# An Analysis of Social Systems in the Translation of The Great Gatsby

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#### **Abstract**

This article was written based on the key concept of polysystem theory which, in translating any literary text, emphasizes the transference of the social systems in which a text is embedded. As stated by Tynjanov (1978a), polysystem theory saw translated literature as a system operating in the larger social systems of the target text. Thus, the task of understanding as well as transferring such systems in their translations, which can certainly affect the readers' adequate understanding of texts, is a challenging job for most of the literary translators. After identifying three main social systems in The Great Gatsby as the corpus which was ranked second in the lists of the 100 Best Novels of the 20th Century, the source and the target texts were studied attentively, to study the way the respective systems were translated by the Iranian literary translators. Therefore, the prominent element of Nord's textual analysis (1991), macrostructure, was focused throughout data collection procedure. Then, it was demonstrated that especially through an appropriate transference of the major conflict between the two predominant classes in the novel, the translator has managed to suitably convey most of the text's social systems in his translation. Finally, it could be deduced that most of the literary translators in Iran, somehow transferred the concerned systems into some significantly adequate equivalents in their works.

Keywords: Polysystem Theory, Social Systems, Transference, Literary Translation

Received: January 2012; Accepted: December 2012

# 1. Introduction

As Even-Zohar (1978) stated, language is embedded in culture. A writer is a product of a particular time and a particular context, just as a translator is a product of the same or another time and another context. Thus, to fulfill a role allocated by a community to the activity of translating, in a suitable way, finds significance. However, it seems that especially the social systems of polysystem theory have been usually, consciously or unconsciously, ignored by some literary translators in Iran. Besides, the respective social aspects have seldom been analyzed in any translated text, for example in the translation of a novel. In this way, it seems quite appropriate to bring about some relevant comments on the role of social systems in the translation of a literary work.

Almost all translation theorists (e.g., Munday, 2001) suggest that polysystem theory has had a profound influence on translation studies, in such a way that it has been considered as a less prescriptive statement of translation in different contexts. Even-Zohar (1978) emphasized that translated literature operated as a system first, in the way TL selected works for translation and second, in the way translation norms, behavior and policies were influenced by other co-systems. He focused on the interrelationships of all these systems in the over-arching concept to which he gave a new term, the polysystem. Moreover, according to him (ibid), translation studies followers, like several translation theorists before them, tended to look at one-to-one relationships and functional notions of equivalence; they believed in the subjective ability of the translator to derive an equivalent text, that in turn influenced the literary and cultural conventions in a particular society. Polysystem theorists presumed the opposite: that the social norms and literary conventions in the receiving culture or target system, governed the aesthetic presuppositions of the translator and thus, influenced following translation decisions. Thus, the

advantage of polysystem theory, apparently, is that it allows for its own augmentation and integrates the study of literature with the study of social and economic forces of history.

Moreover, for Toury (1995), the prominent scholar, translations primarily occupied a position in the social and literary systems of the target culture, and that position determined the translation strategies that were employed.

# 2. Methodology

Nord's (1991) textual analysis, with its focus on the text's macrostructure, as a significant factor in analyzing any literary text as well as its translation, has been used as the procedure to collect the necessary data.

It seems that one of the crucial aspects in the analysis of macrostructure is the question of whether there are any sub-texts or in-texts embedded in the source text (ST), i.e., *The Great Gatsby*. This is particularly important in translation, because each level of communication may require a situational analysis of its own. Additionally, as Nord (1991) stated, most writers on translation theory then approved that before anything and as the only way to certify that the ST had been fully understood, any translator initially had to analyze the text thoroughly. Besides, she suggested that the function of the TT was not settled on only from an analysis of the ST, but it was the purpose of the intercultural communication that could pragmatically clarify it. The model Nord (ibid) was striving to produce, then, was largely concerned with the universals of culture-including language, i.e., communication and translation.

### 3. Results and Discussion

Organized in the three main subsystems of polysystem theory, namely the social

type, the relative information in both ST and TT, which from now on are called the social data, are well brought forward, based on Nord's textual analysis. Thus, such social information which are, in other words, the findings from the comparative analysis of ST and TT in a macro level, can be significantly categorized based on the specific feature of the American society through the 1920s, i.e., the Romantic Age, they are reflecting:

# 1. The Contempt of the West Eggers (the new money) by The East Eggers (the old money)

1.1. The most **domesticated** body of salt water in the Western hemisphere, the great wet **barnyard** of Long Island Sound (p. 5)

1.2. His family were enormously wealthy, even in college his freedom with money was a matter for reproach but now he had left Chicago and come East in a fashion that rather took your breath away. (p. 6)

1.3. 'You **live** in West Egg,' she remarked contemptuously. 'I know somebody there.' (p. 9)

1.4. 'Well, these books are all scientific' insisted Tom, 'this fellow has worked out the whole thing. It's up to us, who are the dominant race, to watch out or these other races will have control of things.'

We've got to beat them down', whispered Daisy. (p.11)

" آره، این کتابا همه ش علمیه. این یارو همه جای قضیه رو حساب کرده، حالا دیگه این به عهده ماهس که نژاد برتر هستیم که مواظب باشیم این نژادهای دیگه اختیار کار رو از دست ما نگیرن." دی زی به نحوا گفت: "ناید یکوییمشون (ص ۳۲)"

- 1.5. 'I told that boy about the ice'. Myrtle raised her eyebrows in despair at the shiftlessness of the lower orders. 'These people! You have to keep after them all the time.' (p. 22)
  - «من به اون پسره گفتم یخ بیاره.» مرتل ابروهایش را به حال اضطرار رو به شکایت از بی مایگی فرمانبران زیر دست بالا برد. «عجب آدمایی! همیشه باید هی بهشون بگی بگی.» (ص ۵۳)
  - 1.6. .... All well dressed, all looking a little hungry, and all talking in low, earnest voices to **solid** and prosperous Americans (p. 28)
  - ... همه خوش پوش، همه به ظاهراندکی گرسنه و همه با صداهای ملایم و متین با آمریکایی های جاسنگین و پولدار در گفتگو (ص ۶۴)
  - 1.7. 'He asked me my name and address- inside of a week I got a package from Coirier's with a new evening gown in it. It was **gas blue** and lavender beads. Two hundred and sixty-five dollars. (p. 29)
  - «یارو اسم و آدرسم رو گرفت سر هفته نشده یک بسته ای از کرواریه برام رسید که توش یک لباس شب نوبود. به رنگ آبی گازی یه با منجوق های گل خاری. دویست و شصت و پنج دلار» (ص۶۶)
  - 1.8. 'Let's get out,' whispered Jordan; 'this is much too polite for me'. (p. 30) جوردن در گوشم گفت: «پاشو بریم. اینجا برای من زیادی مودبانه س.» (ص ۶۸)
  - 1.9. A whole clan named Blackbuck, always gathered in a corner and flipped up their noses like goats at whosoever came near. (p. 39)
  - تمام افراد خانواده ای که بلاک بَک نام داشتند، همیشه در یک گوشه جمع می شدند و هر کس نزدیک شان می شد مثل بز دماغ شان را برایش بالا می گرفتند. (ص ۸۷)
  - 1.10. 'I was brought up in America but educated at Oxford, because all my ancestors have been educated there for many years. It is a family tradition.' (p.42)
  - تربیت من در آمریکا انجام شد و تحصیلاتم در آکسفورد، چون همه اجداد من او نجا درس خوندهن. سنّت خانوادگی یه ». (ص ۹۱)
  - 1.11. 'A souvenir of Oxford days. It was taken in Trinity, Quad. The man on my left is now the Earl of Doncaster'. (p.43)

«این یادگار روزهای آکسفورده. جلو کالج ترینیتی گرفته شده. کسی که طرف چپ من ایستاده لُرد دانکا ستره.» (ص ۹۳)

1.12. 'He went to Oggsford College in England. You know Oggsford College?' 'I've heard of it.'(p. 46)

رفته به دانشگاه آگس فورد در انگلیس. شما دانشگده آگس فورد بودین؟ "اسمش رو شنیده م." (ص۹۹)

1.13. 'He's quite a character around New York – a denizen of Broadway.' (p.47)

1.14. While we admired he brought more and the soft rich heap mounted higher- shirts with stripes and scrolls and plaids, with monograms of **Indian blue**. (p. 59)

در آن حال که به پیراهن هایش به به می گفتیم، دسته دیگری از اشکاف بیرون آورد و مخروط نرم گرانبها همچنان بالاتر می رفت پیراهن های راه راه، ماری، پیچازی با حروف اول اسمش که به رنگ آبی هندی روی آنها ابریشم دوزی شده بود. (ص ۱۲۳)

1.15. 'An Oxford man!' He was incredulous. 'Like hell he is! He wears a pink suit.' (p.77)

تام شاخش درآمد: «تحصیل کردهی آکسفورد! جون عمه ش! باکت و شلوار صورتی پوشیدنش!» (ص ۱۵۸)

1.16. 'Listen, Tom. If **you're such a snob**, why did you invite him to lunch?' demanded Jordan crossly. (p.78)

جوردن با عصبانیت گفت: «ببین تام، اگه تو **داخل آدم حسابش نمیکنی** پس چرا دعوتش کردی به ناهار؟» (ص ۱۵۸)

# 2. Prevalence of immorality among different layers of the American society through Jazz Age

2.1. We all looked the knuckle was black and blue.

'You did it, Tom,' she said accusingly.' That's what I get for marrying a brute of a man, a great, big, hulking physical specimen of a ----- '(p.10)

همه نگاه کردیم- مفصل وسط انگشت کبود و سیاه شده بود.

دی زی با لحن متهم کننده ای گفت: "تام این کار توئه. این نصیب من از ازدواج با یه نرّه غوله با نوع عظیم جسیم و گنده ای از حیوانی به اسم... " (ص ۳۱)

2.2. 'Why she said hesitantly, Tom's got some woman in New York.' 'Got some woman?' I repeated blankly.

'She might have the decency not to telephone him at dinner time. Don't you think?' (p.12)

میس بیکر با تردید گفت:"آخه... تام تو نیویورک یه رفیقه داره." ومن با نفهمی تکرار کردم: "رفیقه داره؟" "اقلاً خوبه آنقدر انسانیت داشته باشه که سر شام دیگه تلفن نزنه." (ص ۳۵)

2.3. 'It does her good to get away.'

'Doesn't her husband object?'

'Wilson? He thinks she goes to see her sister in New York. He's so dumb he doesn't know he's alive.'(p.18)

"براش خوبه دور از اینجا یه هوایی بخوره."
"شوهرش اعتراضی نداره؟"

"کی؟ ویلسن؟ فکر میکنه میره نیویورک پیش خواهرش. آنقدر خره که خودش نمی دونه زنده هس یا مرده." (ص۴۷)

2.4. In the main hall a bar with a real brass rail was set up, and stocked with gins and liquors and with cordials so long forgotten that most of his female guests were too young to know one from another. (p. 26)

در سرسرای اصلی باری با میله برنجی اصل برپا شده بود و آن را باجینها و مشروبهای قوی می انباشتند و با لیکورهایی که مدتها بود فراموش شده بودند و بیشتر مهمان های زنش جوان تر از آن بودند که انواع آنها را از هم باز شناسند. (ص۶۲)

2.5. At first I thought it was another party, a wild rout that had resolved itself into 'hide-and-seek' or 'sardines- in- the-box' with all the house thrown open to the game. (p. 52)

اول فکر کردم لابد یکی دیگر از شب نشینی های اوست: بزم بیبند و باری که به «قایم باشک» و «ساردین در قوطی» رسیده باشد و تمام ساختمان را در اختیار بازی کنندگان قرار داده باشند. (ص (11.

2.6. 'I wonder where in the devil he met Daisy. By God, I may be oldfashioned in my ideas, but women run around too much these days to suit me. They meet all kinds of crazy fish.' (p. 66)

می خوام بدونم کدوم جهنم درّهای با دی زی آشنا شده. به خدا قسم من ممکنه افکارم قدیمی باشه ولی به عقیدهی من زنها این روزا دیگه از بس این وراون ور میرن با همه جور **حیوونی** آشنا میشن. (ص (177

2.7. We drank down nervous gaiety with the cold ale.

'What'll we do with ourselves this afternoon? cried Daisy,' and the day after that and the next thirty years?' (p.75)

دى زى فرياد كشيد: "امروز بعداز ظهر چه كار كنيم؟ و فردا و سى سال آينده؟" (ص١٥٢)

2.8. 'Come on, Daisy', said Tom, pressing her with his hand towards Gatsby's car. 'I'll take you in this circus wagon.' (p.77)

- 2.9. 'I know I'm not very popular. I don't give big parties. I suppose you've got to make your house into a pigsty in order to have any friends- in the modern world.'
  ...The transition from **libertine** to **prig** was so complete. (p. 83)

«من می دونم که مورد توجه نیستم. مهمونی های بزرگ نمی دم. مث این که آدم اگه بخواد تو این دنیای تجدّد یه چن تا دوس داشته باشد، اول باید خونه ش رو تبدیل به طویله بکنه.»

- 2.10. Once in a while I go off on a spree and make a fool of myself, but I always come back, and in my heart I love her all the time.'
  - 'You're revolting,' said Daisy. (p.84)

- 3. Predominance of Materialistic as well as shallow attitudes towards life through Flapper Age
  - 3.1. 'How you ever get anything done is beyond me'. (p. 9)

3.2. 'Oh, I'll stay in the East, don't you worry; I'd be a God damned fool to live anywhere else.'

At this point Miss Baker said: 'Absolutely!' with such suddenness that I startled. (p. 9)

3.3. 'Well, it's a fine book. It's all scientific stuff; it's been proved'.

'Tom's getting very **profound**,' said Daisy, with an expression of unthoughtful sadness. 'He reads **deep books** with long words in them'. (p.10)

«هیچی دیگه، کتاب خیلی خوبی یه. همه مطالبش علمی یه. یارو حرفش رو ثابت کرده.» دی زی که یک غم آنی چهره اش را گرفته بود گفت: «تام داره خیلی پُر عمق می شه. کتابای عمیقی می خونه که پر از لغتای گنده س.» (ص ۳۲)

3.4. 'Is she from New York?' I asked quickly. 'From Louisville. Our white girlhood was passed together there. Our beautiful white ...' (p.14)

من تند رسيدم:"اهل نيويوركه؟"

- «نه لویی ویل. دوران دوشیزگی سپیدمون رومادوتا اونجا باهم گذراندیم. **دوشیزگی سپید** زیبامون ... » (ص ۴۰)
- 3.5. The sister, Catherine, was a slender, worldly girl of about thirty, with a solid, sticky bob of red hair. When she moved about there was an

incessant clicking as innumerable pottery bracelets jingled up and down upon her arms. (p. 20)

کاترین خواهر خانم ویلسن زنی باریک اندام، **دنیایی** و سی ساله بود. موهای سرش را کوتاه قیچی کرده بود - هنگامی که راه می رفت، دستبندهای سرامیک متعددی که به ساعدهای خود بسته بود به هم می خورند و یک بند صدایی شبیه به ترق ترق از آنها برمی خاست. (ص ۵۱)

3.6. Her laughter, her gestures, her assertions became more violently **affected** moment by moment, and as she expanded the room grew smaller around her. (p. 21)

خنده اش، حرکاتش و اظهاراتش لحظه به لحظه، به شدت بیشتری تصنعی می شد و هر چه او منبسطتر می گشت اتاق کوچک ترمی شد. (ص ۵۲)

3.7. 'Well, they say he is a nephew or a cousin of **Kaiser Wilhelm's**. That is where all his money comes from'.

'Really?'(p. 22)

«می گن که برادرزاده یا پسرعموی قیصر آلمانه. پولاش ازونجا اومده.» "راستی؟" (ص ۵۵)

- 3.8. They were at least aware of **the easy money** in the vicinity and convinced that it was theirs for a few words in the right key. (p. 28)
- دست کم از وجود پول آسانی که در همسایگی ریخته بود به نحو دردناکی آگاه بودند، و معتقد به اینکه با چند کلمه ، به شرطی که با لحن مناسبی گفته شود، سهمی از آن نصیبشان خواهد شد.(+ 7)
- 3.9. A stout, middle-aged man, with enormous owl-eyed spectacles, was sitting somewhat **drunk** on the edge of a great table, staring with unsteady concentration at the shelves of books. (p. 30)
- مردی تنومند و میان سال با عینک عظیم چشم جغدی و نسبتاً مست روی لبه ی میز بزرگی نشسته بود و با تمرکز نامداوم به قفسه های کتاب خیره مانده بود. ( ص ۶۸ )
- 3.10. I was looking at an elegant young **roughneck** whose elaborate formality of speech just missed being **absurd**. (p. 32)
- من به جوان به ظاهر **بزن بهادر** شیکپوشی می نگریستم که سخن گفتنِ لفظ قلم او فقط یک پرده تا مرز کارهای **مضحک بی معنی** فاصله داشت. (ص ۷۲)

3.11. The very phrases were worn so threadbare that they evoked no image except that of a turbaned 'character' leaking sawdust at every pore as he pursued a tiger through Bois de Boulogne. (p. 42)

حتی عبارت هایی که به کار می برد چنان از فرط استعمال نخ نما شده بودند که هیچ گونه تصویری برنمی انگیختند، جز تصویر آدمکی عمامه به سر که وقتی در جنگل بولونی به تعقیب ببرها می پرداخت از تمام منافذش خاک ازه بیرون می ریخت. (ص ۹۲)

3.12. Americans, while willing, even eager, to be **serfs**, have always been obstinate about being peasantry. (p. 57)

آمریکایی ها که گاه حاضر اند **نوکربی جیره و مواجب** دیگری شوند، همیشه با سرسختی از پذیرفتن رعیتی ابا کرده اند. (ص ۱۱۹)

3.13. The transactions in Montana copper that made him many times a millionaire, found him physically robust but on the verge of soft – mindedness .(p. 63)

در پایان معامله های مس مونتانا که او راچند باره میلیونر کرد، کودی آدمی بود با جسم تندرست که مغزش به سوی نرمی می گرایید. (ص ۱۳۲)

3.14. Dan Cody inhospitably died. (p. 64)

3.15. 'You think I'm pretty dumb, don't you? Perhaps I am, but I have a \_\_\_\_ almost a second sight, sometimes that tells me what to do. Maybe you don't believe that, but science\_\_'(p. 77)

"شما فکر می کنین من خرم؟ شاید این جور باشه اما من یه چیزی دارم- تقریباً یه بینایی دوم که گاهی بهم میگه باید چه کار کنم. شاید شما باور نکنین ولی علم..." (ص۱۵۷)

# The Analysis of the Translation of Social Systems Used in *The Great Gatsby* and Its Translation

According to polysystem theory (1978), any translated text can be considered as a system which functions in the larger social systems, so that such literary work

cannot be studied separately but as a part of a literary system, which itself is defined as a system of functions of literary order which are in continual interrelationship with other orders. Besides, which finds significance with regard to the polysystem, seems to be the interaction of the variable levels of the system at a fixed moment in history. In this way, the concerning social systems in both ST and TT are brought here, which could be significantly categorized based on the specific feature of the American society through the 1920s, they have been reflecting:

The contempt of The West Eggers (the new money) by The East Eggers (the old money): The most important and predominant social system pervading the novel, as examples number 5 or 6 belong to this category

For the most part, the translator has well transferred some major social systems which concern that main conflict between the two predominant classes in the novel, namely *The West Eggers (the new money)* and *The East Eggers (the old money)*. Skillfully and through an individual discourse, the translator has managed to convey Tom's contemptuous tone as the agent of aristocrats. Especially, the suitable transfer of the way Tom has addressed Gatsby in the novel, as well as most of the conversations between the two concerned groups of characters, have come up to an appropriate work on the whole. This, have increased the potency of his equivalents concerning the social systems.

<u>Predominance of Materialistic as well as shallow attitudes towards life</u>
<u>through Flapper Age:</u> The second major social system which pervades not only *The Great Gatsby* but also other modern societies.

Although such social system is normal for modern societies, its concepts are sometimes so complicated that their translations somehow seem demanding. In this regard, there are some cases, for instance numbers 3.3, 3.4, 3.8. and 3.13 that the translator could not provide meaningful and appropriate equivalents

for some materialistic concepts regarding the concerned social system. Exact and relevant equivalents have had to be provided for some of the discussed points.

<u>Prevalence of immorality among different layers of the American society</u> through Jazz Age: another major social system and at the same time, the commonest for the American society through 1920s

Since some of the items of this social system are somehow related to culture, their translations have, by far, necessitated the translator's more thoughtful consideration. In this way, there are some cases for example numbers 2.6, 2.7 where the translator have either contented himself to the mere exact words (or social concepts) of the ST or have not wholly transferred the significance of some social concepts of the ST. However, for most of the sentences or phrases concerning the respective social system, the translator has provided some meaningful and appropriate equivalents in the TT.

## 4. Conclusion

This research aimed to analyze the major social systems (as included in polysystem theory) in the translation of *The Great Gatsby*. Such social systems included the contempt of The West Eggers (the new money) by The East Eggers (the old money), predominance of materialistic as well as shallow attitudes towards life through Flapper Age and prevalence of immorality among different layers of the American society through Jazz Age. As demonstrated before, the translations of almost all the three social systems have been somehow demanding. Besides, according to Munday (2001) and early translation scholars, translations first take a place in the social systems of the target culture and that place selects the translation strategies that are used.

Thus, on deciding about a suitable translation for any social system, a translator should consider the position of the concerned social items in the receiving culture in order to be able to provide more relevant and exact equivalents. This point may be also reminiscent of Toury's view (1995) towards translation. He considered translation to be an activity governed by norms, socio-cultural constraints, specific to a culture and society which determine the type and extent of equivalence manifested in actual translations.

Therefore, it can be deduced from the above comments that one of the key factors in analyzing a literary translator's success in transferring social systems of a literary text can be the extent he has managed to effectively convey the concerned systems in the TT's social context. This means neither the employment of the same foreign words of ST in the translated text, nor their thorough change and dictation of the TT's social systems on them. Rather, the suitable transference of the ST's systems, considering those of the TT is intended. This which somehow seems a challenge to most of the Iranian literary translators, as it has been demonstrated before, has been a positive point in Emami's translation of *The Great Gatsby*.

According to polysystem theory, a literary translator has to take it into account that the work he has decided to translate, has been written in a specific time and place with its particular addressees whose cultural and social systems on the one hand, and beliefs and knowledge of the world on the other hand, are wholly different from those of the TT's readers. He has to convey the same ST's concepts to his own addressees in the best way that takes the TT's cultural, literary and social systems into consideration. Apart from some minor cases of either misunderstanding or inappropriate transference of some social concepts concerning the related social systems, he has fairly provided many comprehensible and significant equivalents in all the three categorized social

systems, which have come up to a valuable work on the whole. Although he has sometimes preferred a ST-oriented technique, especially in reflecting that main conflict between the two predominant classes in the novel, namely the new money and the old money, he has managed to produce an enriched and fluent text with the use of his admirably creative and dynamic prose.

At the end, to generalize the conclusion of the study to the domain of literary translation in Iran as a whole, it can be deduced that, working according to polysystem theory, approximately most of the literary translators in Iran have fortunately managed to convey the ST's concepts existing in its social systems, into their appropriate equivalents, considering the respective structures of the TT.

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