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**L'ÉTRANGER STRANGE TO ITS TRANSLATION: CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE TURKISH TRANSLATION OF L'ÉTRANGER FROM BERMAN'S PERSPECTIVE**

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**ABSTRACT**

Philosophical works are rich resources in terms of ideological aspects and literary inferences. Since these works aim to transmit the philosophical references to readers, original utilizations should be well-preserved in translation. Nevertheless, certain deviations can be observed in the translation of philosophical works due to the individual preferences of the translators, their social environments and cultural, political or ideological background information. Antoine Berman's translational approach evaluates the possible deviations and deformations in the translation of literary products. Twelve deforming tendencies classified by Berman constitute a solid basis for the evaluation of the translations of philosophical works and the preferences of the translators. Within this context, the present study analyzes the Turkish translation of one of the most well-known philosophical novels, *L'Étranger* within the scope of Berman's perspective. This study aims to present a comprehensive case study demonstrating the impacts of the deformations observed in the translations of philosophical works. For this purpose, the study firstly gives brief information on the ideology of Albert Camus, the author of *L'Étranger*. Secondly, it elaborates Berman's translational perspective in order to provide a theoretical aspect for the analysis. Thirdly, *L'Étranger* is briefly introduced, and the examples selected from this novel are analyzed within the scope of Berman's approach so as to create awareness about the significance of the preservation of philosophical references in the translation.

**Key Words:** Philosophy, Antoine Berman, deforming tendencies, Albert Camus, *L'Étranger*.

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## **1. Introduction**

Philosophy has been a prominent field in human life through the history of mankind as a means to investigate the existence of human beings and the truth in life. This interrogative system has always needed to be explained or interpreted due to its sophisticated and complicated nature, and it is expected to be conveyed through various means and methods. It is most generally seen that literature is one of the most effective ways to transmit philosophical views to target masses. Numerous philosophers have reflected their beliefs and shared their investigations through literature in which they have also chosen a specific style. Therefore, their literary products have generally possessed hidden meanings and understandings intended to be unveiled by readers. Within international context, the literary works of philosophers are most generally presented to foreign readers through translation. Since each word or expression has a specific meaning in philosophical masterpieces, selection of appropriate words or expressions in the target language plays an important role for the transmission of the philosophy; therefore, translators are expected to understand philosophical references hidden behind the words and to convey them as presented in the original text in order to protect the real nature and message of the literary works.

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Novels of Albert Camus constitute successful examples for the reflection of philosophy in literary products, and the translation of his works is considered as a challenging task for translators since the plots of his novels do not directly illustrate the ideology of Camus, but explain it through specific words in the novels and the personality of the characters. For this reason, the words and expressions of the translators have an essential influence on the transmission of Camus's philosophy and ideology, which attributes another feature to the translation: an ideological perspective. In this context, this study will firstly define the philosophy of Albert Camus with its general aspects in order to show the dominance of the philosophy in his books. Secondly, Antoine Berman's translation theory focusing on the deforming tendencies in translation will be explained in order to provide theoretical background information for this study. Then, the study will give brief information on Camus's novel entitled *L'Étranger* and analyze its Turkish translation by Vedat Günyol in the light of Antoine Berman's views so as to demonstrate the deformations experienced in the translation process of philosophical works.

## 2. Absurdity and Rebellion

Albert Camus (1913 – 1960), a well-known French-Algerian author and philosopher (a widely-accepted denomination although he did not consider himself as a philosopher) (Camus, 2014), is a leading actor reflecting effectively the combination of philosophy and literature by means of his literary works in which he illustrated the darkness and meaningless of life in the period of World War II. Albert Camus's philosophy is based on the absurdity of life and the rebellion against it. According to Camus, every person tries to understand the meaning of life and his/her existence; nevertheless, the nature is always indifferent to the curiosity of human beings and gives no answers to the questions about the purpose of living. Camus's philosophical view concentrates on the contradiction between the needs of mankind and the indifference of nature, which he called "the absurd" (Aronson, 2011). He depicted his absurd philosophy through the myth of Sisyphus, and related the endless curiosity of people to the futile struggle of Sisyphus who tries to climb up a mountain with a rock but ends with a failure each time "in an endless cycle" (Aronson, 2011). In response to the absurd, people may choose to commit suicide, which Camus considered as an escape from the absurdity of life and caused another absurd situation in philosophical sense (Naylor, 2012). Another option is to deny the existence of the absurdity and to engage in religion and faith, in other words, to ignore the philosophy. The option which Camus preferred is the rebellion against the absurdity. In this sense, rebellion is the acceptance of the absurd and the invention of a reason to live in any condition. In the rebellion, an individual is aware of the death and continues to live on his/her own purposes and welcomes the death in a happy manner. The characters in Camus's novels prefer to rebel against the absurdity soon or later and prepare themselves for their death (Demirdeler&Dönmez, 2013). For this reason, a close relationship has always been observed between the absurdity and Camus's literary style. This relationship should be acknowledged in order to understand the philosophical references in his novels and to maintain the inner meanings of these references in the translated versions of Camus's books.

Since this study will focus on the philosophical deformations in Camus's one of the best novels, *L'Étranger*, the following section will elaborate Berman's negative analytic and deforming tendencies in translation so as to provide a theoretical background for the analysis of the Turkish translation of *L'Étranger*.

### 3. Berman's Translational Perspective

Antoine Berman, one of the most well-known translation scholars, published numerous articles and books on translational methods and processes in order to illustrate the aim and the nature of translation activities. He is mostly influenced by Schleiermacher and Benjamin, and consequently his works on translation generally focus on the concept of the "foreign" and "the philosophy of translation" (Massardier-Kenney, 2010: 260). Unlike many other scholars of his period, Berman pays great attention to the translator rather than the translation itself. He defends that translators play significant roles in the production of translated texts as independent individuals. Within this context, Ertel elaborates Berman's translational approach as follows:

"... Berman aims for his analyses to form a productive criticism that will lay the conditions for future translations. On the other hand, Berman's approach differs from the translation analyses done within the framework proposed by Gideon Toury and the so-called Tel-Aviv school's polysystem theory. With the translations Berman analyzes, he seeks to shed light on how individual translators' projects take form. In other words, contrary to the restrictive approach to translation of the Tel-Aviv school that tends to limit itself to socio-cultural factors, Berman's approach also takes into account the translator's psyche, insofar as it informs his or her translation choices." (2011: 138).

As it can be understood from these remarks, Berman suggests that translators' characteristics have a striking influence on their translational preferences. He advocates that individual and social roles played by the translators offer an explanation for their moves in translation. Within this context, Berman mostly focuses on literary works since the literature offers a broad array of creative translational interventions (Massardier-Kenney, 2010: 261). By elaborating the actions of the translators in the literature, Berman strives to explain the translational tendencies and their possible outcomes. In his well-known book entitled *L'Épreuve de l'Étranger: Culture et Traduction dans l'Allemagne romantique*, he analyzes the concept of "the Foreign" in translation. Berman's analyses on this concept are appreciated by numerous translation scholars. Lawrence Venuti has attributed great significance to the ideas and views on the "Foreign" mentioned in the book; therefore, he has translated one of Berman's articles from French to English. In this article named "La Traduction Comme Épreuve de l'Étranger" (translated as "Translation and the Trials of the Foreign" by Venuti), Berman evaluates the "foreign" in translation and elaborates the trials in "two senses":

- 1 – A trial for the target culture in experiencing the strangeness of the foreign text and word;
- 2- A trial for the foreign text being uprooted from its original language context. (Munday, 2001: 149).

According to his classification, the translation is regarded as a connection point between two cultures where they have a chance to know each other. By starting from this perspective, Berman suggests that the concepts and expressions which are not used in the target language should be well-preserved in the translation in order to create a consciousness about the foreignness of the source text and the source culture, and to avoid destroying the originality of the literary work. At this point, philosophy

plays a significant role in supporting his ideas on the foreignness as a basis of ethical elaboration of translational actions. Munday explains Berman's approach as follows:

"Berman's work is important in linking philosophical ideas to translation strategies with many examples drawn from existing translations. His discussion of the ethics of translation as witnessed in linguistic 'deformation' of TTs is of especial relevance and a notable counterpoint to earlier writing on literary translation" (Munday 2001: 151).

In line with this elaboration, Berman attributes a philosophical value to the word choices of both authors and translators. Accordingly, he strictly advocates the preservation of the original philosophical references and implications of the source text in translation. In his article entitled "La Traduction Comme Epreuve de l'Étranger", he also mentions main deforming tendencies observed in translation and destroying the philosophical, ethical or cultural values of the specific expressions in the source texts. By classifying these tendencies into twelve categories, Berman criticize intentional or unintentional manipulations of the translators. His 12 deforming tendencies are listed below:

1. Rationalization (changing the sentences in a specific order which results in certain shifts in meaning)
2. Clarification (explaining the vague terms of the source texts)
3. Expansion (producing longer target texts than the original ones as a result of "rationalization" and "clarification")
4. Ennoblement and popularization (causing changes in the style of the author for aesthetic purposes)
5. Qualitative impoverishment (not being able to find equivalent expressions in the target language in terms of sonorous or literary richness)
6. Quantitative impoverishment (causing lexical losses in the target text)
7. The destruction of rhythms (causing losses in rhythms)
8. The destruction of underlying networks of signification (destructing hidden meanings and references of the source words in translation)
9. The destruction of linguistic patternings (causing inconsistencies in the target text)
10. The destruction of vernacular networks or their exoticization (not being able to illustrate the characteristics of a vernacular in translation or trying to use another vernacular which has similar functions in the target culture)
11. The destruction of expressions and idioms (not being able to find a suitable equivalence for idioms and language-specific expressions).
12. The effacement of the superimposition of languages (destructing the relationship between two languages in terms of power plays or tensions). (Berman, 2000: 288)

Berman states that translators show the above-mentioned deforming tendencies intentionally or unintentionally in literary translation. He asserts that those tendencies can destroy the linguistic, stylistic and contextual integrity of the original works. Especially in philosophical works, the ideological references hidden behind the words may be lost in translation unless these deforming actions are prevented. For this reason, Berman advocates that translators should strive to protect the originality of the source text as much as possible by means of the foreignization in translation. Within the context of his perspective, "over-domesticated" expressions cause serious deviations in the messages to be transferred in philosophical works. Therefore, great attention should be paid to the translation of philosophical references in order to provide an efficient transmission of the ideology.

In line with this approach, numerous works can be analyzed in terms of philosophical deformations. At this point, Albert Camus's *L'Étranger* constitutes an effective example demonstrating the deforming tendencies in philosophical references. In the following section, general information will be given about the above-mentioned novel, and then the selected examples from its Turkish translation will be analyzed within the scope of four deforming tendencies: the destruction of underlying networks of signification, the destruction of linguistic patternings, ennoblement, and the destruction of expressions and idioms.

#### 4. *L'Étranger* Strange to its Translation

*L'Étranger* (*The Stranger* in English) written in 1942 is one of Albert Camus's best novels presenting a vivid demonstration of the absurdity and the rebellion through the choices and the lifestyle of the main character, a French named "Meursault" living in Algeria dominated by France. The book presents a certain part of the life of this main character beginning with the death of his mother and ending with his own execution. It basically focuses on the indifference of the main character, Meursault, to every incident, object or person around him, his nonresistance against the force of the destiny, and his realization of the absurdity of life and death.

The life of the main character consists of two phases. In the first phase, Meursault is not interested in his existence; he is oriented by the stream of life, in other words his destiny, without any attempt to change it. He does not show any reaction to the death of his mother and acknowledges it quite easily, which exhibits the breaking point in the life of Meursault. The force that controls his decisions and actions is symbolized by the sun which always has a critical influence on him. At the end of this phase, he kills an Arab without an acceptable reason, and this murder completely changes his life and way of thinking. In the second phase, Meursault realizes the absurdity in the world and rebel against it. He accepts his own death with no regret, without even trying to find a superior force to surrender, and he welcomes the death.

The style of the author is monotonous; the sentences are short, grammatically correct and simple. This preference reflects the simplicity and boringness of the life of Meursault. Word choices also give critical clues about Meursault's way of thinking. He is a stranger in this world who cannot find a reason to care about the world, who does not try to find the meaning of his existence. Therefore, the words chosen by the author also demonstrate the distance between the outer world and Meursault himself. The style of the author has a great importance in terms of the reflection of Camus's absurd philosophy and his ideology; therefore, it should be preserved by the translators working on this masterpiece.

The book was translated into Turkish by Vedat Günyol in 1981 and widely accepted as a successful interpretation by Turkish readers. Indeed, the translation basically reflects the style, philosophy and ideology of the author. Nevertheless, certain preferences of the translator create more different inferences than intended in the original context. Therefore, Günyol's translation of *L'Étranger* constitutes a good example for philosophical and ideological deformations that can be examined in the light of Antoine Berman's negative analytic and his article entitled "La traduction comme épreuve de l'étranger" ("Translation and the Trials of the Foreign"). Certain examples selected from Günyol's translation of *L'Étranger* will be analyzed within the scope of specific deforming tendencies determined by Berman, namely the destruction of underlying networks of signification, the destruction of linguistic patternings, ennoblement, and the destruction of expressions and idioms.

#### 4.1. The Destruction of Underlying Networks of Signification

The very first sentence of *L'Étranger* is one of the easiest sentences in the book but also the most difficult one in terms of translation because one word in the sentence reveals the inner world of Meursault and influences the flow of events in the novel. The first sentence of the book is as follows:

ST: "Aujourd'hui, maman est morte" (Today, mom died) (my translation) (Camus, 1942: 9).

The word *maman* is a specific utilization demonstrating the dimension of the relationship between Meursault and his mother. Meursault is neither distant from his mother nor so close to her. His feelings for his mother are stuck between a superficial love and indifference to her. Ryan Bloom, examining the meaning of this word, states:

"...The truth is that neither of these translations—"Mother" or "Mommy"—ring true to the original. The French word *maman* hangs somewhere between the two extremes: it's neither the cold and distant "mother" nor the overly childlike "mommy." In English, "mom" might seem the closest fit for Camus's sentence, but there's still something off-putting and abrupt about the single-syllable word; the two-syllable *maman* has a touch of softness and warmth that is lost with "mom" (Bloom, 2012).

Matthew Ward decided to use original word *maman* in his English translation in order not to lose the message hidden in the word (Bloom, 2012). This intervention can be easily justified since English readers will understand the meaning of the word because of the similarities between English and French. However, the Turkish equivalences of the word *maman* such as *anne*, *annem*, *anneciğim*, *anam* or *anacığım* are phonetically quite different from the original word; therefore, the utilization of *maman* in Turkish translation seems impossible. At that point, Vedat Günyol decided to translate the sentence as follows:

TT: "Anam ölmüş bugün" (Camus, 1981: 1).

The utilization of *anam* may be considered as an appropriate choice since the word consists of two syllables like the word *maman*. Nevertheless, the context in which the word *anam* is used is quite different than the context of the original word. *Anam* is mostly used in the rural areas of Anatolia and shows the intimacy and affection of children for their mothers. Such preference of the translator has removed the in-between inference of the original word and increased the level of affection of

Meursault for his mother. Such small difference in the relationship between Meursault and his mother may seem insignificant in the first place; nevertheless this difference causes a misinterpretation of Meursault's inner world when it is taken into account that the main reason of Meursault's execution is not the murder that he committed but his indifference to the death of his mother. At that point the underlying network of signification of the word has been inevitably lost in the translation.

The grammatical use of the translator in this sentence also differs from the structure preferred by the author. In the original sentence, the adverb of time is at the beginning although it is located at the end in both Turkish and English translations. Since *L'Étranger* is a philosophical novel, the style and linguistic usage of Camus indicate inferential meanings as it is seen in the first sentence of the book. Ryan Bloom explains the significance of the grammatical structure of the first sentence as follows:

"The ordering of words in Camus's first sentence is no accident: today is interrupted by Maman's death. The sentence, the one we have yet to see correctly rendered in an English translation of "*L'Étranger*," should read: "Today, Maman died"" (Bloom, 2012).

Just like the English translation of the book, the translation of Günyol has also changed the sequence of the sentence and caused a loss in meaning, in other words, in the underlying network of signification.

Another striking example for this deforming tendency is the Turkish translation of the word *l'Arab* (Arab in English) as *fellah*. An example from original text and its Turkish translation is given below:

**ST** : "Il avait été suivi toute la journée par un groupe d'Arabes parmi lesquels se trouvait le frère de son ancienne maîtresse" (Camus, 1942: 37). (He was followed all day by a group of Arabs one of whom was the brother of his ex-lover) (My translation).

**TT**: "Aralarında eski metresinin kardeşi de bulunan bir fellah güruhu bütün gün peşine takılmış". (Camus, 1981: 35).

As I stated above, the story takes place in Algeria colonized by France. Albert Camus was an activist against French colonization in his country; therefore, he implicitly criticized the discrimination between local people of the country and the French in *L'Étranger* by using certain symbols. For example, the narrator never mentions the names of the Arabs in the book; in fact, they do not have names, they are just defined with their nationalities. Another way of discrimination is also observed during the confrontation of Meursault with the Arab that he killed. Meursault has a revolver while the only weapon of the Arab is a knife, and this inequality symbolizes the power of France and the weakness of Algeria. And lastly, although the court judges him for killing a person, the name of the Arab is never mentioned during the whole process of judgement as if the identity of the Arab is not significant for anyone in the court room. Albert Camus deliberately underestimates the position of Arabs in the novel in order to show the absurdity of being discriminated in their own country and to criticize French colonization in the region. On the other hand, Vedat Günyol decided to translate *l'Arab* as *fellah* although there is an exact equivalence for the word in Turkish language. The Turkish Language Association defines *fellah* as farmer, Egyptian villager or Arab, as its third meaning (Türk Dil Kurumu). This word is basically used for the Arabs working as farmers in Anatolia and it does not have any relation with the Arabs living in Algeria. As a result of this change, the reference to the

suffering of Arabian people in Algeria has been completely lost in translation. This intervention has created an image of a restricted group with an unknown origin in the minds of the target readers in Turkish language. The deformation observed here damages the ideology supported by Albert Camus.

#### 4.2. The Destruction of Linguistic Patternings

Example of *maman* also demonstrates the destruction of linguistic patternings in Turkish translation of the book. Albert Camus uses the word *maman* in numerous contexts and sentences with the same meaning. Nevertheless, translator preferred to translate the word by using its various equivalences which have resulted in a destruction in the pattern of the source text. Consequently, inconsistencies have been observed in translation:

**ST**: "...Ce n'est pas ma faute si on a enterré *maman* hier au lieu d'aujourd'hui..." (Camus 1942: 20) (It is not my fault if mom was buried yesterday instead of today.) (My translation).

**TT**: "... Anacığımı bugün değil, dün gömmüş olmakta benim bir kabahatim yok". (Camus 1981: 15)

**ST**: "...Il a voulu savoir aussi l'âge de *maman*". (Camus 1942: 25) (He also wanted to know mom's age.) (My translation).

**TT**: "...Annemin yaşını öğrenmek istedi". (Camus 1981: 21).

There are many other similar examples in the text that will not be mentioned in this study. In brief, as I explained above, the relationship between Meursault and his mother is a key point in the novel; the translation of *maman* as *anacığım* or *annem* has removed all invisible borders between the main character and his mother; as a result, it has destroyed the consistency of the text and the connotation of the original word.

#### 4.3. Ennoblement and the Destruction of Expressions and Idioms

Expressions and idioms are generally subjected to inevitable changes in translation as a result of structural differences of source language and target language. Nevertheless, translators should try to convey the meaning of the expressions as accurately as possible. Certain examples from Günyol's translation demonstrate the destructive shifts observed in the meaning of sentences:

**ST**: "Nous l'avons transportée dans notre petite morgue. Pour ne pas impressionner les autres". (Camus, 1942: 11) (We moved the deceased to our little mortuary so as not to upset the others.) (My translation).

**TT**: "Ötekilerin yürekleri kalkmasın diye kendisini bizim küçük morga taşıttık". (Camus, 1981: 3)

Although the sentence given above does not include any uncommon expression or idiom, Vedat Günyol prefers to exchange the verb "impressionner" (to impress, upset or distress in English) with a more idiomatic expression in Turkish. Nevertheless, the idiom that he used has a different meaning than the verb in the original text. "Yüreği kalkmak" means "to get into a flap" and this Turkish idiom

is not equivalent to the expression given in the source text. The translator has tried to ennoble the above-mentioned term; however, he has also caused significant changes in meaning through this ennoblement.

**ST:** "Il était commode quand maman était là". (Camus, 1942: 22) (It was convenient when mom was here.) (My translation).

**TT:** "Anacığım varken ne rahattı burası". (Camus, 1981: 17)

In this sentence, the pronoun "it" refers to the flat where Meursault lives, and the narrator states that the size of the flat was convenient for two people to live, but unnecessarily large for just one person. However, Günyol attributes another meaning to the sentence and alters the context to a great extent. His translation indicates that the place was more comfortable when he was living with his mom. As discussed in other examples related to the word *maman*, he exaggerates the affection of Meursault for his mother once again, and manipulates the meaning of the expression. Another example is presented below:

**ST:** "Si on va doucement, on risque une insolation. Mais si on va trop vite, on est en transpiration et dans l'église on attrape un chaud et froid". (Camus, 1942: 19) (If you go slowly, there is a risk of heatstroke. But if you go too fast, you perspire and you feel chilly in the church). (My translation).

**TT:** "İnsan yavaş gitse, güneş çarpar, hızlı gitse kan ter içinde kalır, sonra, kilisede soğuk alır, şifayı bulur". (Camus, 1981: 13)

Again in this sentence, translator uses an idiom in order to express the coldness of the church and its impact on people in warm days. Nevertheless the expression "şifa bulmak" means recovering from a disease rather than catching a cold or disease. "Şifayı kapmak" (to become sick in English) is apparently more convenient option for the translation of this expression since it correctly illustrates the meaning. The preference of the translator again has caused an important shift in the content.

## 5. Conclusion

Literature is a genre which necessitates a deep understanding of underlying messages in the text and a certain level of creativity to be applied in the translation process. When the literary utilizations are combined with philosophical and ideological references, the translation of such works become a more challenging task for translators. As observed in the above-mentioned examples, even the smallest interventions of translators may cause a great loss both in the content and the intent of philosophical novels. The deformations created by translators may also alter the perception of the philosophy intended to be conveyed to the target society. Since these deforming tendencies damages philosophical works more seriously than pure literary products, the translators of philosophy should try to minimize the destructions as much as possible, and to reflect the original style and patterns determined by the author. Otherwise, the inconsistencies in the translated text would create contradictions in the minds of the target readers, and such contradictions would render the philosophical references incomprehensible when the complexity of philosophy is taken into account. In fact, Vedat Günyol's translation of *L'Étranger* is a successful interpretation of the original book and the interventions of the translator can be justified when the novel is considered just as a literary work.

Nevertheless, the philosophical nature of the book does not excuse even the smallest changes in the translation since these changes have completely abolished the absurdity in the book. Turkish translation of the book gives us this message: Meursault loved his mother and felt deeply sorry because of her death, and his execution was a matter of injustice, not a matter of absurdity. And Meursault did not rebel against the absurdity; in fact, he was insane because he welcomed the death although he knew that his sentence was not related to the crime that he committed. At that point, the absurdity rebels against the insanity, and it becomes the real “stranger” in the translation.

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