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TRANSLATION OF COLLOQUIAL LANGUAGE AND DIALECTS: AS AN ILLUSTRATION OF “THE UNDYING GRASS”

KONUŞMA DİLİ VE DİYALEKT ÇEVİRİSİ: “ÖLMEZ OTU” ÖRNEĞİ

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ABSTRACT

Yaşar Kemal is one of the prominent novelists of Modern Turkish Literature and he is commonly recognized as the writer of Çukurova. His first and best-known novel, *Ince Memed*, won the Turkish highest literary prize “Varlık.” In 1961, Edouard Roditi translated Yaşar Kemal’s epic novel, *Ince Memed* under the English title *Memed, My Hawk*, and it is still in print today. Yaşar Kemal’s novel gained popularity and earned literary fame outside of Turkey. As Barry Tharaud stated in his article, “Death, Childhood and Primal Fear in Yaşar Kemal’s *The Wind from the Plain*”, Yaşar Kemal is one of the great living authors of world literature. *The Undying Grass* is the third novel *The Wind from the Plain* trilogy and it was published in 1968, the concluding volume of the last part’s translation appeared in 1969, 1974 and, 1977. *The Undying Grass* is Yaşar Kemal’s eight book of fiction to become available in English. The representation of Kemal’s style in the English translation of his novels is explicitly formed by the constancy indicated, translators; Thilda Kemal, Edouard Roditi and, Margeret E. Platon during the translation process, predominantly, Thilda Kemal has been a leading figure in spreading Yaşar Kemal’s reputation as an author in the English-speaking communities. In this article, the purpose is rather than analyzing and discussing Thilda Kemal’s translation, focusing on culture specific elements such as proper names, proverbs, idioms and usage of language notably dialects.

Key Words: Culture specific phrases, colloquial tone, repetition, regional dialect

ÖZET

Modern Türk Edebiyatının önde gelen yazarlarından biri olan Yaşar Kemal, Çukurova’nın yazarı olarak da tanınır. İlk ve en çok okunan eseri *İnce Mehmed* romanıyla, Yaşar Kemal, “Varlık Dergisi” Roman Armağanını kazanmıştır. 1961 yılında Edouard Roditi tarafından çevrilen Yaşar Kemal’in epik romanı *İnce Mehmed*, İngilizceye *Memed, My Hawk* başlığı altında çevrilir ve baskısı devam etmektedir. Bu çeviri ise Yaşar Kemal’e Türkiye dışında da edebi dünyada tanınmasına sebep olur. Barry Tharaud’un, “Dağın Öteki Yüzü’nde Yaşar Kemal’in Ölüm, Çocukluk Dönemi ve Birincil Korku’su” başlıklı makalesinde belirttiği gibi Kemal, dünya edebiyatının ölümsüz yazarlarından biri olur. *Dağın Öteki Yüzü* üçlemesinin son romanı olan *Ölmez Otu* 1968 yılında yayımlanır ve 1969, 1974 ve 1977 yılında çevrilir. *Ölmez Otu* eseri Yaşar Kemal’in sekizinci İngilizceye çevrilen eseridir. Yaşar Kemal’in edebi tarzı, İngilizceye çevirmenler, Thilda Kemal, Edouard Roditi ve Margeret E. Platon tarafından yansıtılır ve çeviri sürecinde ise ağırlıklı olarak Thilda Kemal, İngilizce konuşulan toplumlarda Yaşar Kemal’in tanınmasında baş figürdür. Bu çalışmada, Thilda Kemal’in çevirisi üzerinde analiz ve tartışmaktan daha çok uygun kelime, atasözü ve deyim ve özellikle farklı dilin özel bir kullanımı olan diyalekt üzerinde durulacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kültüre özgü ifadeler, konuşma dili tonu, tekrar, bölgesel diyalekt

1. THE PLOT

The Undying Grass continues the story of the “Yalak” villagers who came down from the Taurus Mountains each year to the burning Chukurova plain to pick cotton to pay their debts. In fact, the focal point of the trilogy is the portrait of the Turkish people, notably in Anatolia, and their struggle versus industrialization period of Turkey. Kemal displays the clashes between the poor villagers and feudal masters, so called “Aghas.” James Baldwin, on the back cover of the English translation of *The Undying Grass*, states that “Kemal speaks for these people for whom no one else is speaking.” (1998: 323) In fact, this sweeping and compassionate novel sounds of not only “Yallak” villagers but also all human voice. Besides, the Turkish title of trilogy; *Dağın Öteki Yüzü* points to other side of mountain where

oppressed and impoverished peasants are exploited by wealthy landowners. As it is depicted, Barry Tharaud; “Economic themes are central to the trilogy, including poverty and the political and spiritual manipulation that sometimes accompany it.” and he stresses that the clash between peasants and “aghass” is raised in the epigraph, I, which has on the effect on epigraph for the entire trilogy. (*The Titles of Yaşar Kemal's Wind From To Plain Trilogy*, 2007: 15) Furthermore, *The Undying Grass* as a final part of the trilogy signifies the destruction of the “myth” that piteous peasants embrace it counter to the oppressive economic order in volume; II and initially, the villagers relinquish the faithful approaches to human issues or in other words, Kemal underlines the severity of economic interests which encapsulate the humanity. Consequently, as well as the other novels of Kemal, *The Undying Grass* reflects the lives of villagers very naturally and this natural way of depicting the human life summons the readers to question themselves as it is illustrated in “Fate,” *The Conduct of Life*; Emerson asks the question at the beginning of the essay; “How shall I live? We are incompetent to solve the times...We can only obey our own polarity. This is fine for us to speculate and elect course, if we must accept an irresistible dictation.” (Tharaud, *Global Perspectives on an American Icon*, ed. 2010: 549). In *The Conduct of life*, Emerson acknowledges and emphasizes the terrors and harshness of life, and the in first chapter “Fate,” he reacts to the problem of evil, pain and suffering as instrumentalities of Divine Providence. His main argument in the “Fate” is the modern division of labor conceals the economic relationship that constitute complicity. Correlatively, Kemal elicits to the pain and suffering as instrumentalities of Capitalism and *The Undying Grass* displays the destruction of humanity briskly.

2. TRANSLATION OF COLLOQUIAL LANGUAGE AND DIALECTS

Goethe called literary translation as one of the most important and dignified enterprises in the general commerce of the world. A literary translator must be capable of translating feelings, cultural nuances, humor and other subtle elements of a piece of work and must consider the aesthetic aspects of the text. A translator embodies someone else’s thoughts and images by writing in another language. As Wechsler pointed out in his book, Translator’s interpretation takes the form of the original task without departing from the context while remaining faithful to the culture them. “He/ She is not considered an artist at all, neither a creator, nor a performer but rather a craftsman” (Wechsler, 1998: 7). Up to the present, translation- error classification remains controversial. Peter Newmark divides most of the mistakes into two types which are referential mistakes and linguistic mistakes. Referential mistakes refer to all mistakes relating to facts or information in the world. On the other hand, linguistic mistakes include words, collocation, and idiom. The American Translation Association (ATA) describes translation errors as follow: Illegible, Misunderstanding of the original context, Mistranslation of the Target Language Addition or Omission, Terminology, Word choice, Register, Too freely translated, Too literal; Word for Word translation, False cognate, Indecision, Inconsistency, Ambiguity, Grammar, Syntax, Punctuation, Spelling in translation, Accents and other diacritical marks, Case (upper/lower), Word form and Usage an Style (2019).

Generally formed using short and facile sentences which are uttered in colloquial Turkish is an outstanding characteristics of Yaşar Kemal's style in his novels. The briefness of the sentences and the fluidity of the conservations among the villagers that are full of idioms and proverbs consolidates the rhythmic aspect of Kemal novels. Kemal puts forward the local dialect instead of the Turkish spoken in İstanbul to depict his characters' conservation intrinsically and most of the time, he condenses slang expressions which are common in local dialect. Burçe Kaya, in her MA thesis, explains that culture specific words or phrases become a challenge in translation and she emphasizes that regional dialects in a text by trying to find an equivalence in the target language may mislead the target reader because a dialect is related to the region, it is spoken (2007: 24). In fact, the dialect opted as an equivalent from the source text would confuse the target text reader. Besides, a dialect may have various functions in a text, it may represent the slang use of a language, show from or indicate the cultural features of the region (Newmark, 1988: 195).

Furthermore, Ali Püsküllüoğlu published a dictionary, entitled; “Yaşar Kemal Sözlüğü” where he explains the meanings of such local words which are used by the “Turkomons” around the Çukurova region that is not known every cities of Turkey, so Tilda Kemal's task was not facile. In fact, Thilda Kemal's language is much more formal than the language in the source text, as it is illustrated in *The Undying Grass*;

- “She planted herself before Ali. Look, at me, my Ali, she said. See how well I am! Isn't your mother as nimble as a young gazelle? Yes, like a gazelle! Ali said quickly. How did you do it, Mother? Have you drunk of the water of life? Like K roglu's immortal white horse...Ah, Ali my child, you don't know your mother! Meryemdje said as she executed a few skips. See? I can walk like this all the way down to the Chukurova plain and right up to the lake of Mediterranean itself. There's no need to remain here because of me. Don't worry. I'll not be a burden again. You won't have to carry me this time. Forget about last year. You must go. How can you stay here when the whole village has gone? Who ever heard of run. Say “mashallah. Mashallah!” Strong as steel I am, my children...Look, just look! She was gasping now, but still unwilling to give up. You see...You saw!” (TT:22).
- “Geldi, Alinin karřısında durdu. Alim, dedi, "kurban olduđum yavrum, bak bak! Baksana bana! Nasılsın ha? Dimdik, ceren gibi deđil mi anan? Ali neye uđradıđını bilmemiřti. řu dimdik, gelin gibi, ceylan gibi kadın anası mıydı gerekten? O muydu? Bir t rl  g zlerine inanamıyor, g zlerini ovuřturup ovuřturup bakıyordu. Sevincinden ne yapacađını bilememedi, bir ara kekeledi, bir řeyler s ylemek istedi, s ylemedi. Sonra abuk abuk: Ceren gibisin, ceren...řařtım. Hayat suyu mu itin anam? K rođlunun Kıratı gibi? Ceren, ceren gibisin, anam dimdik. Meryemce avluda oradan oraya kořarcasına y r yor, kořuyor, atlıyor, zıplıyordu. Alim, yavrum, sen ne sandın ananı. řte senin garip anacađın b yledir. Ben ukura kadar da, Akadeniz g l ne kadar da b yle b yle y r r m. Kalma benim y z mden burada Bir daha senin sırtına y k, bařına bela olmam. Giden yılı unut. dam hi ukurovaya gitmez mi? T m k yl  gider de adam bir bařına kalır mı burada? Olur mu yavrum? Bak, bak, anana bak!... “Mařallah deyin, mařallah!” Demir gibiyim de som elik. Kurban olduđum yavrularım. Bakın, hele bakın. Bakın ha, bakın” (ST,31).

In the excerpt above, Meryemce strives to demonstrate to his son that she is energetic enough to walk to ukurova and her conservation is a prominent illustration of the daily language of a villager, it consists a colloquial tone through the sentences such as “kurban olduđum yavrularım,” “Bakın, hele, bakın,” “Mařallah deyin, mařallah” and she also inverted the sentences like for example; “Kalma benim y z mden burada” and “Demir gibiyim de som, elik.” Thilda Kemal recurs the inversion in sentence which is uttered Meryemce; “Demir gibiyim de som elik” as “Strong as steel I am.” Thereto, the culture-specific word, “Mařallah” is adapted to the target text directly without clarifying or functioning that is, the culture specific word “Mařallah” is common phrase in Islamic culture whereas, target readers are not onto the concept of it. Moreover, Thilda Kemal omitted the colloquial word “hele” and the dialectical use of the word “anne” as “ana” is translated as “mother” in a formal approach. Beyond, Thilda Kemal transfers the tone of slang words though the swear words, in Turkish texts literally, are not translated. As it is indicated in the examples;

- “Ah these Injejik villagers...They're What I call human beings. Not like those mean people at home who don't know my true worth. When I think of that old harridan Meryemdje, that vicious Muhtar Sefer, that simpleton of a Tashbash...” (TT, 12)
- “řte adam dediđin, yiđit insan dediđin bunlar, bu İncecik k yl leri gibi olur! Kadrim bilememiřin eline d řt m o alak k yde. Meryemce orospusunun, s m kl  de alak Seferin, ahmak Tařbařın eline D řt m.” (ST, 15)

Thilda kemal's preference using the word “harridan” falsifies the general formal tone of translated version in that, the archaic choice of her pauses the reader abruptly. Hereof, Kaya accounts that the word “harridan” makes the reader stop for a moment because such an archaic use is unexpected in the context where it is used just like the word “orospu” strikes one's attention although for a different reason, for being a strong swearword (Kaya, 2007: 100). Further, Thilda Kemal applies for literal translation strategy while translating some of the Turkish idioms and proverbs, as it is exemplified; “My eyes drop down in front of me if I'm lying,” (TT,27) “İki g z m  n me aksınki” ... (ST,38). The Turkish idiom is generally used for convincing people that one is quite telling the truth. Besides, “Bless your hands” (TT, 321) “Eline sađlık” (ST,352) is another literal translation strategy by her while translating the culture specific phrases in the source text though for the most part of the translation, she contrives an equivalent

for the phrase in the target language or omits the idiomatic phrases by using non-figurative language in her translation. As it is applied in the text;

- “[...] Ha-ha, use your heads! Old Halil, that master of thief, that deserter from, Yemen Wars ...” (TT.99)
- “[...] Ahha, aklınıza turp sıkıyım! Koca Halil, hırsızlar başı, dört kitapta katili vacip, Yemen kaçkını...” (ST,126)

In the example above, Thilda Kemal transfers the underlying meaning of the phrase “aklınıza turp sıkıyım” without using an idiom and she omits the phrase “dört kitapta katili vacip,” that refines the koca Halil. In lieu of idiomatic phrases in the source text, Thilda Kemal's preference for standard language impresses the general tone of the translation and notably, the colloquial tone of Yaşar Kemal's narratives. As it is clarified;

- “Ali'nin yüreği cızz etti” (ST,54).
- “Here Ali slowed down, the pain in his heart sharper than ever” (TT,38).

In the source text, Yaşar Kemal use the phrase “yüreği cızz etmek” to depict Ali's grief for leaving his mother alone in the village and the phrase has a colloquial tone that is, Yaşar Kemal accentuates the emotional value of the phrase through onomatopoeia, “cızz” however, at this point, Kaya asserts that Thilda Kemal's translation is not colloquial although it sounds poetic through the use of inverted sentence structure (2007:103). In the translated version, Thilda Kemal concedes not to translate the culture specific words, particularly that are peculiar to Turkish cuisine such as “*tarhana* soup,” “*bulgur* pilaff,” “*yufka* bread” and “*raki*” and the untranslated words are sequent by an English noun that predefines the meaning of Turkish words which are written in italics. Additively, there are other untranslated words; adducing as “*namaz* prayer,” “*yatsi* prayer” and “*shalvar* trousers.” Kaya discusses that Thilda Kemal's strategy of “untranslated words in italics” does not comprehend easily for the target reader and she proposes that instead of written in italics, the untranslated words, Thilda Kemal would explain the untranslated words with a footnote or a glossary to help the target reader to establish a semantic connection with these non-translations (Kaya, 2007: 105).

Furthermore, on the cover page of the first print of *The Undying Grass* (1977) by Collins and Harvill Press, the translator, Thilda Kemal's name does not write so it is not explicit that this novel is a translation version. Besides, the segmentation of the chapters in *The Undying Grass* and *Ölmez Otu* is the same; both text consist of 47 chapters though in the source text, the number of each paragraph is not indicated by numbers instead, a number of sentences which are written in italics are indicated as a marker of a new chapter. As it is seen in the example; “Memidiğin içindeki öfkenin, gün geçtikçe azması, dayanılmaz bir hal alması” (ST,5). However, in target text, every chapter indicated by numbers and the numbers proceed parallel to source text. As it is illustrated; “I... How day by day Memidik's anger grew within him until it was post enduring” (TT,55). In *The Undying Grass*, Thilda Kemal evolves some sort of the reorganization paragraphs which is combining one or two paragraphs that are rather short in the source text. The example below clarifies the Thilda's strategy more explicitly;

- “All by herself! Elif exclaimed. Alone in this empty village? A helpless old woman...Why, we wouldn't find a single bone of her body when we come back! that what you think, Elif? He shook his head despondently, Yes, perhaps you're right. Then there's no help for it, we stay here and let Adil Efendi do his worst. Or else she'd set out after us, Elif pursued. And we'd find her dead on the road...Elif! he called out breathlessly. Elif, come here” (TT,25).
- “Elif: Bir başına! Tek başına bomboş köyde...El tutmaz, ayak tutmaz. Kurdun, kuşun, urlunun uğursuzun içinde...Biz dönene kadar kemikleri bile kalmaz. Ali başını kederle salladı: Gücü yetmez, el ayak tutmaz. Öyleyse vazgeçelim. Olmadı, olmadı. Burada kaldı gitti. Varsın Adil Efendi de canımı alsın. Elif: Burada kalırsa ardımıza düşerse yollarda ölüp de kalmaz mı? Biz onu burada koyar gidersek o bomboş köyde kalmaz. Başını taştan taşa vurur. İçeriye seslendi: Elif, Elif! Elif dışarı çık hele...” (ST.36)

In the source text, the dialogues are followed in a separate paragraph whereas, in the target texts, separated paragraphs are combined into a single paragraph. As it seen in the example, above, in the source text; Elif and Ali' dialogue can be followed as an script, though, in the target text, Thilda Kemal gives explanatory statements such as, "Elif exclaimed" and "He shook his head despondently" in a sole paragraph, that is, not exactly parallel to source text's dialogue. At this point, Kaya indicates that the format in the source text is a common feature of Turkish punctuation whereas, Thilda Kemal's presentation of these dialogues is more acceptable in the target language it is in the line with English punctuation (2007: 91). Moreover, in *The Undying Grass*, Thilda Kemal translates the long descriptions of nature scenes and dialogues, she tends to omit the repetitions though, in the source text, with repetitions, Yaşar Kemal portrays his characters' psychology and inwardness. As it is outshined in the example;

- "Well, I won't! Ali burns out. I am not mad, Waste land, that's what the Chukurova is this year, waste barren land. We've got plenty of that around here as it is, haven't we? (TT, 24)
- "Gitmem işte, diye var gücüyle bağırды, ben o ahmak köylü gibi deli değilim. Deli, deli, deli değilim. Bu yıl Çukurova boz toprak, kıraç, boz, bomboz toprak" ... (ST,33)

Thilda Kemal omits the repetitions such as, "I am not mad, mad, mad" and adjectives which are decrypted the Chukurova, on that Kaya criticizes Thilda Kemal's opts to omitting the repetitions which are intensified the complexity of feelings of the characters in the source text.(Kaya, 2007: 93) In fact, the repetitions are component of the colloquial tone of the villagers' conservations which exhibits their inner dilemma and sentimental side.

3. CONCLUSION

Literary translation has always played a very important role in delivering messages across languages and cultural barriers. Turkish literature is in the process of integration into world literature so that translators have become more important than ever before. They should be required to have a good command of the native language, analytical ability, and sensitivity to cultural issues and the aesthetic aspects of the text. Even excellent translators make mistakes in translations, when the ST and TT belong to different cultural groups. As Newmark states in his book, a satisfactory translation is always possible, but a qualified translator is never satisfied. There is no such thing as a perfect, ideal, or correct translation, so translators are always trying to extend their knowledge and improve their expression. The title of volume, III; *The Undying Grass* is the quite convenient title as a presentation of "Old Meryem". Tharaud cites that the title of the third volume of *The Undying Grass*, is wonderfully evocative as well, as it used to describe the old woman Meryemce, and he quotes from the novel to illustrate the inward inference; "You can break her and burn her, you can hack her to pieces, she'll manage to keep alive. She's like undying grass. (Tharaud, Translation Review, 2011: 14) Turkish translation of the trilogy's title is rather pivotal to refine the Kemal's main theme.

As mentioned in the introduction part of article, the Turkish title of the volume, I; *Dağın Öteki Yüzü; The Winds from the Plain* portrays the contrast between the steppe and the Chukurova. Indeed, "Yalak" villagers lie on the borderline between the incompatible lands as victims of the destitution against the abundance. Thus, Yaşar Kemal is a sort of discussant his society. As commented on cover page, Elia Kazan; "Yashar Kemal is a cauldron where fact, fantasy and folklore are stirred to produce poetry. He is a storyteller in the oldest tradition, that of Homer, spokesman for a people who had no other voice." By my troth, literary translation is quite demanding task, so indeed, Thilda Kemal's initiator role in the familiarization of Yaşar Kemal's masterpieces within the English-speaking community can't be discussed. Talat Halman stresses that "The translation of Thilda Kemal is superb and deserves superlative praise, it is her crowning achievement as a translator." Besides, Burçe Kaya, in her MA thesis, entitled with "The role of Thilda Kemal in the Recreation of Yaşar Kemal's Literature in English;" interviewed with Yaşar Kemal to reveal the affinity both husband and wife and author and translator. Kaya asked the question to Kemal; "Did Thilda Kemal consult anyone else except you while doing her translations?" and Kemal's response was that, "She didn't consult anybody, but she read a lot and she always searched in different books and dictionaries. She would spend hours on a single word, and she works meticulously on her translation."

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