

# Identity and Translation

Theories and Perspectives

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# Abstract

The issue of identity has been addressed by different scholars of Translation Studies in the last few decades. Nevertheless, it entails much more attention in order to localize it across other non-Anglo-American scientific committees. This current presentation, after reviewing some major trends of studies in this regard, introduced the narrative approach to identity and identification in translation theory and practice, which embeds translation and its functions (i.e., controlling readers' behaviors, socializing them, and forming their identity) in the socio-historical context. This approach was originally proposed in Baker's well-known book *Translation and Conflict* (2006). Finally, Baker's theoretical model was justified for investigating the narrative construction of identity in the Persian translation of English narrative genre.

# Here, we read ...

What is Identity?

Gender Identity and Translation

National Identity and Translation

Religious Identity and Translation

Narrative Constitution of Identity in Translation

# What is Identity?

Constructionist theories are against the unchangeability of identity favored by essentialists; instead, they embed identity formation in the social context, and present it as the outcome of interactional social process. Via this dialogical interaction – or giving and taking knowledge- which is committed by subjects, their knowledge of their own (and other`s) identity are affected by/ and affect their actions. Therefore, the most appropriate definition for identity in the current study is Hall`s definition:

I use ‘identity’ to refer to the meeting point, the point of suture, between, on the one hand, the discourses and practices which attempt to ‘interpellate, ’ speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourses, and on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subject which can be spoken. Identities are thus points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us. (2000, p. 19)

# Gender and Translation

The issue of gender identity is not limited to the issue of sexuality a matter which is generally inspected in the domain of psychology. According to Simon, “gender is an element of identity and experience which, like other cultural identities, takes form through social consciousness” (1996, p. 5).

Likewise, according to Butler, “Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a rigid regulatory frame which congeals over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural kind of being” (Butler, 1990, p. 33).

Many studies were conducted in the domain of gender identity and translation (e.g., Arrojo 1994, 1995; Chamberlain, 1988; Von Flotow, 1991, 2001, 2007; Simon, 1996; Von Flotow and Farahzad, 2016). As Chamberlain puts it, this area is myriad, and varying according to the type of text being translated, the language involved, cultural practices and countless other factors (1988, p. 96).

Von Flotow (2001) mentions a series of research areas in the domain of gender in translation as follows:

Historical studies (who translated what when and how, and how did gender play into this?);

Theoretical considerations (how do different gender affiliations, definitions, constructions play themselves out in translation and translation research?);

Issues of identity (how does gendered identity or a lack of it affect translation, and translation research?); and

Post-colonial questions (is Anglo-American "gender" applied in other cultures and their texts? is it translated into other languages? and what does it mean if it does not?).

Other Instances

National Identity and Translation

Religious identity and Translation

## Narrative Constitution of Identity in Translation

Somers (1994) embeds the core concept of identity in the destabilizing dimensions of time, space, and relationality. The concept of identity is contextualized, and its interpretation is historicized. She has combined studies of identity with conceptual narrativity. To Somers, the concept of narrative is conditionally propositional, and context-driven. Its aim is not just to represent identities but it mainly functions to construct identity in the new receiving context. In Somers' word,

Philosophers of history had argued that narrative modes of representing knowledge (telling historical stories) were representational forms imposed by historians on the chaos of lived experience. Recently, however, scholars are postulating something much more substantive about narrative: namely, that social life is itself storied and that narrative is an ontological condition of social life. (1994, p. 614)

Therefore , identity is formed via narrativity (Somers, 1994).

Baker (2006) took this for granted and drew a link between Social Narrative Theory (Somers, 1994) and Translation Studies, claiming that social realities, as well as identities of narrated subjects, are differently formed in translation.

# What is more .....

What has been mentioned until now, and a little more, constituted the conceptual basis of a study on the translational construction of Identity in the Persian translations of English narrative genre.