی و نشاطی است که به زودی آشکار خواهد شد.

The names alone sometimes unravel the characteristics of their owners. The dramatist perhaps has chosen the word "tucker" to exhibit the character of that girl. Since the word "tuck" means "push or fold into a small space",

it can be descriptive of that girl. Since this issue is important and effective, the researchers offer it in the framework as "Name Symbolism".

In play which falls into the category of mystery drama in that the description of stage is more important than any other genres. So, following the description of the page is necessary but in "The Mouse Trap" we can see some acts of negligence. Keeping some of this furniture on the stage is essential in conveying the intended meaning. For example "صندلی دسته دار" "عهد ویکتوریا" which is a sign of this genre (mystery) was omitted on the stage.

Results

After comparing the five selected stages with their pages, the researchers came to this conclusion that generally the systems word (54.1%) and movement (22.3%) were in highest level of changes. The system gesture (8%), props (5.5%), décor (2.9%), tone (2.9%), sound effect (2.1%), make-up (0.3%), lighting (0.3%), music and hair style (0.1%) had fewer changes and the system mime remained constant.

The variety of changes in these plays may refer to different kinds and different genres of those works. For example, one can witness more instances of lexical changes (word), or gestural changes. The system word was the most numerous one and the system mime was the least in the changing level in all of these five plays.

The researchers also imply that sometime Iranization involves not just transferring word to word but cultural schemata to cultural schemata. The Iranian addressee wants to enjoy through patterns of pleasure that are culturally institutionalized and this identification makes it easy for them because culture embeds them. So, the director put such things in the work to make understanding easy. Some of the changes that take place from page to stage are due to economic issues. The reason seems that there is less budget allocated for theatre. In some cases the changes in stage, décor, props and many other things just refer to this kind of reason.

Table 2.
The Frequencies of the Changes in the Five Dramas According to Kowzan's Model.

| | I Ought to Be in Pic- tures | The Mouse Trap | Catastrophe | The Hairy Ape | A View from The Bridge | Generally | Percentage |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|---------------------|------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Word | 90 | 118 | 28 | 61 | 106 | 403 | 54.1% |
| Tone | 8 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 19 | 2.5% |
| Mime | | | | | | 0 | 0% |
| Gesture | | 7 | 12 | 17 | 24 | 60 | 8% |
| Movement | 23 | 56 | 35 | 11 | 41 | 166 | 22.3% |
| Make-up | | | | 2 | | 2 | 0.3% |
| Hair Style | | 1 | | | | 1 | 0.1% |
| Costume | 4 | | 3 | 4 | | 11 | 1.6% |
| Props | 4 | 34 | 1 | 2 | | 41 | 5.5% |
| Decor | 2 | 8 | 1 | 7 | 3 | 21 | 2.9% |
| Lighting | | | 1 | | 1 | 2 | 0.3% |
| Music | | | | | 2 | 2 | 0.3% |
| Sound Effect | 1 | 6 | | 6 | 3 | 16 | 2.1% |

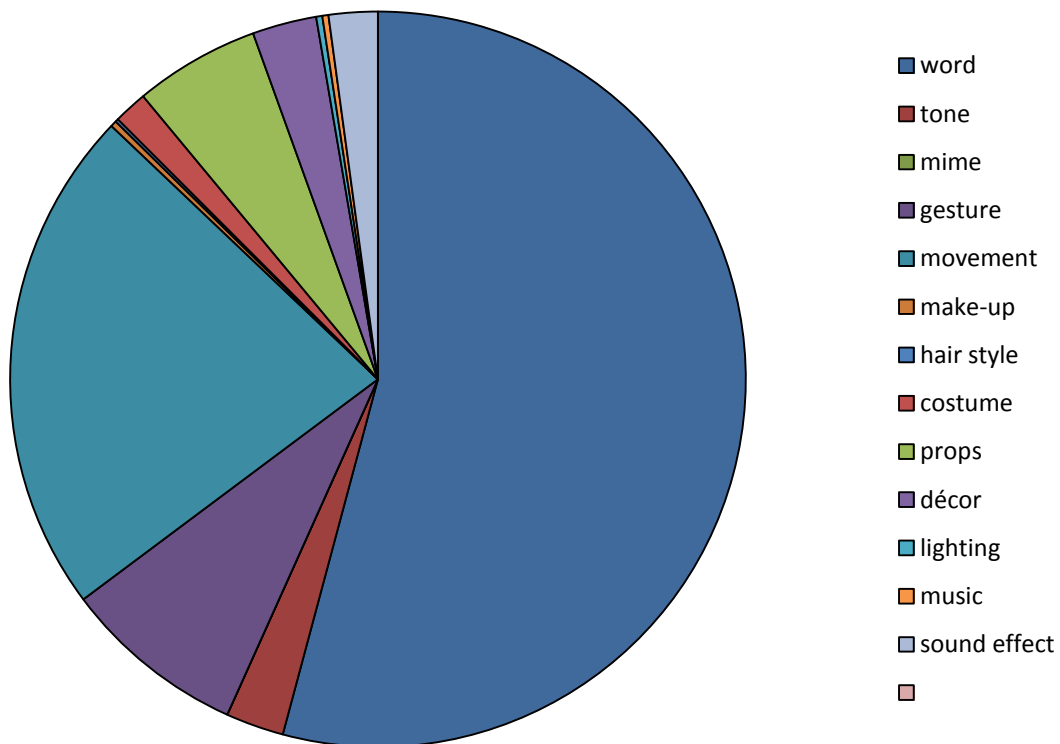


Chart 1. Percentage of the Changes of Each Theatrical System in the Five Dramas

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