

## Domestication and foreignisation of allusions in Persian translations of *Waiting for Godot*: A case study

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### Abstract

In this thesis, Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* along with its Persian translation was analysed in terms of Venuti's dichotomy of domestication and foreignisation. The allusion samples were selected through the whole book. Then, the translations of the allusions were analysed. It was found that foreignisation happened mainly when there was a proper name (PN) in the item which was translated. Items without PN were almost domesticated. Even if they had been foreignised, the referents for the TT reader would have been ungraspable, mainly due to the cultural and religious differences. These findings will help literary translators to have a better understanding of such plays. Having taken that the translators would stick to the findings of this research, the readers will be able to have an expressive translation of the play rather than an informative piece of translation. Also, the findings can be an aid in both empirical and theoretical studies.

**Keywords:** Domestication, foreignisation, allusion, style, literary translation.

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## 1. Introduction

In Catford's words, translation is defined as 'the replacement of textual material in one language by equivalent textual material in another language' (p. 20). Ever since human beings were able to create their own literary works, translators have done their best to transfer them at best. Translators have tried to preserve fidelity to the original, but preserving fidelity to poetics of the original has partially been attainable. As the most influential playwright in creating the notion of Theatre of Absurd, he believed in what he didn't believe in the words he used in his plays, and this made the plays ambiguous (Hu, 2000).

One of the classical methods in approaching translation from culture perspectives is the model introduced by Venuti (1995). In his model, he elaborates on invisibility together with two main types of translation strategies; that is to say, domestication and foreignisation. These two strategies concern both the selection of the text to be translated and the translation method to be employed in TL. The distinction existing between domestication and foreignisation dichotomy is cultural and/or literal, not mere linguistic (Wang, 2013); meaning that in discussing translation from such point of view, cultural differences have priority over the linguistic ones.

Naturally, Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and its translations have been critically analysed in the world of literature for its uniqueness, but almost all the aspects in question have been partially analysed, especially allusions. More, as far as the researcher is concerned there have not been considerable criticisms in which translational frameworks were incorporated in comparing ST with its TTs, especially in the Persian language. Thus, here, the researcher works in a less-worked-on area.

Criticisms on Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, neither translated nor original, have come short in comprehensively analysing them. And no scholars have ever dared to express their complete fulfilments of a single work's analysis.

This research is about the allusions of *Waiting for Godot*, a universally acknowledged play by Samuel Beckett, and their domestic counterparts parallelised through translation in the Persian language. To be precise, it is a comparison of three translations and their source text. One of the vague points in translating Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* is translating allusions. It has brought a lot of problems for translators working on the play's translation. This study of the allusions and their translations into Persian can help potential translators find shortcomings that the pioneers had had in the early translations of the play's allusions.

Comparing all aspects of ST(s) with their TT(s) is more of a dream. So, the researcher would take one aspect into account. There are plenty of strategies, as well, to adopt in comparing the aspects. This thesis tries to investigate on how the strategies of foreignisation and domestication postulated by Lawrence Venuti were applied in one of the problematic aspects that is the translation of allusions and on what stylistic implications if any, those strategies had on translation. Considering these issues into consideration, this research aimed at addressing the following research questions.

### 1.1. Research question

1. Were allusions domesticated or foreignised in the Persian translations of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*?

### 1.2. Review of the related literature

To gain a better understanding of the concept of cultural specific items (CSIs) in translation, first some theoretical concepts are presented and then some empirical studies are elaborated on.

### **1.3. Translation of culture specific elements**

‘Translation is a craft consisting in the attempt to replace a written message and statement in one language by the same message and statement in another language’ (Newmark, 2001, p. 7). However, with culture-specific items, ‘this often seems to be impossible as the meanings which lie beyond these expressions are always strongly linked to a specific cultural context’ (Terestyenyi, 2011, p. 1). In this regard, Tobias notes that

‘CSIs are linguistic items that cause problems for translation due to differences in cultural understanding’. He adds that they incorporate ‘proper nouns, objects, institutions, customs, expressions and concepts embodied in the ST that do not exist in the culture of the TL readership or would be perceived differently’. (Tobias, 2006, p. 27)

Indeed, it is not always clear which words and expressions should be considered culture-specific items, even in the literature of translation, several names exist for these items: *realia*, culture-specific items and culturally bound items. The word *realia* originates from Latin and means ‘the real things’. In this meaning, the word signifies the objects of the material culture. In the field of translation studies, *realia*—also culturally-bound, culture-specific expressions—cannot be easily well-defined. They do not mean only objects but also words that signify concepts that are related to a specific culture (Terestyenyi, 2011).

Newmark (2001) speaks of cultural words; he defines culture as the way of life and its manifestations that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression, thereby acknowledging that each language group has its own culturally specific features. He classifies cultural words as follows: 1) ecology: flora, fauna, hills, winds and plains; 2) material culture: food, clothes, houses and towns, transport; 3) social culture: work and leisure; 4) organisations, customs, activities, procedures, concepts: political and administrative, religious, artistic and 5) gestures and habits.

### **1.4. Translation and culture**

Seemingly, language is considered a part of culture—to put it in other words, language is interwoven to culture. Therefore, translation without the cultural background causes lots of gaps for the target receptors. In this way, the term ‘cultural translation’ is used in many different contexts and senses. In some of these, it is a metaphor that radically questions translation’s traditional parameters, but a somewhat narrower use of the term refers to those practices of literary translation that mediate cultural difference, or try to convey extensive cultural background, or set out to represent another culture via translation. In this sense, ‘cultural translation’ is counterposed to a linguistic or grammatical translation that is limited in scope to the sentences on the page as ‘cultural translation’ which does not usually denote a particular kind of translation strategy, but rather a *perspective* on translations that focuses on their emergence and impact as components in the ideological traffic between language groups’ (Baker & Saledanha, 2009).

Zare-Behtash and Firoozkoobi (2009) did an analysis of domestication and foreignisation dichotomies in six books of Hemingway, the American author. In their study, they found out that within the time range from the 1950s up to 2000-time era, domestication strategy was the preponderant one as compared to foreignisation. In analysing their corpus, they found out that in almost of the features, the domestication strategy was the only one which was used by the translators.

Akef and Vakili (2010) conducted a case study and qualitative research in order to analyse CSIs in the translation process. Their case study included the Iranian well-known novel ‘Savushun’. In their research, they were to identify and contrast the CSIs in two Persian translations of *Savushun* into English. What they could prove and show was that while one of the translators had resorted to extra-textual gloss as the main translation strategy, the other translator had used linguistic (non-cultural) translation as the mostly used strategy in translating CSIs.

In another research, Pralas (2012) investigated domestication and foreignisation strategies of the French CSIs in the translation Julian Barnes's *Flaubert Parrot*. For this study, he used Aixela's classification of CSIs and adopted Venuti's dichotomy. He came to this conclusion that in most of the items, the translator favoured foreignisation strategy more than domestication; showing his visibility in the translation process.

Machali (2012) did research on cases of domestication and foreignisation in the translation of Indonesian poetry into English. In doing so, he examined how cultural translations were correlated with such notions as domestication, foreignisation and power. Furthermore, translation cases involving Indonesian-English languages were examined in light of this correlation. The findings of his study demonstrated that the translation strategies employed by the translator reflect his/her interpretation that dictated the translation process. In other words, he proved that when the cultural elements were regarded as foreign, the translator tended to use the domestication strategy. On the other hand, when the foreign elements were related to a known or Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research, 2016, 3(4) 315 obscure genre, the translator tried to use the foreignisation strategy. Besides, he showed that both strategies represent the translator's power to manipulate the original text and realise it in the translation.

In another research, Sharifabad, Yaqubi and Mahadi (2013) investigated the dichotomy of foreignisation versus domestication in phrasal verbs translation in an English-Persian context. For this research, they compiled a corpus of English news texts which was translated from English into Persian. They found out that translators tended to domesticate the phrasal verbs in news texts and foreignisation was not favoured by them.

Siregar, Sinar, Lubis and Muchtar (2015) embarked on a research to analyse domestication and foreignisation. In their research, they investigated and analysed both translation strategies, i.e., domestication and foreignisation in 'The 8th Habit' novel. They found out that in the process of translation, domestication was the most used strategy used in translating culture-specific items.

In the same line, Shokri and Ketabi (2015), also, explored domestication and foreignisation in a case study-research. They applied this dichotomy to investigate translating culture-specific items in 'Shazdeh Ehtejab' novel. What they found was that domestication with 82% was the major strategy which was applied in translating CSIs.

In another research, Farahani (2016) did a research on the domestication and foreignisation analyse CSIs in an English translation of Hedayat's 'Blind Owl' based on domestication versus foreignisation dichotomy which was proposed by Venuti (1995). For this purpose, they read and analysed the whole book and identified and classified the CSIs accordingly. The results of their research showed that most of the items were domestically translated into Persian and that the translation was fluent and understandable for the English speaking readership.

In the same vein, Shahabi and Rezaei Shams Abad (2016) did diachronic research the way CSIs were translated in an English-Persian context. For this purpose, they investigated the book 'The Old Man and the Sea' and its two Persian translations. For detecting the CSIs, they applied Aixela (1997), Howard's (2009) taxonomy and analysed their Persian translations based on Davies's model (preservation, addition, omission, globalisation, localisation, transformation and creation). The results showed that from among the various techniques for translating these items, preservation was the most frequent one followed by globalisation. As a result, the translations were more foreignised than domesticated.

## **2. Methodology**

This study enjoyed a number of various instrumentations and theoretical framework which are described as follows:

## **2.1. Corpus of the study**

### **2.1.1. *Waiting for Godot***

Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, an already known masterpiece and one of his most renowned plays, is uniquely styled and considered as the most influential play in the early stage of a new turning point which was later called the Theater of the Absurd. It is a play which was originally written in French as *En attendant Godot* in 1952 and then self-translated into English in 1954. It was translated from English into Persian by Behrooz Haji Mohammadi (2012).

Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, an already known masterpiece and one of his most renowned plays, is uniquely styled and considered as the most influential play in the early stage of a new turning point which was later called the Theater of the Absurd. Ronan McDonald believes that 'This notion which was coined by the critic Martin Esslin to indicate a group of playwrights who give artistic articulation to the belief in absurdity expounded by Camus, the sense that human existence is futile and without meaning' (24). Samuel Beckett's play, as McDonald points out, 'is replete with biblical allusions and deals with fundamental issues of time, desire, habit, suffering and so on' (30). The setting and actions are easily recognised; however, the meaning is challenging.

### **2.1.2. Theoretical framework**

As far as the theoretical framework is concerned, this research adopted Venuti's dichotomy of domestication and foreignisation which were part of his theory of translator's invisibility. Venuti (1995) defines invisibility in line with two main kinds of translation methodologies; namely domestication and foreignisation. These two distinct methods contain both the strategy of translation and selection of the book to be translated. Domestication is the type of translation which involves minimising the source-text foreign elements to the target-language cultural values (Munday, 2001). Foreignisation, on the other extreme, involves retaining the foreignness of the original-language text (Shuttleworth & Cowie, 1997).

Domestication and foreignisation dichotomies were created in an attempt to tackle the question of how the translators can bridge the gap between the writer of the source-text which is written in a language which is very culture-bound and the target-text writer (Munday, 2001). Therefore, the time-worn debate has moved beyond the limits of word-for-word and sense-for-sense to a reader-oriented translation versus a writer-oriented one (as quoted in Munday, 2001; Schleiermacher, 1992). In order to achieve the reader-oriented translation strategy, the translator should adopt a naturalising method of translation. The translator, on the other hand, should apply an alienating translation method if he/she seeks to achieve the writer-oriented strategy (Venuti, 1997). In other words, Schleiermacher puts that

the translator to choose between a domesticating method, an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values, bringing the author back home, and a foreignising method, an ethno deviant pressure on those values to register the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text, sending the reader abroad (Venuti, 1995, p. 20).

### **2.1.3. Data collection regime**

In corpus section, the researcher mentions the way he collects the information and extracts the elements he needs. But the elements need refining. Since all allusions are given in the ST but the researcher has no idea on how to refine them, he refers to several criticisms on Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* to spot the allusions in the play. The available allusions are segmented according to the way they appear in the original, e.g., a word as a word.

### **2.1.4. Procedure**

In order to put this research into practice, a number of various steps were taken. First, the whole English text (source text) was read line by line and page by page. Then, the allusions were found in it. An allusion can be a word, a phrase, a sentence or a sequence of sentences. After that, the Persian

translation was read and analysed in terms of the domestication and foreignisation of the allusions. In the final stage, the comparative analyses of the Persian translation were done to make the conclusion.

#### **2.1.5. Data analysis**

The 46 samples, allusions, which are provided here fall into four categories: the first category is biblical; the second one is personal, the third one is historical and the fourth one is literal.

#### **2.1.6. Clarification of the allusion in the play**

To further exemplify the translation of this case study, some examples are provided.

Example 1. 'Estragon' is allusive. Daniel Stempel 'links the name Estragon with the Spanish city of Tarragona, scene of 'a famous debate between Christians and Jews in 1413–1' (qtd. in Acheson 297–298).

The word 'Estragon' has been transliterated into Persian which means that it has been foreignised in translation.

Example 2. Vladimir is allusive. Daniel Stempel reports that the name Vladimir is 'found at both ends of the time-scale of Russian Christianity: the first Russian ruler to be converted to Christianity was Duke Vladimir of Kiev; Vladimir Soloviev, the friend and disciple of Dostoyevski, is one of the greatest religious thinkers of modern Russia' (qtd. in Acheson 298).

The word 'Vladimir' has been transliterated into the Persian language which is a means of foreignisation.

Example 3. A country road (Beckett 1.1.31).

This phrase is an illusion which has been translated by three different equivalences in Persian. The translation is a good example of domestication as it hides the allusive nature of *a country road* which makes it ethnocentric in the TT.

Example 4. Nothing to be done (Beckett 1.1.44).

This sentence is an illusion which has been translated by various equivalences in Persian.

The phrase *Nothing to be done* is the allusion here. It is expressive of the state in which there can be nothing to be done. This, in turn, reminds the reader of death that is the end for all. And as death is a notion, different religions talked about the researcher come to the point that Samuel Beckett, who was very familiar with Christianity, occasioned reminiscence of the Scripture. (Bugliani 17).

Example 5. Hand in hand from the top of the Eiffel Tower, among the first.

Hand in hand is an illusion which has been mistranslated into Persian language. The translation is free. Though, in this translation 'Eiffel' betrays the foreignisedness of the translation. The three translations are syntactically different as the phrase is translated as three different sentences which have nothing to do with their foreignisedness. And the biblical allusion is not clearly mentioned in the translations, e.g., by adding some elucidating materials.

Example 6. Last moment.

It is an illusion which has been translated differently in the Persian language. The translation is semantically the same. But it doesn't biblically bring into the mind of reader anything about the Scripture.

Example 7. Hope deferred maketh the something sick (Beckett 1.1.117–18).

The allusion, Hope deferred maketh the something sick, is a misquotation from King

James Version. It alludes to: 'Hope deferred maketh the heart sick' (King James Version, Prov. 13.12).

### 3. Discussion

There are 46 allusions in this study. They fall into different categories according to the way they are analysed. For this purpose, statistical analysis was done and the percentage of each of them was determined. Figure 1 below represents the related data.



Figure 1. The percentage of the application of each strategy in translation

As the data in Figure 1 demonstrates, from among the total instances of illusions, domestication was the preponderant strategy used in the translation with 93%; followed by foreignisation with 51%. The neutralisation was not found in the translation as it had 0% only.

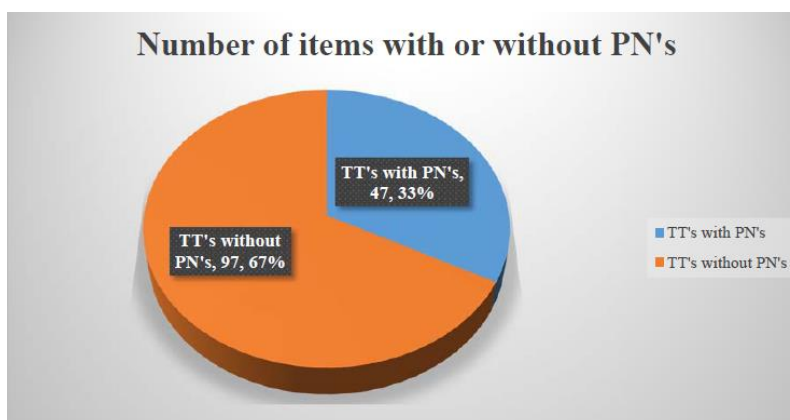


Figure 2. The number of items with and without PN's

As Figure 2 represents, as far as the proper nouns are concerned, more than 97% of the translations were with proper nouns and 47% of them were not with proper nouns.

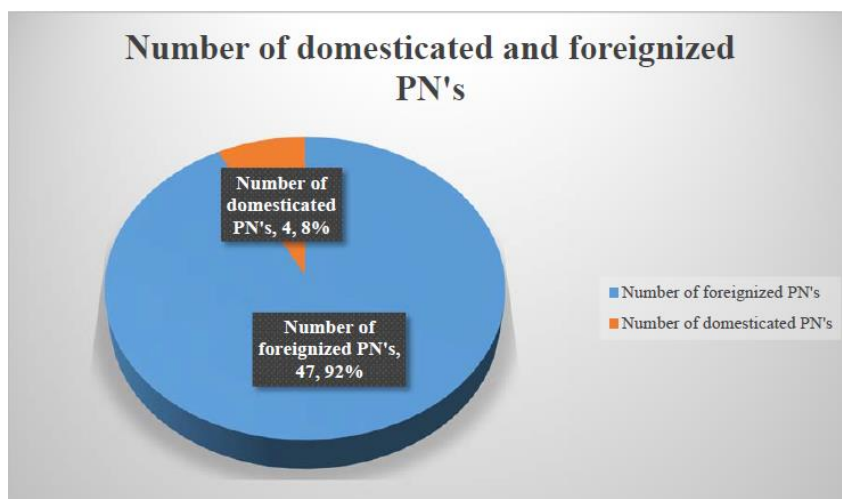


Figure 3. The number of domesticated and foreignised in PN's

As the data in Figure 3 reveals, as far as the proper nouns were concerned, more than 92% of the proper nouns were foreignised; whereas only 4% of them were domesticated during the translation.

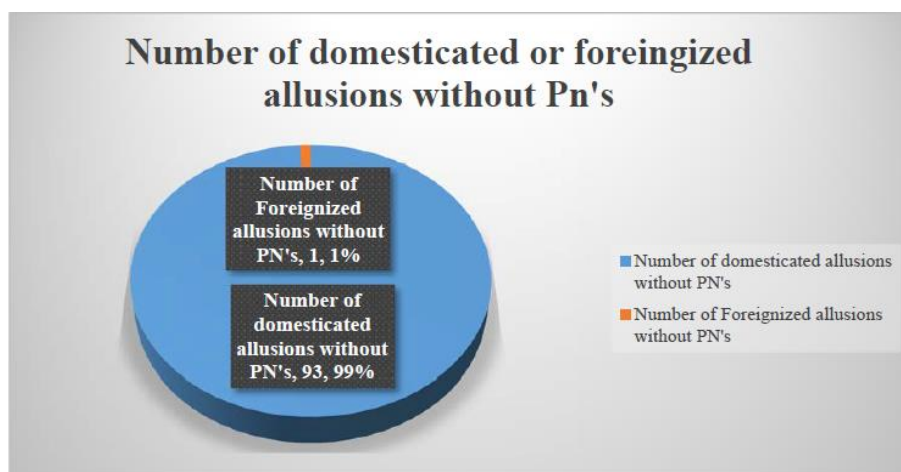


Figure 4. The number of domesticated and foreignised allusions without PN's

As Figure 4 reveals, more than 99% of domesticated allusions had no proper nouns; whereas 1% of the foreignised allusions were with proper nouns.

#### 4. Conclusions

This study was set to analyse the play *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett and its Persian translation in terms of domestication and foreignisation dichotomy proposed by Venuti. The results revealed that most of the allusions were domesticated in the translation from English into Persian (65% versus 35%). *Waiting for Godot* doesn't have any stylistic counterpart in the Persian language. That is, no absurd play has ever been written in the Persian language. And the play is profound enough to perplex the erudite into whose language the play was written. As a mediator, it has only been translation through which the play has been transferred to the Persian language. Translators who are to transfer the ST to the TT should have deep knowledge of the SL and the TL into which they are translating. Though this is not enough, the response the readership is going to have plays an important role.



It can be implied that it is indication of ignorance or lack of knowledge of the translators toward the literary nature of the play which, excluding the items with proper name (PN's), translated like a report which is just informative, of concealing ST allusions without PN's in the process of translation (the allusions are to some extent cultural specific; thus, the best policy would be elucidating them in the footnotes. However, this would be impossible for the presentation of the play for the audience), and of the fact that some allusions don't lend themselves to translations as the things they allude to is vague in the TL (if the referents were to be brought in the footnotes, some of them still wouldn't make any sense in the mind of the readers as some of the referents are unfamiliar).

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This study has some useful implications. One implication is for researchers who are interested in the literary aspects of translation. This study can help them to learn about how to put a theory of literary translation into practice. A second implication can be for translator who is engaged in the field of literary translation. They can use the results of this research so as to see how to tackle culturally-bound elements in translation. Moreover, this study can be useful for translation quality assessment. The researchers in this field can use the methodology and result section of this paper to gain an understanding of how a translation can be assessed in terms of foreignisation and domestication.

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