Patterns of Repetition in Persian and English: A Cross-Linguistic Study of the Two Translations of *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett

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Abstract *The aim of this study was to investigate the density of the most frequently used type of cohesive device (repetition) in terms of semantic equivalence in Waiting for Godot by Beckett (1954) and its two Persian translations by Alizad (2009) and Rastegar (2002). In fact, the original text and the translations were examined in terms of repetition. The repeated elements were first specified and counted in all the three texts and the density was calculated in each text for comparison. The results showed that there was a tendency not to transfer original repetitions-not out of carelessness nor out of linguistic constraints, but out of normative, stylistic considerations. Also, a seemingly contradictory phenomenon occurred, in which new repetitions were introduced by the translators. This could have been an attempt   on the part of the translators to avoid repeating the same words or phrases, or to care for other   normative considerations like the wish to embellish or amplify the text. Also, the results indicated that there was no orderly one to one relationship between the source and target texts with regard to translating repetitions; namely, in one case their number was equal to, while in another case, it was less than that of the original text since the translators tried to use more similar equivalents than repeating the same equivalents over and over. It can therefore be concluded that the two translated texts were statistically different in terms of semantically-loaded repetitions.*

Keywords: *Cohesion, coherence, lexical cohesion, density, repetition*

1. Introduction

The past several decades have seen a phenomenal growth in interest in text linguistics. Linguists endeavor to make some contribution towards it; among them systemic-functional linguists-Halliday and Hasan- are distinguished for their publication of *Cohesion in English* in 1976. The theory of cohesion in English proposed by Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Halliday (1994) has made significant contributions to the understanding of cohesion and, to a certain extent, coherence of English texts. The theory accounts for the relationship between the different elements of a text so as to enable the reader or listener to derive meaning from the text. Without cohesion, Halliday and Hasan believe, a text may be fragmented and lose its meaning. Cohesion makes a text consistent, so that ideas are easily followed.

Cohesion is part of language system and a way of organizing text on its surface. It is 'a semantic relation between an element in the text and some other element that is crucial to the interpretation of it.' (Halliday &

Hasan, 1976). One element 'presupposes' the other and points back or forward to it .Cohesion exists within a phrase, clause, sentence, and also between sentences. (Halliday & Hasan,1976). For de Beaugrande and Dressler (1981) cohesion within sentence or smaller units is more easily recognized and more direct than that among sentences or bigger units of text. However, when it comes to the description of text ‚cohesive ties between sentences are of major significance since they represent' the variable aspect of cohesion, distinguishing one text from another (Halliday & Hassan, 1976). Hallidayan cohesion involves the grammatical elements reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunction in addition to the semantic feature lexical cohesion. The theoretical terms for the linguistic resources which link one part of a text with another are what Halliday and Hasan (1985) regard as; reference, substitution and ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical cohesion (p.48).

Taking into consideration the content of the ST and TT, the focus of the present study was on repetition, falling under the category of lexical cohesion. This type of cohesive device was chosen for analysis due to its number of occurrences and their relative distance in the texts.

Bloor and Bloor (1995) argue that: "lexical cohesion refers to the cohesive effect of the use of lexical item in discourse where the choice of an item relates to the choices that have gone before" (p.100). Baker (1992) defines this tie from another angle: "lexical cohesion refers the role played by the selection of vocabulary in organizing relation within a text" (p. 202). Lexical cohesion has two aspects: repetition and collocation.

The aim of the present study was to investigate the density of the most frequently used type of cohesive device (repetition) in terms of semantic equivalents in *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett (1954) and its two Persian translations by Alizad (2009) and Rastegar (2002). In fact, the repeated items and their equivalents in the original text and its translations were examined. The repeated elements were specified and analysed semantically and counted in all the texts and the density was calculated in each text.

2. Transferring Repetition Across Languages

Avoiding repetition of words or phrases is part of a set of translation norms found to operate consciously or subconsciously on the translator and dictating the nature, and adequacy, of the translated text. Being one of the most recurrent norms, it can, in fact, supply research with an insight into the intricate relationship between textual and inter-textual relations, between considerations of adequacy and acceptability. In fact, it is so common and widespread, transcending differences between languages and cultures, that the term "norm", being local in nature, fails to apply to it, and one might call it a "universal of translation". Repetitions, in these handbooks, usually appear at the head of lists of prohibitions (Toury, 1977 & Ben-Ari, 1988).

Repetition has vast and various literary functions depending on genre, period and writer of the text. Repetitions may have a generic function — as they do in comedy, for instance, where repetitions (lingual or situational) function as part of the comic inventory of devices. They play an important role in myths, legends and folk tales, where they provide the generic frame of reference. They have a wide range of functions in poetry, where they may serve as musical, thematic or symbolic devices. They have traditionally served as "hypnotic" religious elements in sacred texts. They may function as a simulator of dialogues or spoken language in modern literature. At times they are significant to a point where they may provide the key to the reading, understanding or even decoding of the literary text (Ben-Ari, 1988).   Modern translation studies, however, have demonstrated that procedures adopted by   translators, and the norms behind those procedures, do not necessarily correspond to textual relations (Even-Zohar, 1974 & Toury, 1977).

Notwithstanding the importance of repetitions, therefore, it is not surprising to find that one of the most persistent and inflexible norms in translation from all languages, is that of avoiding repetitions. Since the behavior of norms is neither logical nor conscious, it seems that avoiding repetitions has to do with a deep-rooted need to display richness of vocabulary, passed down by generations of normative stylistic do's and don'ts and extremely difficult to root out. In western civilizations richness of vocabulary is, supposedly, a mark of class and culture, of intelligence and rank, whereas meagerness of vocabulary has traditionally been associated with poverty of means, intellectual or otherwise. Modern literature has made the use of repetitions

a versatile tool for its various manifestations. But, though acknowledged and frequently used in original literary texts, old-fashioned norms still have the upper hand in translated ones. There is no doubt that translators can identify repetitions and analyze their respective roles in the text. Their first and strongest tendency, however, will be to refrain from using them (Ben-Ari, 1988).

Roughly speaking, repetitions are handled in two main ways; they are either omitted, or replaced by synonyms. Replacing repetitions can be done in several ways, starting with a variation of the item replaced and ending with a synonymous expression, but once replaced; the result is invariably the same: normative pressures turn every texteme into a repertoreme. The persistence and weight of the norm is reflected in the fact that no text escapes it: the phenomenon is just as widespread in classical literary texts, where respect for the position of the writer in the SL could theoretically involve a greater commitment on the part of translators to transfer textual relations by textual means; moreover, it is to be found even in bilingual texts, where, presumably, the proximity of the original should enhance adequacy. (Ben-Ari, 1988)

Avoiding repetition is such a predominant norm that it seems to be found in all translated texts. The only variant, extravagances of the individual translator, is sometimes that of quantity, which reflects the degree of willingness, on the part of translators, to sacrifice acceptability for the sake of adequacy. When such willingness does not exist, when translation is at its customary "normal" positionas a secondary system within the literary polysystem, rigid normative literary models and "classical" stylistic norms will prevail (Ben-Ari, 1988).

Based on the above quoted statements concerning the importance and functions of repetition in text and translation, the present study sought to find answers to the following questions:

1. Is there a one-to-one relationship between the source and target texts in terms of repetition patterns from a semantic point of view?
2. Is there any difference between the two translated texts in terms of semantically-loaded repeated items?

3. Methodology

3.1 Materials

For the purpose of this study, the researchers made use of the play *Waiting for Godot* (1954) and its two Persian translations by Alizad (2009) and Rastegar (2002). *Waiting for Godot* is one of the most prominent works in literature which caused a significant revolution in theatre in the twentieth century. It was initially written as *En Attendant Godot* in French in 1948 and translated into English by Beckett himself as *Waiting for Godot*, the play was produced in London in 1955 and in the United States in 1956 and has been produced worldwide.

3.2 Procedures

The following procedures were used in this study to find answers to the research questions.

First, the repeated elements and their equivalents were specified in the original text and its translations respectively according to Halliday and Hasan (1976) categorization of lexical devices called 'specifically simple lexical repetition'.

Second, the identified elements were analyzed to see whether 'identical', 'similar' or 'different' semantic equivalents were used for the specified repeated elements in the original text. The employed equivalents were then counted in all the texts and the density of each equivalent was calculated in each text. The data were analyzed descriptively, using simple statistics where necessary. Finally, the results were compared to find if there was any difference between the two translations in terms of semantically-loaded repeated patterns.

3.3 Framework of the Study

Halliday and Hasan's (1976) approach to repetition as a subtype of reiteration in establishing lexical cohesive ties, was the basis of this study. In fact, the study mainly focused on the first type of cohesive devices defined by them, i.e. 'specifically simple lexical repetition' in terms of semantic equivalence.

4 Data Analysis and Results

4.1 Data Analysis

The first research question asked for the possible one-to-one relationship between the source and target texts as far as the repetition patterns are concerned.

Regarding the first question, the researchers identified all the items repeated in the original text and their equivalents in both renderings of it to see if there is a one-to-one relationship between these patterns. To achieve this goal, first the original text was investigated and then the equivalents of the repeated items were found in the two translations.

Then, the repeated items were semantically analyzed to check the density of identical, similar and different equivalents. Actually, the identical equivalents which semantically transferred the very same repetition patterns of the original text were scored 2, while the cases in which the patterns were somehow similar to the original text were scored 1. The equivalents which were semantically different in comparison to the original text were scored 0.

The analysis comprised the whole drama and the density of each repeated pattern was calculated to show which translation had transferred the patterns of the original text more precisely. The results of the data analysis are presented in the following tables and discussed below:

Table 1. Repeated items of the original text and their equivalents in the two Persian translations of *Waiting for Godot*

Item No.	Original Text	T1	T2	Identical Semantic Equivalent		Similar Semantic Equivalent		Different Semantic Equivalent	
				T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2
1	E: Nothing to be done.	‑هیچ کاری نمیشه کرد	‑نخیر، فایده ای ندارد.	2	2	-	-	-	-
2	V: So there you are again.	‑بازم پیدات شد.	‑توکه باز یک من رفتی و صد من برگشتی؟	2	-	-	1	-	-
3	E: Not now, Not Now.	‑آلان نه‑الان نه	‑ول کن ‑ بابا دلت خوش است!	2	-	-	-	-	0
4	E: In a ditch	‑داخل راه آب.	‑تو خندق.	2	2	-	-	-	-
5	V:A ditch !where?	‑راه آب!کجا؟	‑عجب! کدام خندق؟	2	2	-	-	-	-
6	V: And they didn't beat you?	‑دوباره کتکت زدند؟	‑تو سرت که نزدند؟	-	-	1	1	-	-

	English	Persian 1	Persian 2						
7	E: Beat me? Certainly they beat me.	-کتکم زدند؟ .معلومه که زدند	-مگر می شود نزنند؟	2	-	-	1	-	-
8	V: The same lot as usual?	-همون دسته همیشگی بود؟	-همون دار ودسته همیشگی؟	-	2	1	-	-	-
9	E: The same? I don't know.	-همون؟نمی دونم.	-چه می دانم .لابد	2	-	-	-	-	0
10	V: It hurts?	-درد داره؟	-می زند؟	2	2	-	-	-	-
11	E: Hurts !He wants to know if it hurts!	-درد داره ؟ یه چیزی می گه ها!	-زکی! تازه می خواد بداند می زند یا نمی زند!	-	-	1	1	-	-
12	E: It hurts?	-درد داره؟	-مگر مال تو هم می زند؟	2	-	-	1	-	-
13	V: Hurts!He wants to know if it hurts!	-درد داره ؟یه چیزی می گه ها!	-زکی! تازه می خواد بداند می زند یا نمی زند!	-	-	1	1	-	-
14	P: Adieu.	-بدرود.	-عزت زیاد.	2	2	-	-	-	-
15	V:Adieu.	-بدرود.	-سایه تان کم نشود.	2	-	-	1	-	-
16	V: ...Nothing to be done.	-هیچ کاری نمی شه کرد.	-فایده ای نداره.	2	2	-	-	-	-
17	V: Suppose we repented.	-فرض کن توبه کردیم .	-بیا ما هم توبه کنیم ببینیم چه می شود.	2	-	-	1	-	-
18	E: Repented what?	-توبه از چی؟	-توبه کنیم؟ از چی؟	2	2	-	-	-	-
19	V:...Nothing to be done.	-... هیچ کاری نمی شه کرد.	-...نه ، فایده یی نداره.	2	2	-	-	-	-
20	V: Don't tell me!	-تعریف نکن برام!	-نمی خواد بگویی!	2	2	-	-	-	-

As it was mentioned before, the above-shown density was calculated by adding up the scores of each item. In the following section, the statistical results of the analyzed data will be presented.

4.2 Statistical Results

Considering the densities obtained from the above tables regarding the semantically-loaded repetitions in the original text and its two Persian translations, the following graphical representations were resulted. As the results show (Table 2), the total density of the identified repetition elements in the translations of the whole drama was 344.

## Table 2 Distribution of scores in the two Persian translations

Translation	Scores			Total
	0	1	2	
1	6	29	309	344
2	45	154	145	344

Figure 1. Graphical representation of the scores of translation 1
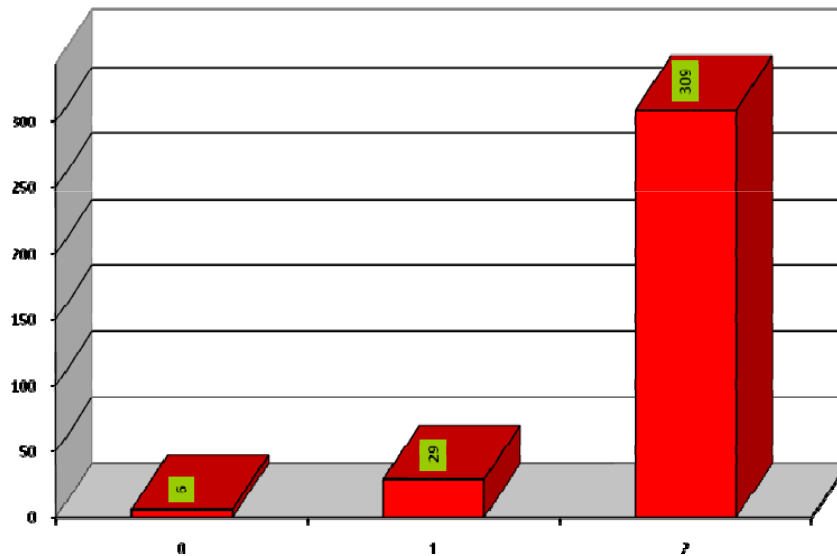
The above figure shows the scores and distribution of the identical, similar and different repetitious equivalents in Alizad's translation. Also, the following figure shows the scores and distribution of the identical, similar and different repetitious equivalents in Rastegar's translation.

## Figure 2. Graphical representation of the scores of translation 2
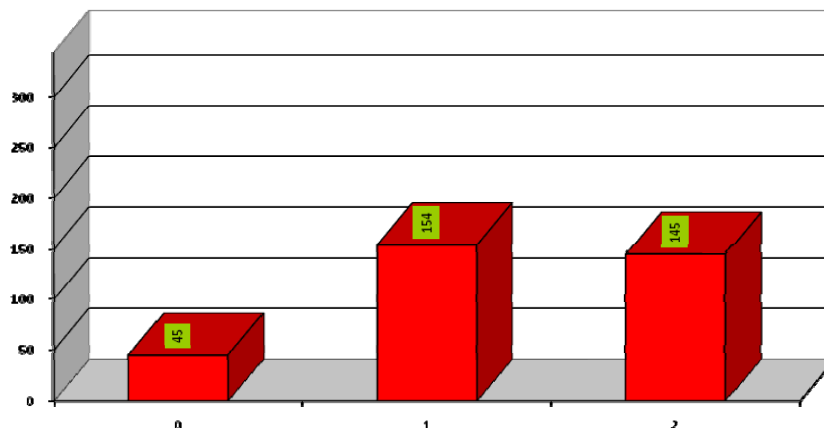
In the next step, the two Persian translations were compared to find out whether they were similar with regard to the obtained scores. Table 3 below shows the descriptive statistics for this comparison, and figure 3 illustrates the means graphically.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for the Two Persian Translations

	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
T1	344	.00	2.00	1.88	.375
T2	344	.00	2.00	1.29	.685

This table and the following graph show the differences between the means of the two Persian translations. As it is evident, the Mean in the first translation by Alizad (T1) is 1.88 but it is 1.29 in the second translation by Rastegar (T2).

Figure 3. Graphical representation of the Means of the two Persian translations
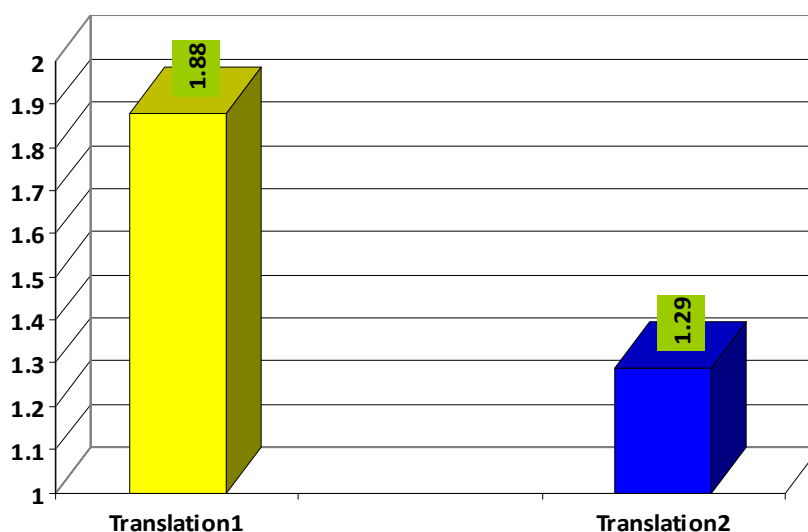
In order to see if there is any difference between the two Persian translations, a t-test was run. Table 4 below indicates the results of the t-test.

Table 4. The Results of the t-test for the Two Persian Translations

t	df	Sig.	Mean Difference
14.020	686	.000	.59

The above table shows that the amount of t-observed (t-observed= 14.020) is significant at the probability level of p= .000; which means that the two Persian translations are statistically different.

5. Discussion of Results

This study planned to examine more closely the repetition patterns of the original text, a well-known play by Beckett (1954) and its two Persian translations from a semantic point of view to see whether there was a one-to-one relationship between the original text and its Persian renderings, and if the two Persian translations were statistically different in terms of repeated patterns' meaning.

The framework of the study was Halliday & Hasan's lexical cohesive devices focusing on 'specifically the simple lexical repetitions' in the form of simple words or even short utterances and repeated phrases.

According to the densities shown in the above tables, it can generally be claimed that although one of the translators had tried to transfer the repetition elements precisely as the original, there was no orderly one-to-one relationship between the source and target texts with regard to the Persian translations of the repeated items' meanings. Also, the two translated texts were statistically different in terms of semantically-loaded repetitions.

5.1 Answering the First Research Question

Concerning the first question, there were a few cases in which the translated phrases were similar or somehow different from the original text. The first translation by Alizad (T1) was more identical to the original text than Rastegar's translation (T2) in terms of semantic equivalence (309 out of 344 identified cases). The second Translation by Rastegar (T2) compared with the first one (T1) was more similar to the original text as far as semantic equivalents were involved (154 out of 344 cases). With respect to the second translation by Rastegar, the densities showed that the number of identical and similar semantic equivalents was approximately distributed the same with a few differences (about 9 cases). According to the results, in most of the cases, Rastegar had tried to use more explainable or even different equivalents for the repetitious patterns in terms of meaning. Rastegar had actually tried to introduce more similar equivalents for the repeated words or phrases in order to make the text more innovative and to reduce the boring effect of repetition on the reader. Few cases were however encountered in Rastegar's translation in which repetition patterns were translated differently from the original text by using different equivalents. This was not considerable in Alizad's translation as he had attempted to be more faithful to the original text and had rendered a more semantic text compared with Rastegar's translation. As a result,   the concept of cohesion which is related to meaning and is a way of assessing the quality of translation was more evident in Alizad 's translation. As Halliday and Hasan (1976) state, investigating cohesion in ST and TT is a good way to appraise the meaning of original and translated versions. Thus, by comparing them one can notice how much of the meaning is transferred in the process of translation and how much is lost.

With reference to what was mentioned above, it could be argued that there was a relative one-to-one relationship between the source text and the translation in Alizad's work as far as semantically-loaded repetition is concerned.

In general, both translations had applied a literal semantic and somehow communicative method of translation to transfer the repetition patterns identified in the whole drama. Much effort had been made to render the exact contextual meaning of the original text in such a way that both content and form were readily acceptable and comprehensible to the readerships of the target language. Nevertheless, the language used by Rastegar in some parts enjoyed folklore or common people language.

5.2 Answering the second Research Question

The second question was related to the possible difference between the two Persian translated texts in transferring semantically-loaded repetitions. With respect to the tables and graphical representations shown above regarding the density of each identified semantic equivalent in the original text, compared with the two Persian translations, the results showed that the mean in the first translation by Alizad was 1.88, while it was 1.29 in the second translation by Rastegar, which indicated the difference between the two Persian translations in terms of semantically-loaded repetitions.

6. Conclusion

Repetition or reiteration is a phenomenon common in language, music, religion, and literature, and has been studied extensively by linguists.

In the present research, the significance of repetition patterns in source and target texts was mostly based on the nature of the structure and theme of the play under study which had been yielded in the two Persian translations through the use of repeated words and utterances, as the theme of the play is absurd life, waiting and passing of time. The research aimed at comparing the density of repetitious elements -the most prominent feature- of the English drama and its two Persian translations to see if there was a one-to-one semantic equivalence between the original text and its Persian renderings in terms of repetitious elements, and also to find any differences between the two Persian translations with regard to repeated patterns with semantic loads.

The analysis showed that there was no orderly one-to-one relationship between the source and target texts with regard to translating semantically-loaded repetitions, although there were cases in which the translators had used the same number of similar and identical equivalents. In some cases, the translators had tried to introduce new similar equivalents for repetitions as an attempt to compensate for or to avoid repeating the same words or phrases being used over and over. As a whole, the two Persian translations were statistically different in terms of semantically-loaded repeated items.

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