

Translated Fiction in Iran: Readers' Reception and Expectations

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Abstract

Do translators know what kinds of translation their readers like and what kinds they dislike? The translator, like every author, has some readers in mind. Hence, in order for a translation to be acceptable, it needs to fulfill its readers' expectations. The present study surveys readers' expectations regarding literary translation (novels and stories), literary translators, as well as the peritext, the text and the format of such translated books. To this end, readers' reviews in three sites, namely Fidibo, Taghcheh, and Goodreads, were collected and then coded and classified following the thematic analysis approach. Chesterman's (2007) tripartite model of reception which studies readers' reactions, responses, and repercussions was adopted as the theoretical framework. Readers' expectations were classified into five main categories, namely translational expectations, textual/linguistic expectations, peritextual expectations, formatting expectations, and good literary translators' features. The results indicate that readers like translations that are both fluent and readable and are free from linguistic and textual abnormalities which are often the result of literal translation. Furthermore, the results of translational expectations specifically show that readers prefer translation methods and approaches that truly transfer the meaning, style, tone, register as well as

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culture-specific concepts. As to the peritext, readers preferred that an introduction and a literary criticism of the foreign work be included in the translation. Also, they defined a good literary translator as someone who is fully competent in the foreign language, able to comprehend the original text accurately and well-endowed with writing ability.

Key words: expectations, readers' reception, reader's reviews, translated fiction, translation readers

Introduction

Each translation activity, according to Schäffner (1998, p. 1), aims at producing "a good translation, a good target text (TT)." However, as Schäffner herself asks, what are the criteria to judge a good translation, compared to bad or poor translations? The success of a translation could be attributed to so many factors. Among those factors, the fulfilment of the expectations of readers is no less important. According to 'functional theories' in translation studies (TS), every translation is directed towards specific readers and hence, in order to function successfully, it must be done in accordance with readers' expectations and therefore fulfil their needs. Otherwise a translation is deemed to failure (Nord, 1991). With this in mind, it becomes urgent to establish what readers of translation need and expect from the target text (TT). According to Gutt, (1996, p252), "the success of the translated text is crucially dependent on the expectations of the target audience." McAuley (2015) believes that "any attempt to judge the success of a translation has to take into account the reaction of its intended audience" (p. 5). In other words, as Munday (2016) declares, describing Nida's dynamic equivalence, "the message has to be tailored to the receptor's linguistic needs and cultural expectation." (p. 68). What is important in this statement is that it highlights readers' expectations, likes, and dislikes as criteria for judging the success of a translation.

Although the reader is frequently mentioned in translation theories, often it was the implied reader that was the focus of those theories (Suojanen et al., 2015). Implied readers which have been the focus of reception studies up to a recent time, are "textually encoded readers", that is, they have no real existence (Chan, 2010, p. 122). In other words, implied readers are the readers intended by an author or a translator. On the other side, real or actual readers

have real existence; they are individuals who actually receive the text. This second group is what Nord (2000) calls 'receivers'. The present research which concentrates exclusively on the latter group is based on the presumption that surveying real readers' opinions about translation could yield more practical results than studies that investigate the texts themselves in order to get an insight of the intended readers' expectations. Chesterman (1998) emphasizes the importance of ensuring that studies in translation reception clearly include real readers of translation. According to him, readers of translated texts probably have some expectations as to the text-type and discourse conventions, style and register of the text, the appropriate degree of grammaticality, the statistical distribution of all types of text features, use of collocations, and lexical choice (Chesterman, 2017, p. 167).

Due to the importance of readers' attitudes and expectations, in the present survey, the aim is to examine what readers of translated fiction into Persian need and expect from those translations, as well as their translators, texts, formats, and peritexts. What do they consider to be a pleasing feature or a shortcoming of a translated literary book? To fulfil this goal, the literature has been reviewed in search of a theoretical framework that surveys readers' expectation with regard to translation. Some models have been proposed, one of the most prominent of which is Gambier's model in the area of audio-visual translation. Gambier (2018) proposes a model encompassing three types of reception (3Rs) specific to the study of audio-visual products (e.g. subtitles). These are reaction, response and repercussion (Gambier, 2018, p. 57).

User-Centered Translation (UCT) is another model in TS that surveys readers' expectations, preferences and attitudes regarding the different types of translation. Proposed by Suojanen et al. (2015), UCT is designed to initially elicit readers' preferences and expectations and enhance the quality of translation on that basis. The assumption is that after the text has met readers' expectations, it will function successfully. Another model, which is adopted as the framework of the present study, is Chesterman's (2007) three partite model (3Rs), according to which the study of translation reception is to be divided in three broad areas: reactions, responses, and repercussions. Responses, which is

the core of the present study, refers to the readers' opinions regarding what translation should be like.

Studies in the area of 'translation reception usually fall into two types. There are studies that investigate how readers respond to micro-level elements of a translation. These are called thematic studies (Suojanen et al., 2015, p. 116). On the other hand, there are reception studies that investigate overall user experience rather than focusing on single elements. "The purpose of such studies is to find out how readers understand translated texts or what kinds of translation strategies are most useful and acceptable from the readers' perspective" (Suojanen et al., 2015, p. 112). In fact, the present research is concerned with this latter type. A good deal of studies have been conducted in the area of audiovisual translation reception. Gottlieb (2004) used a questionnaire to find out how the viewers of subtitled programs understand and interpret those programs and what their attitudes toward the subtitled programs are. The matters that caused objection were usual characteristics of subtitles such as instances of condensations of the text that were beyond the translator's control. With regard to technical translation, Lv and Ning (2013) found out the following five principles pertinent to Chinese readers' horizon of expectation toward scientific-technological texts: the principles of faithfulness, brevity, expressiveness, accuracy, and serving readers. Regarding the translation of marketing texts, which according to Reiss's text typologies is predominantly associated with the appellative text type, Risku et al. (2017) interviewed 13 participants who all work in marketing, public relations or after-sales in internationally active companies and are the receivers of those translations. They agreed that the text should be molded to the norms and expectations of the target culture. With concern to the competences of a qualified translator, the participants mentioned the following competencies: linguistic, cultural, and technical expertise, the use of company terminology, and a request for feedback if anything is unclear. The studies reviewed above concerned the reception of different text types. The translation of holy scriptures is not an exception. Adopting a self-designed questionnaire, Elimam (2017) surveyed Muslim native English speakers for their expectations of

Quran translation. The survey revealed that the majority of the respondents preferred the Quranic terms to be transliterated rather than simply translated, favored editions that provide explanations of difficult words in brackets, as do translations which provided an introduction to each surah, and viewed footnotes positively, which reveal their desire to know as much relevant information as possible. A large majority (%84) preferred a translation to be carried out by a Muslim rather than non-Muslim translators.

In the area of literary translation, empirical studies on actual readers are not as many as those studies conducted in other translation types (e.g. audiovisual translation). In his Doctoral thesis, Campbell (2015) examined the attitudes of non-professional readers towards literary translated books and translators in the UK (p. 1). The following skills were mentioned to be required of a qualified translator: perfect knowledge of source and target languages, experience as a translator or writer, and being a native target-language speaker. The preservation of culture-specific items was positively viewed since they were considered an indispensable component of the source culture location. Exploring young and adult American readers' book reviews from online resources Children's Literature Comprehensive Database (CLCD) and Goodreads on the one hand, and Chinese readers' responses from the child readers' individual blogs and several Chinese educational websites, Huang (2014) revealed that from the viewpoint of both American and Chinese readers, for translated children's literature to be of high quality, translators must possess interlingual aptitude and intercultural knowledge/sensitivity.

Nonetheless, the studies reviewed above are all out of the Iranian context. According to Fish (1980), in the theory of interpretive community, readings of text are culturally constructed and change over time. Such a community is defined as "a group of individual readers whose interpretation of texts is shaped and constrained by shared assumptions about reading and by a common set of interpretive practices", (Gambier, 2018, p. 47). Consequently, due to the decisive role of culture in the formation of readers' attitudes, the results of a research in Community A may not apply to community B. Prior to the present research only two studies precede in the area of literary translation

in Iran. However, they have their limitations. First and foremost, the studies are restricted to participants from the city of Mashhad, so the need arises for more inclusive studies covering a wide population across the country. Using a mixed method approach of interview in the first phase and a questionnaire designed on the basis of the results obtained in the interviews, Bijani et al. (2014) elicited the responses of 424 college students in the city of Mashhad with regard to translated fiction into Persian. They came up with twelve categories of favorable literary translation, the most significant of which is facilitating readers' imagination of the story. Adopting the same self-designed questionnaire mentioned above, Khoshsaligheh et al. (2020) conducted another research again in the city of Mashhad in an attempt to survey the opinions of 385 translation readers (all academic individuals) with respect to the features proved favorable in the study by Bijani et al. (2014). The study too targeted the community of university students, though it claims to explore the opinions of ordinary readers. Ordinary readers are contrasted to professional readers who usually read translation for a special purpose. The study confirmed the importance of immersion as the most favorable feature followed by faithfulness and footnoting.

It seems to be highly significant to conduct a comprehensive research in order to identify the expectations and attitudes of Iranian readers with regard to literary translation. In line with this aim, the study is an attempt to answer the following questions:

1. What translational features do Iranian readers prefer to see in literary books translated into Persian?
2. What are Iranian readers' textual expectations from translated literary books?
3. What peritextual features do Iranian readers like in translated literary books?
4. What concerns do Iranian readers have with regard to the format of translated books published in Iran?
5. Who do the readers consider as a good literary translator?

Methodology

In this section, first the framework adopted in the study will be explained and then the procedures of data collection and data analysis are described.

Framework of the Study

Chesterman (2007) divides the study of translation reception into three broad categories:

- Reactions: “To refer to the effects of the textual (i.e. translations themselves) on the cognitive (i.e. the mental and emotional reactions of readers), we could thus use the term reactions” (Chesterman, 2007, p. 179). This is the first effect, Chesterman asserts.
- Responses: Responses are prompted by the initial effects (reactions) which appear in the form of opinions and reviews by readers. Examples range from writing to a newspaper to complain about a translation, drawing a red line under an offending item, posting a translated book review online, or making notes to offer further work to an excellent translator.
- Repercussions: Repercussions, according to (Chesterman, 2007, p. 180), are “the effects of translations at the cultural level”. Examples might be “the canonization of a literary work, changes in the evolution of the target language, changes in norms and practices, changes in the perception of cultural stereotypes.”

Since the present research studies reviews by readers posted online, it is concerned with *responses* which as mentioned above are prompted by *reactions*. However, *repercussions* are beyond the researchers’ aim.

Data Collection Procedures and Sources

To study the viewpoints of Iranian readers, reviews posted by readers in two Iranian sites (i.e. Fidibo and Taghche) along with an American site (i.e. Goodreads) were investigated. These sites give customers a chance to write reviews on any book they wish. The content of the comments on the translated

literature concerned a number of issues. Some commentators posted their view commenting on the translation and the translator, weighing the quality of the translator's work. Some commented exclusively on the content of the book and the author. Others commented on both the translation/translator and the author. Some other comments considered even the price and other similar issues.

These sites had sections containing and marketing translated stories and novels. Since the study is language-independent, that is, no distinction is made between reviews on translations from Russian literature, American literature or any other literary works in the world, any review that dealt with literary translation was welcomed, irrespective of the source language.

A choice had to be made between the available books to access the reviews pertinent only to those chosen books. The criterion for the selection is being a literary translated book. However, literary masterpieces like *Animal Farm* and *1984* were included in the study, based on the assumption that they are mostly read over the world and hence more reviews on their translations can be found. Twenty-three translated literary books were selected and the comments relevant to those translations were examined in this study. The purpose was to analyze the viewpoints of a randomly selected group of Iranian readers of such translated fiction. As a first step in the data collection process, the reviews posted under the translated books chosen were studied fully. Those reviews that directly addressed issues of translation quality were copied in a separate folder of word office file. Reviews belonging to each translated novel were collected together. Those reviews that had to do with issues other than translation such as the plot of story, and the theme were not included in the data collection corpus. Overall, 569 reviews were selected as valid. These belonged to 23 translations which were mostly classical works of literature.

However, the reviews were very broad and still had to be neatly classified into meaningful categories. As a second step in the data collection process, the reviews were initially coded according to the five categories of translational expectations, textual expectations, peritextual expectation, formatting expectations, and characteristics of good literary translators, which

were established during a pilot analysis prior to the main data collection process.

Data Analysis

According to Munday (2016) reviews can either be analyzed synchronically or diachronically. Munday (2016) points out “An example of a synchronic analysis would be an examination of a range of reviews of a single work; examples of a diachronic analysis would be an examination of reviews of books of an author or newspaper over a longer time period” (p. 242). The present study adopts a synchronic approach to examine readers’ comments on translated books and to establish what they like or dislike regarding the textual elements, the peritexts, the format, and the strategies and the procedures used in the translation. The study further analyzed readers’ opinions regarding the characteristics of good literary translators. Initially, the content of the reviews was analyzed holistically, looking for reader’s evaluations of the translation and the translator. After the initial coding, the reviews were sub-classified according to the specific features and issues they addressed. Following a thematic analysis approach, the reviews were sub-classified into sub-categories which are defined and described comprehensively in the next section. Thematic analysis (Mathews & Ross, 2010) is defined as “a process of working with raw data to identify and interpret key ideas or themes” (p. 373). The analysis is based on segmentation and categorization of the data prior to the final interpretation. Further, it has to be dynamic. That is, the themes and categories cannot be predetermined at the beginning. In fact, themes emerge as the data is analyzed and interpreted fully.

Results

In line with the research questions, the findings were classified under five main headings. The first heading is concerned with the expectations of readers with regard to features exclusively addressing translation. By *exclusively addressing translation*, we mean that readers used the word translation when they discussed those particular favorable translational features. The second category concerns positive features of the text and the

language of the translation. This was accordingly named *textual/linguistic expectations*. The third heading, titled *peritextual expectations*, reports the expectations of readers with regard to the peritext (e.g. preface, title, footnotes, cover, etc.). The fourth category, *formatting expectations*, deals with what readers like about the format of a literary translated book. Finally, the last section addresses positive features of literary translators from the viewpoint of readers.

Translational Features (Expectations)

Overall, 9 categories appeared as favorable translational features (see Table 1). The categories emerged out of 251 reviews. The most commonly reviewed and desired feature in literary translation is fluency (%47), and the least reviewed are equivalent response and full translation, each constituting %4.8 of the whole nine categories. The degree of importance of each is further illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1

Translational features of a good literary translation

| | | Statistics | |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------|
| N | Valid | 251 | |
| | Missing | 0 | |
| | | Number of Reviews | Percentage |
| Valid | Fluency | 118 | 47.0 |
| | Faithfulness | 17 | 6.8 |
| | Accuracy | 19 | 7.6 |
| | Loyalty to the Author's Style, Tone and Characters' Register | 29 | 11.6 |
| | Translation from the Original Language | 11 | 4.4 |
| | Preservation (Foreignization) of Cultural Items | 9 | 3.6 |
| | Complete (Full) translation | 12 | 4.8 |
| | recency of Translation | 24 | 9.6 |
| | Equivalent Response/Effect | 12 | 4.8 |
| | Total | 251 | 100.0 |

As Table 1 above illustrates, fluency comes first with %47, followed by loyalty to the author's style, tone, and register (%11.6), recency (%9.6), accuracy (%7.6), faithfulness (%6.8), complete translation and equivalent response (each %4.8), translation from the original language (%4.4), and foreignization of cultural concepts (%3.6). Here are some of the reviews regarding the above features (our translations):

1. *I read Mr. Hossein Kazemi Yazdi's translation, and in my opinion, it was much more fluent and understandable than Mr. Seyed Hosseini's translation. (Ta'oun).*

2. *Don't fall in the same trap I fell into. Make sure to read the original or a good translation. While reading, I felt that the translation could not convey the beauty of the author's writing and style. But I didn't expect it to be such a failure. (The Death of Ivan Ilyich)*

3. *It was also good in terms of translation. However, given the fact that it was translated a long time ago, it needs to be edited to make it easier for today's readers to understand. (Qomarbaz)*

The above reviews, concern fluency, loyalty to the author's style, and recency, respectively.

Statistically, as the above table shows, except fluency that exceeds other features by a great margin, all the features had almost similar degree of importance. This potentially suggests that each feature has an equal degree of importance in creating a TT that fulfils readers' expectations.

Textual/Linguistic Expectations

The second most debated topic concerns textual and linguistic expectations. Out of the 184 reviews, seven expectations were extracted. The majority pointed to the importance of a comprehensible TT (39.7%), followed by correct spelling and punctuations (19.0%), common well-established native Persian words and expressions (18.5%) (referring to words and expressions that can be readily understood by the Persian readers), immersion (9.2%)(which has to do with readers' engagement with and visualization of the story to be achieved through the selection of words and phrases that appeal to the readers' linguistic taste) (Khoshsaligheh, Kafi, & Ameri, 2020, p. 12), aesthetical

and pleasing language (5.4%) (meant that a translation of a literary work must be correspondingly a work of art in itself). In other words, the translation must appeal to readers' sense perception (Abrams & Harpham, 2012, p. 4). Other expectations are consistent TT according to TL norms' (5.4%), and correct TL grammar with 2.7% (see Table). Below are some examples of readers' comments concerning textual linguistic expectation.

1. It was difficult to communicate with the text because it was neither fluent nor catchy nor of high quality. Especially with the literal and very weak translations of this version that I read, there were many vague sentences and unfamiliar Arabic words in the text. (Goodreads)

This reviewer mentions a number of reasons that hindered his visualization of the story. These are non-fluent TT, word-for-word strategy of translation, uncommon words, and ill-structured sentences.

2. The translation was excellent. Master Parviz Shahdi translated the book from the original source, that is, from French, which is a good thing and a great advantage. The translated text is very fluent and understandable and not heavy and difficult. In addition, it is excellent in terms of literary richness and the use of literary ornaments, and the translation itself is a source for strengthening Persian literature. It is excellent that at the same time as we read a French novel, we can improve in terms of Persian literature as well because of the excellent translation. (Taoun)

The reader here is very much pleased with the translation because it is aesthetically perfect. In other words, the reader is impressed by the artistic beauties of the TT. This refers to the significance of having a writerly ability that allows the translator to render a text which is artistic and literary. The reader's contentment with the artistic beauty of the TT convinced him to consider the translation as a very good example of Persian literature.

3. Either the translation was very bad, or the speaker read it wrong. He had not followed Persian grammar correctly. For example, where the sentence was long, several phrases were nested in it, and the main verb was forgotten. Or the sentence contained a plural subject, and a singular verb. There were many of these mistakes. (Madame Bovary)

This third example declares that the translation does not conform to the Persian syntax. The sentences are long, which is not usual in Farsi. The reader further reports that some sentences do not contain a verb, in some others the subject is plural, while the verb is singular. This points to the fact that translators must make sure that their sentences are grammatically correct.

Table 2

Textual/linguistic expectations

Statistics

| | | |
|---|---------|-----|
| N | Valid | 184 |
| | Missing | 0 |

| | | Number of Reviews | Percentage |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|------------|
| Valid | Comprehensible TT | 73 | 39.7 |
| | Correct Spelling and Punctuation | 35 | 19.0 |
| | Common Well-established Persian native words and expressions | 34 | 18.5 |
| | Immersion | 17 | 9.2 |
| | Aesthetical and Pleasing Language | 10 | 5.4 |
| | Consistent TT According to TL Norms | 10 | 5.4 |
| | Correct TL Grammar | 5 | 2.7 |
| | Total | 184 | 100.0 |

Peritextual Expectations

After translational and textual expectations, peritextual elements were of a concern to readers. Out of 569 reviews analyzed, 105 directly addressed peritextual features, out of which six categories emerged. These are criticism/introduction/and author’s preface (%66.4) as the most important peritextual elements followed by family tree for perplexing foreign story character’s names (%16.8), attractive, accurate title that reflects the author’s intention (%6.5), footnotes & attractive cover that is compatible with the content of the book (each %3.7), and writing the name of the translator and the

publisher on the front cover (%.9) (see Table 3 below).

As the table below illustrates, the most valued parts of the peritext were literary criticisms, introductions (which usually contained information about the author and his work) and the author's preface, which is a peritextual element of the ST. Except this category which differed from other features by a great margin, and the proposal to draw a family tree (illustrating the kinship between the story characters), the other peritextual features had almost equal degree of importance (see Table 3).

Table 3

Peritextual expectations

Statistics

| | | |
|---|---------|-----|
| N | Valid | 105 |
| | Missing | 0 |

| | | Number of Reviews | Percentage |
|-------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------|
| Valid | Criticism, Introduction, Author's Preface | 71 | 66.4 |
| | Family Tree for Perplexing Foreign Story Character's Names | 18 | 16.8 |
| | Attractive, Accurate Title That reflects the Author's Intention | 7 | 6.5 |
| | Footnotes for the Description of Cultural Terms | 4 | 3.7 |
| | Numbered Pages | 1 | .9 |
| | Attractive Cover that is Compatible with the Content of the Book | 4 | 3.7 |
| | Writing the Name of the Translator and the Publisher On the Front Cover | 1 | .9 |
| | Readable Font | 1 | .9 |
| | Total | 107 | 100.0 |

Here are some of the reviews concerning the above categories.

1. *Regarding Jalal's translation, although sometimes the sentences need a bit of thought, inclusion of the translation of Sartre's criticism on the book helps a lot to*

understand it. This reason is enough for this translation to be considered the best translation (Fidibo, foreign translation by Jalal Al Ahmad)

The above review highlights the importance of 'literary criticism' which supposedly helps the reader to better comprehend the text.

2. If you want to read the book, first download a genealogy of the characters. Because you get extremely confused due to the repetition of names and their length (Taqcheh, One Hundred Years of Solitude, Mohammad Reza Sahabi)

The reader above, advises other readers to download an already drawn family tree of the story characters, because otherwise they might be perplexed by the similar and long foreign names. The family tree that most reviewers suggested makes it much easier for readers to distinguish the different characters. It does so through matching characters to their roles in the story and their kinship to each other.

Formatting Expectations

Regarding formatting expectations, which addresses the overall layout of the text, only two reviews mentioned such expectations. One review commented on the importance of numbering pages (%.9), and the other highlighted the significance of readable font (%0.9) (see Table 4).

Here is how one reviewer expressed his dissatisfaction with an electronic book whose pages were not numbered:

1. The first principle that should have been observed in the production and editing of such "electronic books", but was not observed, is the indisputable principle of page numbering in such a way that the reader who probably wants to take notes from the book does not say: "Wow!" This is the first and perhaps the most important drawback of this software...

As to the font, one reader expressed his satisfaction with a translated book that had a large readable font.

2. The only advantage was the type of pages and the large and readable font.

Table 4*Formatting expectations*

| | | Statistics | |
|-------|----------------|-------------------|------------|
| N | Valid | 2 | |
| | Missing | 0 | |
| | | Number of Reviews | Percentage |
| Valid | Numbered Pages | 1 | .9 |
| | Readable Font | 1 | .9 |

Characteristics of Good Literary Translators

With regard to the favorable features and skills of a good literary translator, nine categories emerged out of 27 reviews. The most valued feature is linguistic knowledge which encompasses knowledge of the SL, the TL, and special knowledge of linguistics (%37.0), followed by the ability to fully comprehend the ST meaning (%22.2), and writerly ability (%18.5), which concerns the translator's ability to correspondingly create aesthetical and a pleasing literary TT (like an author). Then comes creativity, extra-linguistic knowledge (cultural, social, historical knowledge), respect for the professional ethics, being meticulous in the choice of works for translation, mastering numerous words, and experience as a literary translator (each %3.7; see Table 4). Except the first three skills that suggest a preference for linguistic skills over other skills, the other six features had an exactly equal degree of importance as each was reviewed only once (see Table 5).

The comment below considers high command of both SL and the TL as vital capabilities of literary translators.

1. *One of the very good and valuable translations of this book, after the translation of Mohammad Ghazi (may his soul be at peace), is the translation of Ahmed Shamlou (may his soul be at peace). The importance of Shamlou's*

translation, in addition to being in line with the language developments in recent years and its novelty, is Shamlou's mastery of several European languages and his familiarity with linguistics. (Taqcheh, Shazdeh Kochulu, Ahmed Shamlou)

As to the artistic ability of the translator, literary translators are expected to translate with the aim of creating a literary work of art that can be easily distinguished from other text types through its aesthetic features. Consider the following review.

2.

ostoevsky is wonderful, especially with the art of Jalal Al Ahmad

Table 5

Good literary translators' features

Statistics
Good Literary Translator's
Features

| | | |
|---|---------|----|
| N | Valid | 27 |
| | Missing | 0 |

| | | Number of Reviews | Percentage |
|-------|-------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|------------|
| Valid | Linguistic Knowledge | 10 | 37.0 |
| | Writerly Ability | 5 | 18.5 |
| | Perfect Knowledge of the ST | 6 | 22.2 |
| | Creativity | 1 | 3.7 |
| | Extra-linguistic Knowledge | 1 | 3.7 |
| | Respect For Professional Ethics | 1 | 3.7 |
| | Meticulousness in the Choice of Books for Translation | 1 | 3.7 |
| | Experience as a Literary Translator | 1 | 3.7 |
| | Mastering numerous Words | 1 | 3.7 |
| | Total | 27 | 100.0 |

Discussion

As argued in the introduction, real readers have received a scarce scholarly attention in Translation Studies as compared to the textually embedded reader (i.e. implied reader). This fact was an inspiration for conducting the present research. Furthermore, given the fact that the results of readers' reception studies cannot be generalized to other parts of the world (Nord, 1991), the lessons learnt from the present study are highly valuable in their own context (Iran).

The tables above suggest that in each category, one or two features are predominant, while the rest had almost equal degree of importance. For instance, with regard to the translational features, except fluency which was reviewed by 118 readers, the other eight features were mentioned by a range of 9 to 29 readers. The differences between most of the categories are not staggering. However, given the large number of reviews collected, the fact that some features are more commonly reviewed than others potentially imply that they are more important to readers than other features. It is now clear that fluency which transcends other features in the degree of importance, is the first translational feature that comes to the attention of the Iranian readers. Taking 'fluency' and 'recency of translation' aside, the other seven features indicate an appreciation of the ST. The results of translational features indicate that translated literature must be viewed by the Persian reader as a text with a foreign character emerging from a setting which is different from readers' own cultural and social setting. Hence, readers must expect a reading experience which is different from the experience of reading literary books written by Persian authors.

On the other hand, with regard to language, the results indicate that comprehensibility, as the most valued textual feature, along with the preference for common native Persian words, correct TL grammar, consistent and cohesive TT (that has to conform to Persian language norms) all point to a translation that is as comprehensible and natural (for readers) as if written by a native Persian author. The remaining two textual features, namely correct spelling and punctuations and pleasing and aesthetical text can be interpreted

in the following manner. As some reviewers explicitly stated, the use of correct punctuations assisted them to better comprehend the text, while incorrect spelling and punctuations hampered their comprehension. So, this favorable feature is in agreement with the most valued textual feature, namely comprehensibility. Pleasing and aesthetical text, on the other hand, implicitly proposes a translation based on text type. This category implies that translated literature is judged by the same features that govern literature in general. Consequently, being aesthetical is still another feature of the translated literature. In fact, this conclusion is further supported by readers' demand for the correspondence of style, register, and tone, which are noticeable literary devices of the expressive text type. Hence, the practical implication is that it would be much better if translators made the notion of text type as a building block, leading them through the whole process of translation. That means that an expressive text (e.g. fiction, etc.) shall be translated in a manner that makes it conform to the genre of expressive texts.

Among the translational and textual expectations, two preferences were more notable. These were readers' preference for loyalty to the author's style and their preference for short sentences as opposed to long sentences. These two features do seem to be in conflict in some instances. As is mentioned in the definition of style above, the sentence structure and the type of sentences (whether long or short) might be a distinctive feature of a given author's writing style. That means that a given author might deliberately use long sentences for a special effect. This phenomenon is prominently evident in periodic sentences "in which the component parts, or members, are so composed that the close of its syntactic structure remains suspended until the end of the sentence; the effect tends to be formal or oratorical" (Abrams and Harpham, 2012, p. 385). This type is contrasted to the nonperiodic sentence which is "more relaxed and conversational in its effect—the component members are continuous, but so loosely joined that the sentence would have been syntactically complete if a period had been inserted at one or more places before the actual close" (Abrams and Harpham, 2012, p. 385). Hence, given the importance of preserving the authorial style, breaking a long periodic sentence

into smaller sentences (in order to fulfil readers' expectations with regard to the sentence type) might with strong possibility disrupt the author's style. The results obtained in the present study cannot further clarify readers' attitudes towards these two points, namely 'loyalty to the author's style' and 'long versus short sentences'. It might be a better idea to investigate readers' perceptions towards these features in future studies.

The results reached with regard to the peritextual and formatting expectations do suggest some interesting conclusions. Preference for the inclusion of literary criticism, author's preface, translator's introduction, a title that reflects the author's intention, a cover that is compatible with the book's content, and footnotes do imply Iranian reader's appreciation of the foreign and distinctive character as well as the foreign atmosphere of the work. However, a quite unexpected result with regard to the peritexts was readers' proposal to make available a family tree as a facilitative tool to deal with the complexity posed by foreign names which made it difficult for readers to keep track of the story.

As to the translator, the various categories extracted point to different skills expected to be possessed by literary translators. The mostly reviewed features, namely linguistic knowledge, writerly ability, and perfect comprehension of the ST, stress the importance of the translator's linguistic ability. Writerly ability also indicates that literary translators are partly assimilated to literary authors. Extra-linguistic knowledge is another qualification emphasized by reviewers. This refers to familiarity with the source culture, which according to the reviewers, helps readers better comprehend the ST meaning. The other qualification is being meticulous in the choice of books which makes it essential for literary translators to take their abilities into consideration and think twice before deciding on a given book. Experience on the other hand must be assumed by readers as a factor that enhances translators' linguistic as well as extra-linguistic abilities. However, it must be acknowledged that the results reached in this section (i.e. translator's skills) are not much representative because very few reviews in comparison to other features were found in the sites. Overall, only 27 reviews were found to

be addressing the translator's skills. This does not mean that Iranian readers did not pay attention to the translators. On the contrary, readers were fully aware and appreciative of the translators and the great service they offer to the community; they kept asking each other about the better translator. In fact, readers were more engaged in discussing textual, linguistic and translational features.

The present research shares some results with the previous few studies carried out in the area of reader's reception of literary translation. Campbell's study (2015) found perfect knowledge of source and target languages, experience as a translator or writer as three favorable features of literary translators in the UK. These three features were also favored by Iranian readers in the present study. Both studies also verified the importance of maintaining culture-specific items and the need to get absorbed in the book. The latter feature which is termed immersion in this study, was also considered a highly significant feature by Iranian ordinary readers in the study recently conducted by Khoshsaligheh et al. (2020). In fact, in the said study, immersion appears the second most favored quality, after faithfulness.

Comprehensibility, footnotes, as well as an introduction that explained the background to the novel, and fidelity to the original work, which were among the favorable features in the present research, had been previously confirmed as highly significant preferences by Chinese readers of translated fiction (Chan, 2010). As to the translator's skills, the mentioned study highlighted interlingual aptitude and intercultural knowledge as two vital skills to be possessed by literary translators. These results again were consistent with the way Iranian readers conceived of literary translators.

The present study shares the most with Bijani's et al. (2014), which elicited Iranian undergraduate readers' expectations toward literary translation. The two studies confirmed the following eight categories as features of a favorably received translation of foreign fiction among Persian readers. The categories are facilitating readers' imagination of the story (i.e. immersion), conveying the real sense, loyalty to the author's writing style, consistent TT language according to TL norms, clear and comprehensible TT,

Correspondence of TT & ST functions, accurate TL grammar, and the preservation of the ST cultural items.

In addition to the above-mentioned studies, this study had much in common with the results reached by Venuti (1998), “that most English-language reviews prefer fluent translations written in modern, general, standard English that is natural and idiomatic” (18-20). Persian readers likewise favored a fluent translation that is written in modern and standard Persian. Moreover, by appreciating features like correct TL grammar and consistent TT according to TL norms, they in fact emphasized the significance of a natural TT, which is free from linguistic peculiarities. Furthermore, English-language reviewers’ inclination towards idiomatic translation is closely similar to the Persian readers’ preference for aesthetical and pleasing texts.

Conclusion

The results of the present study can come to the aid of translators in their attempt to provide a successful translation. Now, it is clear that in order to be effective, translators must consider the following important points. First of all, they must make sure that their translation is fluent, comprehensible and conforms to today’s language, which is partly realized through the use of common well-established words and expressions. Correspondingly, the grammar of the TT should be based on the Persian language syntax. In other words, while translators must make sure that the ST meaning is transmitted accurately and faithfully, they do not have to abide by the ST grammatical structures because languages are not usually identical in their syntax. Languages sometimes express the same meaning using dissimilar syntactic structures. Furthermore, carrying out structures from an SL into a TL will likely result in transference, that is, odd sentences which in turn hampers readers’ comprehensibility of the text. Literary translators should pay attention to three components of the ST, namely style, tone, and register. These three need to be accurately and identically reflected in the TT. In fact, bearing in mind that the texts we are dealing with are literary texts, loyalty to stylistic elements becomes more crucial here. Correspondingly, translators must attempt to

preserve cultural concepts and terms and avoid domesticating them in the TL, so as to convey the true sense of the novel/story.

From a textual perspective, translators should use punctuation marks correctly, and revise the translation after it is done. Of course, the revision stage could be performed by a reviser. Equally important is correct spelling.

Translators should also build up a writerly ability so as to be able to create a literary work of art through translation. This is not to be mistaken with terms like 'transcreation', or 'rewriting literature'. Quite the reverse, translators are not at all recommended to domesticate the foreign work. Moreover, literary translators are expected to create pleasing and aesthetical text, two prominent features of literary works in general.

As to the peritext, translators are highly recommended to write a literary criticism, or provide readers with criticism from an external source. Likewise, they can make available in the introduction a concise biography of the ST author and give a short description of his previous works. In line with this requirement, translators might use footnoting as a tool for defining and describing unfamiliar concepts.

Regarding the translation of titles, translators must make sure to transmit the same meaning intended by the ST title. This issue is also true for the design of the book cover. That is, care must be taken to make sure that pictures on the TT book cover are true representations of the content of the book. However, issues relating to book design are usually the job of the publishing house. Yet, translators can consult publishers in this regard. Ultimately, attempts must be made to follow the 'faithfulness' principle even in the design of the book cover.

Lastly, literary translators should broaden the scope of their linguistic as well as extra-linguistic knowledge. Equally important is translators' endeavor to know their readers well. The ultimate end must be the fulfilment of readers' expectations.

The present research used a distinctive tool (i.e. reviews) to investigate the attitudes of Iranian readers of translated fiction. Readers were researched as an interpretive community with a focus on their commonalities rather than

differences. However, studies differentiating between different types of readers (e.g. the professional reader, the ordinary reader, etc.) might provide interesting results, illuminating the differences in the outlook of these readers towards literary translation and translators. Furthermore, prospective researchers might use other empirical tools (e.g. interviews, questionnaires, etc.) to conduct similar studies. However, it shall be noted that it is a common presupposition in studies of reader's reception that attitudes of people towards translation might change within time and under specific conditions (Nord, 1991). Hence, researchers in the future might conduct further studies to test the authenticity of the 'time' factor. Moreover, researchers might study the conditions (e.g. cultural, social, educational, etc.) that lead readers to develop a particular conception of translation. Equally important is researching readers' attitudes and expectations towards the translation of other text types (e.g. informative texts, appellative texts).

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