

Stylistic Issues in Translations of Modern Literary Texts: Enhancing Baker's (1996) Model through Beckett's *Malone Dies*¹

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Abstract

The present study aimed to investigate strategies employed in translating style through time and enhance the current models. To achieve this aim, Samuel Beckett, one of the prominent writers of the twentieth century with his unique style, opted. His novel *Malone Dies* and its three Persian translations by Kianoush (1968), Navid (2004), and Sommi (2015) were analyzed. Each sentence of *Malone Dies* was compared with its translations by applying Baker's model (1996). The model consists of *Simplification*, *Explicitation*, *Normalization* or *Conservatism*, and *Leveling out*. The results showed that *Simplification* and *Explicitation* were generally the most frequently used strategies. For Kianoush and Navid, the former strategy, and for Sommi, the latter strategy was the most employed ones. Also, based on the results, the effect of time on the selection of strategies could not be overlooked totally. Moreover, it was found that four other strategies named *Preservation*, *Distortion*, *Exoticization*, and *Deletion* could be added to enhance Baker's (1996) model.

Keywords: Baker's (1996) model, Beckett's *Malone Dies*, literary translation, style, translation strategies

1. Introduction

Literary translation and various challenges attributed to it have been the subject of many studies. Translations, besides "making sense", should convey the style of the ST (Nida 2012, p. 147). Majorly attempting to "reproduce" the original

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text in the target language (Afrouz, 2019, p. 32), translators put great emphasis on the accuracy of the content to produce an adequate text in the target language. Although the authors' style is sometimes left disregarded, Mokhtari Ardekani (1997) draws literary translators' attention to the analysis of the "style" of the original text before translating it (p. 205).

Passage of time may be one possible factor affecting translators' deviation from the authors' style. This 'passage of time' can be interpreted as the gap between the ST and TT publication dates, and those of various TTs of the same ST. Literary translations may possibly be affected by the passage of time. Although retranslations are usually expected to enjoy higher quality than the previous translations, this would not always be the case (Afrouz & Mollanazar, 2018)

In English literature, authors' styles have seemingly gained attention by the appearance of Dickens, Joyce, Beckett, etc. Their literary styles were unique. Most of the novelists and poets have their own specific styles. As a result, it is important for literary translators to convey not only the content of the text, but also the author's style.

Beckett (1906–89) is a prominent writer of the 20th century. Beckett himself considered the three novels comprising the so-called first trilogy, *Molloy* (1951), *Malone Dies* (1951), *The Unnamable* (1953), to be among his most important works since the trilogy revolutionized the novel. His novel *Malone Dies* and its Persian translations were chosen for this study to investigate the translators' deviation from the style of the source text. Baker's (1996) model was used to examine the extent of this deviation by focusing on such parameters as explicitation, simplification, normalization, and leveling out.

To be more specific, this study attempts to find answers to the following questions:

1. To what extent have the translators deviated from Beckett's style in *Malone Dies*? Which strategies adopted by the Persian translators have the lowest and highest frequency in rendering Beckett's style?
2. Can the passage of time play a role in the selection of specific strategies for rendering *Malone Dies*?
3. To what extent have the translators been consistent in selecting specific strategies for rendering style?

2. Review of Literature

2.1. Literature, style and translation

Literature is part of the "identity" of a nation and a literary translator greatly needs to be intimately familiar with a nation's culture (Afrouz, 2022b, p. 31). That is the reason why translating culture-specific terms is one of the most complicated tasks of a literary translator (Afrouz & Mollanazar, 2017a, Afrouz 2017). "Accuracy, naturalness, clarity, and formal correspondence" are referred to as "features of 'Good Translation'" (Afrouz & Mollanazar, 2017b, p. 14). The second and the third features are majorly related to the stylistic issues of translation.

When "translation is concerned with how something is said as well as what is said, it involves the translation of style" (Malmkjær & Windle, 2011, p. 71). Among various literary genres, the translation of novels is intertwined with stylistic issues. The importance of the translation of novels can sometimes, as Newmark (1988, p. 171) asserted, lie in introducing a new or a fresh version of literary "style" into the TL.

Understanding ST style and capability of reproducing "similar stylistic effects" in the TT are crucial for a literary translator (Malmkjær & Windle, 2011, p. 73). Translators can choose specific strategies for dealing with the style of the ST. In general, translation strategies play a pivotal role in rendering of not only the content and equivalent choice, but also of 'style' (Golchinnezhad & Afrouz 2021a, 2021b;

Latifi Shirejini & Afrouz 2021a, 2021b; Afrouz 2020, 2021a, 2021b, 2021c, 2022a; Parvaz and Afrouz 2021).

2.2. Previous studies on 'style'

Delzendeherooy (2007) worked on the narrative style of the Persian translations of Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*. The researcher found that the translators ignored and distorted Woolf's narrative style. Delzendeherooy (2010) also investigated Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* and its two Persian translations by employing Toury's norms and laws of translation. The findings revealed that one translator moved towards Toury's notion of adequacy and law of interference by subjecting himself to the style of the ST. The other translator, on the other hand, homogenized the text by stylistic flattening and showing tendency toward Toury's notion of acceptability and law of growing standardization. In the two aforementioned studies, stylistic issues of translated texts could have been dealt with more appropriately by focusing on specialized models, such as Baker's.

Considering the rendition of ellipsis as a stylistic feature, Nezam (2012) studied Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* and its Persian Translations. The researcher simply came to this conclusion that elliptical patterns were fairly similar in both English and Persian. The model selected by the researcher seemed rather out of date.

Gholami and Salimi (2012) evaluated *The Adventures of Huckleberry Fin* by Mark Twain and its three Persian translations. The results of their paper indicated that the translators rendered the semantic content of English colloquial expressions but ignored their colloquial character or sense. Instead of merely bolding the problem, the researchers could have proposed some solutions for such challenging situations.

Concentrating on the issue of 'style', Bakhtiari (2014) investigated four books written by Jalal Ale Ahmad and three books translated by him. The results revealed the transference of stylistic features from Ale Ahmad's authorship style into his

translating style. In other words, translators, in general, and Ale Ahmad, in this particular case, may sometimes ignore the style of the original text author and leave their own finger-prints on the work they opt for translating.

Al Batineh (2015) examined instances where the style of Johnson-Davies the translator intersects with the style of Johnson-Davies the author. The results of the study revealed that there was a close stylistic relation between Johnson-Davies' creative writing and his translation.

Lastly, Afrouz (2021d) worked on stylistic issues of translating classical Persian literature. The corpus of his study included three English translations of Sa'di's *the Gulistan*: Rehatsek, Rosenbaum, and Newman. Baker's (1996) model was employed for analyzing the data. The findings of his study "revealed greater tendency of recent translators to deviating from the ST author's style and their stronger inclination towards providing easy-to-understand texts for today's TT audience" (Afrouz, 2021d, p. 214).

Bassnett (2014, p. 119) claims that "a different concept of the imaginary distinction between form and content prevails when the text to be considered is a novel". As Beckett's trilogy have not been the subject of research in style before, the present study can be considered as a step toward shedding light on the probable effect of the passage of time on dealing with stylistic issues of translation. Since no researcher has yet carried out such a study, the present paper can fill the research gap.

3. Method

The present study is a descriptive and comparative corpus-based research.

3.1. Corpus

Beckett is known for his unique style in his plays and novels, especially in his first trilogy—*Molloy* (1955), *Malone Dies* (1956), and *The Unnamable* (1958). The

novel *Malone Dies* is chosen for this study with its three Persian translations by Kianoush (1968), Navid (2004), and Sommi (2015). The three translators are Persian native speakers. Three hundred sentences were extracted from the whole chapters of the English novel. The reason that Beckett's two other novels were not selected was that the researchers did not have access to their Persian translations.

3.2. The model

The framework used in his study is Baker's (1996) model. It consists of the following four strategies:

Simplification: It is defined as "the idea that translators subconsciously simplify the language or message or both" (Baker, 1996, p. 176).

Explicitation: It is "the tendency to spell things out in translation, including, in its simplest form, the practice of adding background information" (Baker, 1996, p. 176).

Normalization: *Normalization* is "the tendency to conform to patterns and practices which are typical of the target language, even to the point of exaggerating them" (Baker, 1996, pp. 176–177).

Leveling out: This concerns the inclination of TT "to gravitate around the center of any continuum rather than move towards the fringes" (Baker, 1996, p.177).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results

The analysis of the translations of *Malone Dies* revealed that *Simplification* was generally the most frequently utilized strategy. *Explicitation* was identified to be the second most frequently used strategy which shows there was a tendency to express more clearly what was implied in the original text. The third most frequently

employed strategy was *Normalization*. And the least frequently selected strategy was *Leveling out*.

Baker's model consists of 4 strategies for translating style. Based on the findings of this study, 4 other strategies were proposed by the researcher, i.e. *Preservation* (no deviation from the original text style), *Distortion* (translating without observing fluency), *Exoticization* (defamiliarization in translation), and *Deletion* (deleting the sentence completely). Among these four strategies, *Preservation* and *Deletion* were the most frequent and, in total, they were the fourth and fifth most frequent strategies. The frequency of *Distortion* and *Exoticization* was the same as *Leveling out*. Table 1 presents the total frequency of the strategies.

Table 1. Frequency of Strategies Selected by Translators

Strategies \ Translators	Kianoush (1968)	Navid (2004)	Sommi (2015)	Total
Simplification	153	173	92	418
Explicitation	108	102	161	371
Normalization	36	17	47	100
Deletion	6	1	11	18
Preservation	5	10	4	19
Leveling out	0	2	1	3
Distortion	1	2	0	3
Exoticization	2	0	1	3

In translations carried out by Kianoush and Navid, the three most frequent strategies were *Simplification*, *Explicitation*, and *Normalization*. But in translation of Sommi, *Explicitation* took the first place, and then came *Simplification* and *Normalization*. The least frequent strategy for these three translators was different, i.e. *Leveling out* for Kianoush, *Exoticization* for Navid, and *Distortion* for Sommi.

Table 2. Percentage of Strategies Selected by Translators

Strategies \ Translators	Kianoush (1968)	Navid (2004)	Sommi (2015)	Total
Simplification	49%	56%	29%	45%

Explicitation	35%	33%	51%	40%
Normalization	11%	6%	15%	11%
Deletion	2%	0%	4%	2%
Preservation	2%	3%	1%	2%
Leveling out	0%	1%	0%	0%
Distortion	0%	1%	0%	0%
Exoticization	1%	0%	0%	0%

Table 2 indicates that Kianoush selected *Simplification* (49%) more than other strategies. Other most frequently employed strategies for Kianoush's translation are *Explicitation* (35%) and *Normalization* (11%). The least frequently used strategies are *Leveling out* and *Distortion* with the frequency of zero.

Navid's translation (published in 2004; 36 years after Kianoush's) mostly used *Simplification* (56%). The second and the third most frequently selected strategies are *Explicitation* (33%) and *Normalization* (6%). In Navid's translation, *Exoticization* and *Deletion* are the least frequently utilized strategies (0%).

Unlike Kianoush's and Navid's translations, *Explicitation* (51%) is the most frequently used strategy by Sommi. Then, *Simplification* (29%) and *Normalization* (15%) come as the second and third most frequently employed strategies. Three strategies are least frequently used: *Leveling out*, *Exoticization*, and *Distortion* which had never been opted for.

Kianoush, by using *Simplification* (49%), deviated from Beckett's style. Kianoush chose *Simplification* to simplify what was probably found by him to be vague or unintelligible to Persian speakers. The second most employed strategy by Kianoush was *Explicitation* (35%). It indicates that Kianoush might have a tendency toward making some implicit sentences of *Malone Dies* explicit.

Navid's deviation from Beckett's style was practically the same as Kianoush's, but with a little difference in percentage. *Simplification* as Navid's most utilized strategy (56%) explains that he has probably found most of Beckett's sentences hard to follow. As a result, *Simplification* seems to be one of the best

ways to translate such sentences. Another reason for deviation from Beckett's style was implicit sentences which Navid has preferred to translate explicitly by using *Explicitation* (33%).

Based on what is revealed in Table 2, it can be concluded that Sommi's biggest challenge was translating Beckett's implicit sentences by opting *Explicitation* (51%) as the first most used strategy. And the second place is allocated to *Simplification* (29%) which shows that Sommi has tended to simplify unclear sentences in *Malone Dies*. These findings demonstrate that *Simplification* and *Explicitation* had an important role in deviation from Beckett's style for these three translators.

Regarding the second question, the findings indicate that the use of *Simplification* increased from Kianoush (37%) to Navid (41%), but it decreased in the case of Sommi (22%). Therefore, time has not affected the use of this strategy. Comparing translations of Kianoush and Navid, we can realize that the use of *Explicitation* has decreased to 1% after 36 years. However, for Sommi's translation, it has increased to 43%. If we had neglected this 1% decrease, we could have concluded that the use of *Explicitation* has increased. Interestingly, Kianoush never applied *Leveling out* in his translation. Then, there was a sharp rise in Navid's employment of this strategy (67%), whereas for Sommi, it decreased to 33%. This means that if we had ignored Kianoush's translation, we could have mentioned that passage of time could have caused a decrease in the use of *Leveling out*. Moreover, it was found that passage of time did not have any effects on the use of *Normalization*. Findings also indicated that there was a surge in employing *Distortion* from Kianoush to Navid. Nevertheless, there was a dramatic fall in Sommi's use of this strategy. *Preservation* was used mostly by Navid (3%). As a result, passage of time presumably had no influence on the application of this strategy. *Exoticization* was mostly used in Kianoush's translation (67%), and then it experienced a sharp drop in Navid's case (0%). Afterwards, it increased to 33% in

Sommi's translation. Therefore, without considering Navid's translation, the preference for this strategy was declined through time. Interestingly, *Deletion* experienced ups and downs through time. But, according to Table 2, we can ignore the effect of time for *Deletion*.

As for the third question, it was found that the three translators neither used the same percentage of all strategies nor preferred to resort to just one specific strategy for their translations. As a result, none of the translators were consistent in their selection of a particular strategy.

4.2. Discussion

In this section, practical examples of TTs are examined. These can enhance the theoretical issues of translation and boost the present models of translation strategies (Afrouz & Mollanazar, 2016). As mentioned in the previous section, *Simplification* is a strategy that makes things easier for the target-reader. Table 3 includes some examples related to this strategy.

Table 3. *Simplification*

ST	I want this matter to be free from all traces of approximateness.
TT (by Kianoush)	می‌خواهم این موضوع از همه‌ی آثار تقریب برکنار باشد.
TT (by Navid)	می‌خواهم این قضیه از همه‌ی نشانه‌های تقریبی بودن مبرا باشد.
TT (by Sommi)	می‌خواهم این مسئله از هرگونه رد و نشان تقریب به دور باشد

Beckett is famous for using words which he coined himself such as "approximateness" in example 1. None of the translators used a correspondingly marked word in their Persian translations; in other words, they have standardized it. What seems weird to the English readers is simplified in Persian.

Beckett is also well-known for writing economically, i.e., short sentences with few words. But in some cases, the translators did not follow his style and tried to add some background information and make the implicit sentences explicit. Providing the TT readership with further information is a strategy illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4. Simplification (another instance)

ST	I can find no other explanation to my being left in it.
TT (by Kianoush)	غیر از اینکه بگویم مرا توی آن انداخته‌اند و رفته‌اند حرف دیگری ندارم.
TT (by Navid)	غیر از این که بگویم مرا در آن انداخته‌اند چیز دیگری نیست که توضیح بدهم.
TT (by Sommi)	در غیر این صورت، تنها ماندنم در این اتاق هیچ دلیل موجهی نداشت.

Kianoush and Navid added “غیر از اینکه بگویم” to emphasize that the narrator had no other explanation. Sommi used another expression for emphasis, i.e. “در غیر این صورت”, and he translated “it” to “اتاق” which means he made the implicit pronoun explicit based on what was mentioned before in the story.

Table 5. Normalization

ST	or dashed to the ground.
TT (by the three translators)	یا نقش بر آب می‌شد.

As is revealed in Table 5, all translators preferred to replace the English sentence with a Persian cliché instead of just translating the exact words. The use of *Leveling out* will cause less variation in translations compared to the original texts. It also concerns translating the formal to the informal or vice versa and different tones in the same way. Three cases of this strategy were found in the entire corpus—one of which being mentioned in Table 6.

Table 6. Leveling out

ST	I inquire no further in any case.
TT (by Sommi)	در هر حال، در این خصوص، دیگر چند و چونی نخواهم کرد.

In the abovementioned instance, the ST embraces a formal lexical item, i.e. “inquire”, which was rendered informally to “چند و چونی نخواهم کرد”.

Distortion is a strategy seemingly used by the translators, but not mentioned in Baker’s model. As it can be seen in Table 7, the Persian translation is not as fluent as the English one.

Table 7. Distortion

ST	He did not associate the crocus with the spring nor the chrysanthemum with Michaelmas.
TT (by Navid)	نه ارتباط گل زعفران را با بهار و نه گل داودی را با عید سن میشل می‌فهمید.

Another strategy is called *Preservation*. It occurs when no conspicuous deviation from the style of the original text is observed. The example demonstrates that the translator tried to stay close to the style of the author.

Table 8. *Preservation*

ST	But I shall indulge in it.
TT (by Navid)	اما من تسلیم آن می شوم.

Exoticization, defined as defamiliarization in translation, happens when the fluency of the translation is not distorted, but it presents a weird and unfamiliar sentence to the target-readers.

Table 9. *Exoticization*

ST	... strikes no chord in my memory.
TT (by Kianoush)	در ذهن من هیچ یادی را بیدار نمی کند.

While the ST above is a common expression in the source language, the Persian translation does not sound natural. In other words, while the translation does not lack fluency, its image looks unfamiliar to the target-readership.

5. Conclusion

The study aimed at shedding light on the extent to which the three Persian translators have deviated from Beckett's style in *Malone Dies*. Based on the findings, Kianoush had a greater tendency towards *Simplification* than other strategies. In other words, he simplified the sentences which seemed difficult to the target language readers. Likewise, Navid's mostly used strategy was *Simplification* by which he tried to make the unintelligible sentences more understandable to the Persian readers. On the other hand, Sommi, unlike two other translators, preferred *Explicitation* by which he dealt with implicit sentences and tried to clarify them in his translation.

Another goal of this study was to investigate the effect of time on the selection of a specific strategy. According to the results, it can be said that the effect of time did not cause a sharp rise or fall in the use of specific strategies. Navid's translation, chronologically the second translation, has undergone some changes

which were not consistent with the first and third translations. Time-passage has had seemingly no great impact on the use of strategies such as *Simplification*, *Leveling out*, *Distortion*, and *Preservation* by the three translators. However, the use of *Explicitation* has increased through time if we ignore Navid's slight difference from Kianoush. Modern readers may nowadays prefer to read a clear-cut text that would not make them ponder much in order to comprehend the text, as a result, the tendency of translators towards using *Explicitation* may grow. Ignoring the case of Navid's translation, one can realize that there was an increase in applying *Normalization*. It seems that modern readers would rather read a target oriented translation. This is in line with the results achieved by Afrouz (2021d).

Another case is related to *Exoticization* the employment of which has decreased through time. This result indicates that defamiliarization in translation was apparently common in Kianoush's time and nowadays it seems to occur only sporadically. The last strategy that has been affected by time was *Deletion* which has experienced a rise through time. It can be understood that currently the inclination towards deleting what is not intelligible, perhaps unimportant culture-bound terms, is on the rise.

In addition, the results demonstrated that the translators have employed a variety of strategies with different percentages which showed that none of the translators was consistent in choosing a particular strategy for their translation.

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چکیده

هدف تحقیق حاضر بررسی راهبردهای ترجمه سبک در گذر زمان و ارتقاء مدل-های کنونی است. بدین منظور، ساموئل بکت، یکی از نویسندگان برجسته قرن بیستم، که دارای سبک منحصر به فردی است، انتخاب گردید. رمان مشهور وی، *مالون می‌میرد*، به همراه سه ترجمه فارسی آن به قلم کیانوش (۱۳۴۷)، نوید (۱۳۸۳) و سمی (۱۳۹۴) پیکره تحقیق را تشکیل می‌دهند. در این پژوهش، متن انگلیسی با سه ترجمه آن با استفاده از مدل بیکر (۱۹۹۶) به شیوه تطبیقی بررسی و از منظر مسائل سبکی تحلیل شد. این الگو شامل «ساده‌سازی، تصریح، طبیعی‌سازی و متوازن‌سازی» است. بر اساس یافته‌ها، ساده‌سازی و تصریح در مجموع بیشترین فراوانی را داشتند. راهبرد اول برای کیانوش و نوید، و راهبرد دوم برای سمی بیشترین کاربرد را داشته است. طبق نتایج به دست آمده، تأثیر گذر زمان بر انتخاب راهبردها قابل چشم‌پوشی نیست. هم‌چنین، چهار راهبرد دیگر، تحت عنوان «حفظ، تحریف، بیگانه‌سازی و حذف»، برای ارتقاء مدل بیکر شناسایی گردید.

واژه‌های راهنما: ترجمه ادبی، *مالون می‌میرد*، راهبردهای ترجمه، مدل بیکر (۱۹۹۶)، سبک

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