The Baker`s Narrative Account: A Pathway to Study Translational Construction of Social Identity[1]

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Abstract

Narrative theory has brought new changes in viewing the formation and representation of foreign reality in translation. The current paper describes this importance, while explaining Mona Baker`s narrative account (2006), and comparing the narrative approach with other well-known approaches in Translation studies. The main purpose of this study is to introduce narrative theory as a basis for the model analyzing the representation of social identity in translation.

Keywords: Translation studies, narrative theory, narrative analytic model, identity

I. Introduction

The issue of identity construction in translation has been discussed by different scholars through the last decades (e.g., Gender identity in translation: Godard, 1984. Chamberlian, 1998. Von Flotow, 1991, 1997, 2001. Simon, 1996; National identity in translation: Lefevere, 1977. Venuti, 2005; and Religious identity in translation: Schulte, 2015. Ulrike Sill 2015). These identity oriented studies approached identity from the constructivist perspective, rather than essentialist one, claiming that identity is a constructive phenomenon that is developed due to interactions between the subjects and

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the contextual factors. These studies confirmed this fact that identity reconstruction and representation via translation is an approached in Translation studies.

This approachability is resulted from the interdisciplinary nature of Translation studies that is generally rooted in Cultural turn (Bassnett and Lefevere, 1990). Cultural turn prioritizes cultural issues over textual ones, and representing sociocultural reality over linguistic endeavor of equivalent making. Mona Baker`s narrative account (2006) is one of those cultural based endeavors that integrates Social science and Translation studies. She views translation as a kind of re-narration in which the original narrative is reframed by the translator (or narrator) in order to reconstruct the SL reality differently in TL. This reconstruction is totally context bound, and it depends on the TL sociopolitical system and ideology. She adopts a narrative analysis model to examine source texts and their translation in order to realize how reality is redefined and reconfigured in both source and target lingua-cultural contexts.

Baker views narrative from social and communication theory, treating narratives across all genres and modes rather than from narratology andlinguistics that purely focus on one text. As she puts it, "Narratives in this view are public and personal 'stories' that we subscribe to and that guide our behavior. Therefore, narratives have directly to do with personal performance, and identification. Narratives are the stories we tell ourselves, not just those we explicitly tell other people, about the world(s) in which we live. The terms 'narrative' and 'story' are interchangeable in this context" (2006, p.19).

Also, instead of studying narratives` structure, Baker`s narrative account focuses mainly on narratives` function in constructing and representing of social identity. In Bennett and Edelman`s words, "narrative shapes people's views of rationality, of objectivity, of morality, and of their conceptions of themselves and others" (1985, p.159). Baker conducts narrative analysis in order to discover how reality (and social identity as part) of source language is constructed in target language. According to Lieblich (1998), narrative analysis has three functions: (a) to investigate research questions (functional analysis of narratives); (b) to investigate narratives themselves as research objects (componential analysis of narratives); and (c) to investigate the philosophy and methodology of qualitative research. Survey on the representation of identity in translation, from narrative analysis perspective, is a functional analysis of narrative texts.

In this paper, after introduction to Baker`s narrative theory of translation, and its application for study the formation and representation of translated narrative identity, a case study (i.e., a doctoral dissertation) will be briefly presented that has taken Baker`s theory as its theoretical framework. It analyzes narratives in English novels and in their Persian translations that are produced in pre and post Islamic Revolution of Iran (IRI) in

order to realize how narrative identities are constructed therein, and how the sociopolitical system of each era has affected this reconstruction. In fact, the selected novels are not analyzed in order to see how they are organized; instead, the stories and their translations are investigated to see how characters` (gender, national, or religious) identities are constructed and represented in two Persian translations of the same novels in two different sociopolitical eras.

Accordingly, this research is not concerned with the issues of the textual organization of narratives as what is done in narratology. Yet, the study`s stress on the sociopolitical aspect of narrative theory doesn't necessarily mean to ignore the linguistic aspect of narratives because these two aspects complete each other, and they are interrelated. Also, the social aspect of narratives will not be examined unless their structures are analyzed. Of course, the narrative analyses in the linguistic and social approaches are not the same. In fact, the difference between narratology (or linguistic approach to narrative) and social narrative theory is that in the former case narrative structures are analyzed as the object of study, while in latter approach narratives are examined (although linguistically) in order to show how identity as part of reality is constructed and represented via them.

Furthermore, the concept of "identity" in literature of different nations is one of the most interesting subjects of interdisciplinary studies. Translation studies, as an interdisciplinary study, heads in discovering more about this issue in cross cultural communication. Baker`s approach is one of the latest pertinent works, and it is considered as the most applicable for addressing identity formation in translating narratives, according to which translator as a cross cultural narrator constructs the identities of original narrative`s characters in different ways in TL.

II. A Review of Transaction Approaches

A few decades ago, Translation Studies has been introduced as an independent field of study by the James Holmes in his seminal paper "*The Name and Nature of Translation Studies*" (1988b). TS is an inclusive domain that includes any research that has to do with translation (ibid). Likewise, Mona Baker views Translation Studies as

"the academic discipline concerned with the study of translation at large, including literary and non-literary translation, various forms of oral interpreting, as well as dubbing and subtitling. [It is] also understood to cover the whole spectrum of research and pedagogical activities, from developing theoretical frameworks to conducting individual

case studies to engaging in practical matters such as training translators and developing criteria for translation assessment." (1998, p.277)

Although at its beginning TS was approached from the linguistic perspective (e.g., Jacobson, 1959; Vinay and Darbelnet, 1959; Nida, 1964; Catford, 1965; etc.), its implication and application were extended to "theoretical frameworks and methodologies borrowed from other disciplines, including psychology, communication theory, literary theory, anthropology, philosophy, and more recently, cultural studies" (ibid, p.279).

Baker`s own approach to translation is globally recognized as "Narrative approach" (Baker, 2006). Translation is seen as *"re-narration"* in which source narrative (in different text types like scientific, historic, anthropologic, technical, literary, etc.) is reframed in another language and culture. Contemplating in the domain of social science, translation is considered as different version of an original narrative that holds different sets of values and orientations due to the socio-cultural setting in which it is produced. As each sociopolitical system follows different set of values, their promoted versions of narratives are intentionally composed. Peculiarity of narratives to their own sociocultural context entails translators to pay special attention to the sociopolitical factors affecting the production and interpretation of narratives in the target language.

Narrative approach is juxtaposed to the older ones in Julian House`s list of approaches (2016) including

- Linguistic and textual approaches

- (Neo)hermeneutic approach

- Descriptive translation studies (DTS)

- Functionalist, and action-and reception theory related approaches

- Discourse, pragmatic, and functional approaches

- Postmodern, postcolonial, feminist, and deconstructive views

- Narrative approach

In the following paragraphs, some common aspects (including meaning making and taking of previous approaches and narrative one are briefly accounted. In both linguistic and narrative approaches, the original relationship between ST and its embedding context is replaced with the relationship of TT and its specific context. According to Catford (1965), this replacement leads to the replacement of original

meaning with that of TT. Also, House affirms that meaning is "inextricably enmeshed in the context of use of a linguistic unit" and meaning replacement is "only through relating linguistic items to their context of situation" (House, 2016: 17). In narrative theory, similarly, meaning making in translation and constructing reality therein are only possible through configuration of narratives features that are fundamentally based upon the target sociocultural context.

The context bound meaning making process in narrative approach is accompanied with the interpretive affair of receivers who resort to the target narratives (personal, public, etc.). Here, translator is accounted as a narrator who composes a different narrative in TL. In this regard, he doesn't transfer the original meaning into translation; instead, he selectively appropriates the significant meanings and aspects of reality that are in consonance with transcendent values of the target culture and its own narratives. As it shown, translators play a major role in both parts (i.e., making meaning, and interpreting meaning). This importance guides us to this fact that translator is a reader when he comprehends the ST meaning, and he is a writer when he composes TT (House, 2016). This issue is emphasized in both hermeneutic and narrative approaches in different terms.

Regarding its similarity to Skopos theory (Vermere, 1989- 2004) and DTS (Toury, 1995), narrative approach provokes accentuation, deletion, addition, or modulation of original meaning in TT as the former approaches tone down the importance of ST and dethrone it since, in Vermeer`s words, it is an offer of information that can be accepted, rejected, or changed depending on the purpose of translation in TL. In Skopos theory, the term Skopos refers to the specific purpose of translation according to which it is produced independent of the ST as their purposes differ from each other. In narrative approach, likewise, the term goal refers to the exclusive purpose of translation in the target culture, that is not necessarily similar to the goal of original narrative. According to this goal, the original narrative is differently reframed in TT, and meaning is formed.

At the same time, narrative approach strongly supports the idea that ideology and values determine the structure and content of –translated- narrative text. Comparatively, discursive and functional approaches simultaneously look at both communication of meaning and the socially constructed power relations. In both approaches, texts are judged within their own sociopolitical context, and in accordance with the values and good reasons to which texts adhere.

Yet, it shouldn't be dismissed that in narrative approach the narrative-based formation of reality in TT and its impact on target readers are strongly emphasized, while in CDA the discourse and its ideological impact on the textual composition of translation are mainly stressed. Moreover, the notion of narrative in Baker`s term is different from

discourse. Baker claims that narrative as a concept is "much more concrete and accessible compared to the abstract notion of discourse as a vehicle for social and political processes" (2006, p.3).

Finally, translation as a reparation involves more than lingo-textual replacement. It is "embedded in the cultural and political systems and in history" (Bassnett and Trivedi, 1999, p.6). Basic tenets of cultural turn theories could be tracked in the narrative approach as they are briefly elaborated:

- Narrative theory of translation, like rewriting theory (Lefever, 1992b), counts the contextual factors including power, ideology, and institution affecting rewriting (or re-narrating) of the foreign literature in the target system;

- Similar to nationalist and feminist translation theories, narrative theory addresses the issue of identity construction via translation, and how translators` voiced in the TT.

- More critically, like postcolonial theories of translation, narrative theory concerns intercultural power imbalance, and introduces translation as a way of resistance against the dominant cultures` hegemony through configuring foreign narratives in TL so that they reflect the local values and reasonings of dominated nations (Palestine vs. Israel, in Baker, 2006).

- Narrative theory of translation can be interpreted in deconstruction`s terms. One of the Derrida`s critical concepts is "*differance*" (Davis, 2001). This concept has some implications for translation. Accordingly, translated narrative is both deferred and different from the original narrative. Moreover, as ST and TT are not anymore placed in the original- second handed binary, and as there is no original work, no original narrative is taken for granted in either SL or TL. In other words, even the source narratives are not regarded as original, but as translation of other narratives.

III. Narrative Identity

Identity is viewed from the constructionist perspective, rather than essentialist one. It is claimed that real or fictional identities of subjects are constructed via-recounting- the interactions between them and other contextual factors. Tajfel, from the social perspective, refers to identity as "the individual's knowledge that he belongs to a certain social group together with some emotional and value significance to him of this group membership" (1972, p. 292). Also, according to Rubin (2012), prototypical identity is manifested in the social groups` prototypicality that denotes the degree to which a social

group (e.g., females, theists, patriots, etc.) is perceived to be representative of a superordinate category of, for example, nation, gender, or religion. In fact, individuals` socially positive reinforced, repeated, and recounted behaviors help individuals to be considered as members of a certain social group (Walsh and White, 2012).

Likewise, according to Butler`s "Performativity" (1990), gender attains a naturalized state through its repeated performance.

"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).

Hence, it is through repetitive and imitative performance that gender identity is formed within social context.

More importantly, identity prototypes (here, gender prototypes), as part of reality, are determined and supported by the ruling system. To represent its favorite identity prototypes to the public, the ruling system supports and exhibits the repetition and representation of favorite behaviors and performances of social groups in media, literature, and publishing industry. Such a representation is context bound, and it is subjected to the power organization in the society (Hall, 1997; Blommaert, 2005). Literature is one of the effective domains for representing prototypical gender identity to the public.

In a narrower sense, John E. Joseph (2004), in his own book "*Language and Identity*", stresses that any identity in a novel implies a group identity of that kind.

"What is particularly interesting about the identity of the successful literary character is that it embodies a group identity– the modern woman, the person trapped within social constraint, the human race generally – in the form of a plausible individual" (p. 5).

Also, he claims that there is no difference in the process of identity formation for real people and for fictional characters. In such texts as biographies and historiographies, it is not easy to realize whether that identity is real or fictional.

In the same way, Parker (2004) puts identity development in the frame of narrativity. In stories, characters are described, a series of actions are held together by a plot, and they are arranged in a sort of temporal order (Schwandt, 2001). Relying on narratives, Parker scrutinizes narrative identities. She believes that narrative approach to identity is a part of social constructionist approaches. As she emphasizes, "narrative

identity is a perspective on identity that suggests that our identities exist through and because of narrative" (2004, p. 43).

IV. Narrative Theory of Translation

Baker (2006), relying on Bruner (1991) and Somers (1994), classifies narratives into ontological, public, conceptual and meta-narratives. Ontological narratives are personal stories that people tell about themselves (like anecdotes and autobiographies); public (or collective) narratives (e.g., novels, short stories, movies, documentaries, columns of newspapers, etc.) are socially composed and told stories that are sanctioned by the social institutes, and are promoted by the state`s social media. Conceptual narratives refer to the scientific and technical concepts and descriptions that inform people of the evolutional path of different sciences and arts (e.g., science fictions, different scientific theories, etc.); and meta narratives are those widespread stories that affect people`s consciousness, judgment, and knowledge about the surrounding issues and events (e.g., human rights, third world, terrorism, etc.)

Borrowing from Somers (1994), Baker discusses four features of narrativity that are traceable in all instances of narrative:

- *Temporality*: elements of a narrative are always placed in some sequence (not necessarily chronological) that carries certain meaning. "The set of events, relationships and protagonists that constitute any narrative has to be embedded in a sequential context and in a specific temporal and spatial configuration that renders them intelligible" (Baker, 2006, p. 51).

- *Relationality*: it emphasizes the connectedness between the constructing elements of narrative. The viability and coherence of the whole narrative depends on how narrative parts are meshed together (Bruner, 1991, p. 8).

- *Causal emplotment*: it alludes the purposeful locating of events and characters in the story. Events and characters are listed according to the cause and effect relations they hold in relation to other events and characters. Emplotted events "take on narrative meaning" as they are "understood from the perspective of their contribution and influence on a specified outcome" (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 5).

- *Selective appropriation*: a narrative, in order to represent what it intends, needs to exclude some events and to privilege others. Events, characters` actions, speeches, and

attributions are selectively appropriated, due to whether they are valuable, and whether that version of narrative supports the social values or not (Baker, 2006, p. 72).

When a new version (or translation) of a narrative is composed, some of the narrative features of the original text may intentionally be configured in a different way in order that the included reality (or some part of it) to be reconstructed and represented in another way. In Baker`s terms, the configuration of narrative features in a version of a narrative is called framing. She counts strategies of framing narratives- that may happen in translating narratives- as follows:

- *Temporal and spatial framing*: changing the original temporal and spatial order in the target text;

- *Framing through selective appropriation*: changing the "patterns of omission and addition" to "suppress, accentuate, or elaborate particular aspects of a narrative encoded in the source text" (ibid, p.114);

- *Framing by labeling*: the intentional application of different labels, nouns, pronouns, and ways of addressing for mentioning the same referents in TT;

- *Repositioning of participants* (or characters): Changing the relationality existing between events and characters of the original story in the translation, through the use of various means of self and others` identification.

Narrative construction of reality in any language is done in accordance with, and to serve, society`s dominant values and ideology. The effective application of the above strategies, in translating a foreign narrative, guarantees the adoption of target values in TT. In Baker`s words, via framing "we [i.e. translators] consciously participate in the construction of reality" (ibid, p. 106). Thus, via framing, certain aspects of a narrative have to be added, emphasized, downplayed or simply suppressed through direct translation (ibid, p. 23).

In addition to serving the establishment of desired reality, narratives play a socializing role that serves society`s institutes to control and socialize people in ways those institutes prefer. This is especially the case in historiography, public media, and literature where "the retelling of past narratives is also a means of control. It socializes individuals into an established social and political order", and "this restricts their sense of who they are" (ibid, p. 21). In fact, the society`s sanctioned narratives both socialize and shape people`s identity (*who they are*), via representing appropriate identity prototypes that are in accord with society`s values and reasoning.

A. Narrative Constitution of Identity

Relying on Somers` "Narrative constitution of identity" (1994), Baker emphasizes the effective identification of narrative characters via positioning them within translated narratives. Due to configuring narrative features in translating narratives, it is possible to effectively form and represent characters` identity (e.g., gender, religious, or national aspect) in the receiving culture. As any character is "an organized set of actional tendencies" (Fisher, 1997, p. 316), any (non)linguistic addition, deletion, modulation, or rearrangement of the original narrative`s events, actions, and attributions in the translation causes different characters` identification therein.

In the following figure, the relationship between narrative features` configuration and "characters` identification" are demonstrated.
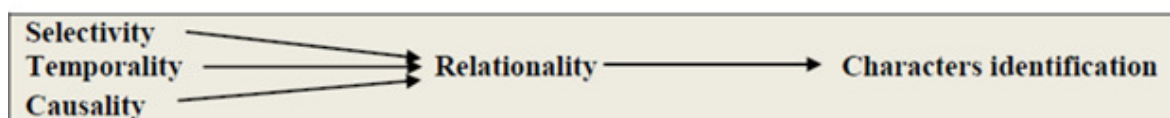

Figure 1. Narrative Features-Identification Direction

As mentioned above, characters` identification is directly resulted from the configuration of *relationality* in the story. In fact, in order to represent credible and value laden characters within narratives, there should exist coherent connectedness between narrative`s events, actions, and attributions (Fisher, 1997). To gain this aim, events, actions, and attributions should intentionally be selected, ordered, and emplotted within the story. In other words, other narrative features (i.e. selectivity, temporality, and causality), and their configuration are at service of characters` identification within narratives.

B. A Case Study

As it is emphasized by Baker (2006), translation is conducted in the target sociocultural context and in accordance with its dominant ideology. This leads to the different reconfiguration of the original narrative in translation. Consequently, the original narrative`s identities are differently reconstructed in the translated narrative. The reframing process of original narrative in TT, and the reconstruction of narrative identities, depend on society`s dominant ideology and its appending values. Hence, the exemplar case study aims to discover how characters` gender, national, and religious

identities are (re)constructed and represented in- pre and post IRI- Persian translations of selected English novels.

In a narrower sense, this research tries to recognize how each aspect of identity (gender, national, or religious one) is formed and represented in translations; what differences exist in relation to representations of the same identity prototypes in pre and post IRI translations of the same English novel; and how the dominant ideology in each era has affected the identity formation and representation within translations. To achieve these goals, a contrastive analysis of STs and TTs, and a comparison of TTs of the same ST, are conducted at micro level, and the narratives relations to their sociocultural context will be explained at micro level (Baker, 2006).

In one part of the mentioned study, the English novel *"Pride and Prejudice"* (Jane Austen, 1813) and its two Persian translations (Shams al-Moluk Mosaheb, 1967; and Reza Rezayi, 2017) in pre and post Islamic Revolution eras are analyzed in order to realize how the female protagonist`s gender identity (i.e., Elizabeth[2]) is represented within each translation. Here, the linguistic based study of the source /target texts` framing as a way to find more about the character`s identity, and the cultural- based enquiry about the relationship between the embedding sociopolitical context and the way each version (or translation) of the narrative is framed are simultaneously carried out. The former is called micro analysis, and the latter is called macro analysis (see Baker, 2006). In the micro analytic part, the arrangement of the narrative features that identify the main character in each version is examined. In this part, both para-textual commentary (including introductions, prefaces, footnotes, glossaries) and the main text are analyzed. In macro analysis, on the other hand, the interactive relationship between the narrative`s formed reality- including represented identities- and the value system of the receiving sociopolitical context are studied.

The first translation was produced before Islamic Revolution of Iran (1979), and it was published by Bongah-e Tarjomeh, va Nashr e Ketab[3]. In that period (1953-1979), the quality and quantity of translations from western languages into Persian increased. Translations paved the way for introducing western concepts to Persian literature, and for bringing about new genres- like novel and drama- into the modern Iranian literature. In

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[2] A young rustic girl who is from the middle class, living in a family with her parents and four sisters

[3] The Institute of Translation and Publication, Iran

general, translation played a crucial role in modernizing both culture and literature of Iran through the last two centuries.

The second translation is produced after Islamic Revolution. The Islamic revolution became a turning point in history and sociology of Iran. Islamic Republic of Iran has its own system of Ideology that, unlike the nationalistic orientation in Pahlavi`s period, is based on Islamic religion. Regarding the impact of Cultural Revolution on the trends of translation, Karimi Hakkak (1988) believes that a redirection happened in translation practice in all areas- especially in Iran`s education system- to prepare translations that would serve the state`s ideology better.

Considering the critical differences in the ideologies and orientations of two periods, and doing micro-macro analyses on the original and translated story, reveal noticeable clarifications about representation of the protagonist`s gender identity in each version of narrative.

Conclusion

Although Baker`s narrative account is not the only one theory applicable to study narratives and their organization (for example, consider critical discourse analysis, and its fruitful implications about both textual and contextual aspects), it systematically and comprehensively covers linguistic and non-linguistic aspects of translation to realize how original social realities (from which social identity is part) are modified in TT. In Baker`s view, even one single sentence on a banner denotes its own narrative that possesses specially configured features to communicate certain reality. When a translator embarks on translating that sentence, he/she needs to care about the end goal of his/her translation, respect local narratives (and meta narratives in TL), and consider values of target system. After these considerations, he/she should reconfigure the original narrative of the ST so that the effective reality would be constituted in the target culture.

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