



# Ideological Manipulations: The Persian Translation of *The Gadfly*

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## Abstract

This paper discusses the lexical choices made by the translator of a novel. The novel, *The Gadfly*, has a political significance for the pre-revolutionary Iran. Lexical choices were discussed in light of the methodology provided by Leuven-Zwart who introduces three taxonomies of modulation, modification and mutation for translation shifts. This is supplemented with Venuti's metonymic intertextuality in which the translation text is linked to the dominant discourses of time. The research revealed that the translator has made a novel more political by opting for more ideological lexical items in Persian.

**Keywords:** shifts, metonymic intertextuality, *The Gadfly*, manipulation.

## 1. Introduction

Manipulation in translation is an inevitable operation which has come to light in the recent decades with polysystem theory. Systemist scholars like Bassnett and Lefevere (1990) have a very clear emphasis on the fact that translation entails some sort of transformation for the interest of the dominant poetics, ideology and discourse. This kind of approach to translation is the one that goes beyond the mere translatability-untranslatability dichotomy and enters the realm of cross-cultural interaction. According to what a scholar points about translations "[a]s the selection of works to be translated in itself reflects not only the value judgment and personal preference of the translators and the publishers but also the general taste and interest of the reading public at the time" (Yip, 1997: 199).

This paper discusses the Persian translation of a famous novel called *The Gadfly*: it is a well-known novel for its revolutionary content published by an institute (Amir-Kabir) that invested in publishing works in relation with political activism and the ongoing debates on the issues which were important for the anti-establishment intellectuals. It seems the main reason of its being popular among the Iranians before the Islamic revolution was the fact that the novel described a commitment to a revolutionary and emancipatory theme. The analysis of some lexical items in this novel will be carried out as follows.

## 2. Method

The domesticating strategy, which Venuti enlarges on, conditions translations in relation to the dominant poetics and ideology of the translating culture, making it a part of the translating culture (Venuti, 1998: 28). The strategy manifests itself in the personal-ideological interventions and mistranslations of the translator in the translation process (Crissafuli, 2002). Logically, these personal-ideological interventions are a part of the shifts that Leuven-Zwart calls "optional lexical shifts". The reason behind drawing on Leuven-Zwart's methodology is that in order to intervene ideologically and personally in translation, the translator has to make some shifts in an optional fashion. In other words, there is a possibility of choice open for the translator.

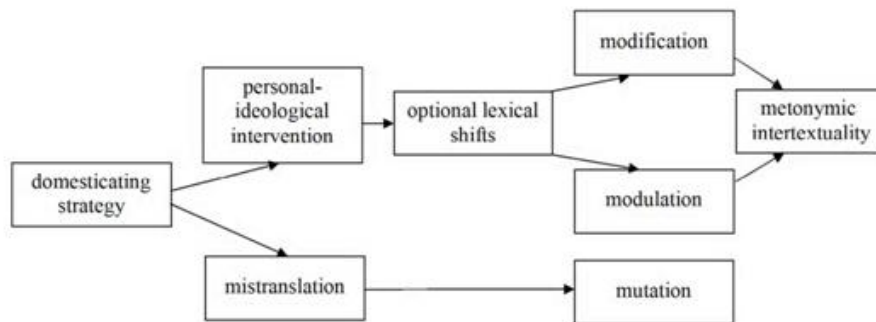
Leuven-Zwart's comparative method distinguishes between modulation, modification and mutation. She defines an architranseme (ATR), a semantic core, and then two transemes, one for the original item and the other for the translation. Transemes express "common denominator(s) in relation between specific textual units of the source and target texts" (Bakker et al, 2001: 230). Architranseme is the core semantic core shared by the transemes as in the case of "country" and "وطن" which are the source and target transemes. One can note here that the architranseme is "a nation or state with its land and people" but there is a divergence in the connotational meaning the transemes bear. The taxonomy can be defined as follows:

1. Modification: "a source *and* target transeme show one or more aspects of disjunction with the ATR; a relation of contrast between transemes",
2. Modulation: "a source *or* target transeme shows one or more aspects of disjunction with the ATR; a relation of hyponymy between transemes",
3. Mutation: "there is no aspect of conjunction" (231).

While (1) and (2) concern personal-ideological intervention, (3) relates to mistranslations where due to the translator's misreading of the ST we cannot establish any architranseme because in a mistranslation one cannot see any sort of logical semantic link. In modification and modulation there is a slight divergence from the architranseme but in mutation there a full divergence between the transemes. As a consequence of these shifts another intertextuality that Venuti (2007: 32) calls metonymic is established in the target text that comments selectively on the discourses of the translating culture. This kind of intertextuality "might focus on recreating specific parts of the foreign text which acquire significance and value in relation to literary trends and traditions in the translating culture" (ibid). The release of this intertextuality signifies other connotations that are meaningful in the context of the dominant ideologies and discourses. Although all translations opt for domesticating in a general sense because they set the foreign texts in the context of the translating language and culture, such intertextuality aims for the discourses that are dominant and historically meaningful for this culture.

This research puts together these methodologies. The following figure shows the relation between the concepts and the intervention process by the translator.

Figure 1.0 The processes of intervention by the translator



When a shift is detected in the translated text on the basis mentioned above, it is explained in terms of the possible meanings it can bear for the translator and for the context in which he/she is translating. The translators' lexical choices are mapped on to the original items. The corresponding lexical items of the ST and TT are compared. Afterwards, the transemes and architranseme are extracted and compared to each other. When the type of shift is specified, it is set against the metonymic intertextuality, and the meanings that the choice had for the translating context are explained. Contextualizing the lexical choice in the target culture shows how the translator has appropriated the target discourses in his translation, through the intertextual links, to produce a translation that is personally and ideologically intervened by the translator.

### 3. The text: The Gadfly

This book by Voynich is the story of a resurrection against tyranny and occupation. In general it tells the story of a resistance and upcoming revolution. The story is set in Italy occupied by Austrians. The central character of the novel is a seminary student, Arthur, who has some revolutionary activities in Italy, although he himself is of a British origin. These revolutionary activities have a religious element intermixed with it. He has a very intimate relation with a teacher in the seminary, Father Montanelli, whom he does not know is his real father.

After finding out who his father is, disappointed and disillusioned, he disappears for a long time. Years later, when political activists are in need of a satirist, they come up with a person called Gadfly who lends his name to the novel. This lame man, who turns out to be Arthur, has very strong anti-religious sentiments and a very egregious tongue, particularly toward religion and, particularly, Father Montanelli. After being involved in an armed struggle, Gadfly is arrested and imprisoned. He fails to flee the prison and, finally, he gets killed.

Table 1. Instances of ideological manipulation in Homayoonpour's translation of *The Gadfly*

English	Persian
Get up (28)	بپاخیزند (31)
Living the republic (28)	لزوم انطباق زندگی با آرمان جمهوری (30)
Sacrifice (38)	جانبازی (39)
Comrade (38)	رفقا (39)
Fashionable (44)	متجدد (44)
Revolt (48)	قیام (47)

Government (79)	حکومت (79)
Labourer (82)	زحمتکش (77)
Civil and religious liberty (84)	تمدن و آزادی مذهب (79)
Conspirator (95)	مبارز (90)
Mischief (243)	عصیان (215)

#### 4. Analysis

1. "It's not patience that's wanted – it's for somebody to get up and defend themselves" is the sentence in which the phrase "get up" occurs. "پیاخیزند" as an equivalent for the phrase is very telling in terms of the translator's personal outlook. While he could resort to a less extreme translation, he chooses to employ a revolutionary discourse in which "پیاخاستن" has a very revolutionary connotation. This is a case of modulation whereby a hyponymy is established between the source and target transemes. The intertextuality of the target transeme, however, signifies a different connotational meaning for the term.

2. One of the things the political activists in the novel are after is building a republic. "Need of living the Republic, not dreaming of it" is uttered by Arthur in a conversation with Gemma, another activist, in response to her question about Father Montanelli's lecture. When "living" is set against "dreaming", there is a sign of realist against imaginative approach to the political matters. The translator misreads the passage by translating "living" to "زندگی", while what is meant in the source text is the fact that the opposition group must take a pragmatist approach to the whole thing. Furthermore, Homayoonpour adds "آرمان" which is absent in the text. This case of ideological manipulation by the translator shows how the translator thinks high of the emancipatory practices in the novel and in the translating culture by extension. This is a case of modification because no relationship can be established between the two transemes.

3. "Sacrifice", commonly translated as "فداکاری", is rendered here as "جانبازی". This is out of a conversation between Arthur and Father Cardi, a priest given to the emancipatory reading of Christianity and religion in general. In the passage he says: "If you have found the way of sacrifice, the way that leads to peace". Given the context of translation, the translator tries to assert this view that peace and freedom do entail something beyond mere "فداکاری"; one needs to lose his life for achieving a transcendental end. The two transemes share a semantic core, namely, giving up something in the hope of achieving something more important yet the translation choice is linked to a different discourse in Persian culture; it seems "جانبازی" may be in relation with some sort of political activity that the guerillas may cherish most. Thus, modulation is the translation shift that takes place here.

4. "Comrade" is one of the most interesting cases of ideological intervention in the translation practices of the episode. It seems that the dominant Leftist, Soviet-inspired discourse translates into word choices that are extremely obvious for ideological intervention. Homayounpour translates "comrade" to "رفیق" in an effort to link the story to the translating culture. Again, there is a case of modulation in which the two transemes share some aspects. "Comrade" and "رفیق" both connote a Marxist-Leninist approach yet the translator's opting for this choice instead of the neutral "دوست" is significant in itself.

5. In the context of modernity that the intelligentsia wanted to propagate and advocate in their writings, a woman who is "fashionable" is translated as a "متجدد". This latter word is a translation of the term "modern" or "modernist" at the time of translation. The translator intervenes in the source text and inculcates this view that a "fashionable" person can be "modern". The context inspires and supports such a view particularly when attributed to a revolutionary woman who wants both radical change and modernity at the same time. The architranseme, being new and in step with new developments, can be observed in both transemes but the target transeme possesses the connotations referred to above. This case of modulation establishes a metonymic intertextuality with the modernity discourse at the time.

6. "Revolt" is rendered into "قیام" which has a positive connotation. Both of the transemes include a movement of the people against the status quo. The source transeme, however, is more general than the target transeme. That is why a hyponymy is established between the two but with a different connotation for the latter. In terms of intertextuality, it seems the translator tries to link the passage to the struggles against the Pahlavi regime by the guerrillas or the ordinary people.

7. "Government", as the ruling system of a country, has a direct equivalent in Persian, "دولت" but the translator chooses to use "حکومت" instead. The latter term signifies a system of ruling in which there is some sort of force for the law to be enforced. *Dehkhoda Encyclopedic Dictionary* mentions "فرمانروایی" as a meaning of the term. Given the situation in the novel, the translator thinks there is "حکومت" rather than "دولت" in the modern sense of the term. As a result, the translator criticizes the current politics, and does criticize implicitly the Pahlavi regime for which "دولت" with its advanced and progressive apparatuses is not an appropriate term. Instead, one can apply "حکومت" to the Pahlavi ruling system in which there is, more or less, a sort of backdated approach to politics and running country. As is clear here, a modulation takes place in which we can see a relationship of hyponymy; one can say "دولت" and "حکومت" belong to the same semantic area where one includes the other. Yet, the connotation attached to the latter links the Persian text to the critical discourse on the Pahlavi regime. In this case again one can detect the resort to traditional discourse for the more modern and progressive "دولت" is not opted for.

8. “Laborer” in the clause “you’ll expect every poor artisan and laborer to find out the meaning” is translated as “زحمتکش” which leads to a modification with the resulting change in connotation. When put in the intertextual network of the episode we can see this choice is ideologically significant again: the translator could have chosen “کارگر” with its neutral overtones but, at the time which the Left appreciates the working class calling them “زنجیر” or “زحمتکش”, it seems the metonymic intertextuality works well with the translation.

9. “Conspirator” used to describe Gemma, a political activist, in the following sentence, “But she was far too practiced a conspirator to let them monopolize her”, refers to the fact that she is too experienced an activist to be set up by the others. It seems Voynich uses the term in a rather teasing way to imply that Gemma is herself aware of manipulations directed at her. The translator, rather sanguinely, translates the term to “مبارز”. Comparing the transeme with the architranseme which has a negative connotation, one can reach the conclusion that the translator has opted for modulation strategy in which the target transeme has a very different connotation yet with a same semantic core. It seems the translator appreciates the character to an extent that employing the term “خیانتکار” or “شریک فتنه” is for him out of the question. Set in the wider context of history and episode, the translation term refers sympathetically to the fact that Gemma is a benevolent political activist.

10. “Mischievous” in the clause “Gadfly, an animated quintessence of the spirit of mischief” is translated as “عصیان”. This is a case of modulation that shows how the translator intervenes ideologically in the text. While both of the transems share the same core semantic more or less, the target transeme has some other positive connotations attached to it in the context it is mentioned. Gadfly is described as “روح عصیان” rather than “روح شرارت” which has dominantly negative connotations. The former, in the condition that concepts like “قیام” are used, seems more appropriate than other choices, what a revolutionary probably needs most.

## 5. Discussion

As the cases of translation shifts demonstrate in this specific translation practice, the translator mediates maximally in the translation practice, which manifests in the theme he chooses and develops into the translation discourse he employs accordingly. Needless to say, translators historicize the text in the target culture and commit domestication to a great extent but one needs to see specific cases of this historicization process in the intertextual relations and particularly metonymic intertextuality. The latter chooses to comment implicitly and of course selectively on the dominant discourse. Homayunpour draws on the most prominent discourse of political activity in the era, employing terms like “بیخاستن”, “جانباری”, “رفقا”, and “قیام”. This discourse gives a political air to the whole work by creating shifts that refer to the personal-ideological interventions on the part of the translator.

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