

Prefacial Visibility of Contemporary Iranian Translators: Implications for Translator Trainers

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Abstract

Although the existing research has advanced our understating of sociological issues such as translators' prefaces, a paucity of studies into languages of limited diffusion, including Persian is strongly felt. To partly fill this gap, this study aims to explore Iranian fiction translators' (in)visibility from the perspective of paratexts. Paratextual elements, especially prefaces, are among the most privileged translators' commentaries that provide opportunities for translators to have a direct contact with readers and foreground their presence and status in their profession. Drawing on a convenience sampling technique, the corpus of the study comprised the prefaces of 300 Persian translated works of fiction from English. The corpus under investigation encompassed a wide spectrum of English writers and Persian translators. The prefaces of the translations were analyzed in accordance with the "thematic analysis" procedure, where the prefaces were examined multiple times, and meaningful patterns were extracted and grouped under several headings sharing the same content. The results showed that a large proportion of the extracted themes from translators' prefaces elaborated on introducing the original authors and their source texts. Consequently, these commentaries, even under the translators' name, did not significantly contribute to highlighting the visibility of translators within their work. This study may provide implications for novice translators regarding their stance and voice in their translations.

Keywords: Preface, Paratext, Theme, Translators, (In)visibility

1. Introduction

Despite the substantial amount of research in the discipline of translation studies in recent decades on a wide range of topics, translators are still underestimated as real agents in translation process research (Dam & Zethsen, 2009). It seems that translators are not regarded as professional and high-status individuals in their job. This is perhaps, as Jan Chan (2008) mentions, because of the nature of translation profession that is still under-developed. One may also wonder why there is no place for translators as agents in the Holmes' map (1972) of translation studies. According to Pym (1998), no trace is found of translators' style or subjectivity in this map while they are rightly deserved to be foregrounded in the translation discipline.

For Chesterman (2009), likewise, the role of translators is not adequately treated in Holmes' classic map. He points out that Holmes was mainly interested in literary translation; consequently, his "vision of translation studies was highly weighted towards texts rather than the people that produce them" (p. 19). However, Holmes actually left some room for future investigations by adding new sub-fields and branches to his map, as Chesterman (2009) notes. To highlight the role of translators from various perspectives, Chesterman (2009) proposes a new area of investigation called "Translator Studies" divided into three categories:

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1. Cultural: ideologies, ethics, history, etc.
2. Cognitive: mental processes, emotions, attitudes, etc.
3. Sociological: networks, status, workplace processes, etc.

Other scholars also argue for the necessity of models and approaches against which translators' presence would be signified. These models, as [Baker](#) asserts, should necessarily reflect translators' role as contributors in producing the discourse, "shadowing, mimicking and, as it were, counterfeiting the narrator's words, but occasionally caught in the text's disparities and interstices, and paratextually emerging into the open as a separate discursive presence" (2010, p. 195).

[Hermans](#) (cited in [Baker, 2010](#)) argues that translators do not necessarily "function as institutional gatekeepers, echoing and strengthening the voice of the authority" (p. 195). He notes that translators have a voice "in their own right" and the existing narratological models have neglected their critical presence. He is of the view that the reason for this would lie in the fact that the translator's presence largely escapes readers' notice because he/she is completely hidden within the translated text. As an advocate of translators' visibility, [Venuti \(1995\)](#) coined the term "(in)visibility" to describe the status of translators in the contemporary British and American culture. He argues that translators themselves are partly responsible for their low-current jobs because they tend to obediently follow the viewpoints by publishers, critics and readers that a good translation should be readable and fluent in the target language. Likewise, [Prunč \(2007\)](#) argues that translators accept to work for low prices and rates and are victims of "the current price cutting spiral which threatens not only their own existence but also the reputation of the translation profession", to some extent.

Venuti's suggestion for raising the voice of translators and highlighting their presence results in producing translations, which are non-fluent and foreignized rather than readable and domesticated. There have been some skepticism and valid objections against Venuti's theorization. [Tymoczko \(2000\)](#), for example, (2000) states that no explicit criteria have been specified for the concept of foreignization. In a similar manner, [Baker \(2010\)](#) argues that this is a naive idea to manifest the reality of translation through domestication and foreignization dichotomy. Other critics like [Shamma \(2009\)](#) have claimed that the notion of foreignization is mostly applied to European languages and is ambiguous in the cases of translating minor languages into dominant ones. Finally, the notion of translation in translation studies is increasingly directed toward satisfying the needs of its readers and recipients, which is mostly achieved by target-oriented and fluent texts.

This study aims to look upon the notion of visibility from the new perspective of paratexts that are mostly detached from the source text and provide more opportunity for translators' intervention. Here, visibility denotes anything that catches the readers' attention toward the translator's role and translation process. With respect to the significance of paratexts, [Venuti also \(1992\)](#) believes that translators are mostly engaged with their translations, without adding paratexts, such as commentaries, prefaces, criticisms, etc. to their translations. Therefore, their critical self-presence is not reflected in their work. Consequently, Venuti's call for translators' visibility covers not only the text proper, which is, the main body of the text, but also paratexts that have been relatively neglected in the literature.

Paratextual elements belong exclusively to translators; and they are at liberty to express their remarks even against the original authors' perspectives. Through highlighting the translated nature of target text beyond the text proper and foregrounding the status of translators, both readers and translators could be satisfied. Such background information turns translators into scholars in their profession as they are able to reflect their sensitivity and deliberation behind any choices made in the translating process through these elements. [McRae](#) maintains that understanding translators' rationale behind their translating process may assist critics in conducting more valid and objective assessments. As a result, their critiques are not simply restricted to the target version or its comparison with the original ([2010](#)). Degree of paratextual visibility varies from translation to

translation. This may embrace a mere indication of translators' name on the cover page to personal dedications, lengthy and detailed prefaces or discursive explanations in the footnotes.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Paratexts

[Genette](#) is the first who presented “a global view of liminal mediations and the logic of their relation to the reading public” (1997, p. xx). He categorizes paratexts into “peritexts” –elements within the same volume including prefaces, dedications, notes, titles, blurbs, among other things— and “epitexts or distanced elements”—located outside the text proper such as interviews, reviews, criticism, etc. (1997, p.5). Paratextual study, in his view, entails five features of the text: 1. spatial (paratext location); 2. temporal (date of its appearance); 3. substantial (mode of its existence: verbal or non-verbal) 4. pragmatic (specification of addressees); and 5. functional (the most crucial point which refers to the aim that paratext is supposed to fulfill) (1997).

[Genette \(1997\)](#) considers translation as a kind of paratext inferior to its original that its existence and status are determined by this hierarchy. Opposing this view, [Tahir-Gürçağlar](#) asserts that when translation is considered as a paratext, only its original would benefit from its position and other elements influential in its production such as the target literary system, target readership or publisher are simply overlooked (2002). As far as this opinion is concerned, [Batchelor \(2018\)](#) argues that Tahir-Gürçağlar' s view seems exaggerated and refers to some examples from Genette's threshold of interpretation to show that “nowhere he indicates in his study that any given element that has paratextual value cannot also convey other things. [Batchelor](#) then concludes that “to consider translations as paratexts, then, is not to disregard the many other ways in which they may be of interest to a researcher; rather, it is about scrutinizing them for the ways in which they may comment on or (make) present the original text” (p. 29).

However, according to [Tahir-Gürçağlar](#), along with the methodological framework of descriptive translation studies, Genette's work has provided a fertile background for research in translation (2011). Therefore, the study of paratextual elements has equipped the researchers with the necessary tools to investigate a variety of subjects. Shedding light on translators' visibility through the use of paratexts has been the subject of some studies. [McRae \(2010\)](#), for example, conducted an empirical study on the prefaces of more than 800 contemporary literary translations into English. He believed that “prefaces are an excellent locus for disseminating their understanding to readers” (2010, p. 80). Analyzing the content of prefaces revealed that the most eminent function was facilitating the comprehension of cultural diversities. The second most predominant function was reflecting on the translators' presence and intervention in the text. Finally, he concluded that “Although translators' prefaces are relatively uncommon today, they have an important role to play as the voice of the translator—the key figure in promoting better understanding among peoples and nations” (p. 3).

[Bilodeau \(2013\)](#) took the issue of translator's visibility in its cross-cultural perspective and showed that the degree of visibility is not the same for translators in different countries. She studied translators' afterwards in Japanese literary translations and reflected on different publishing policies in Western and Japanese countries, so that in the latter, there is “multiple naming of the translator in the peritext (particularly the cover) and publishers usually “reserve space for translators to write in the first person between the covers” (p. 2). [Atef Mehr \(2016\)](#) conducted her study on “Translator's Paratextual Visibility: The Case of Iranian Translators from 1906-1926”. She explored paratextual visibility of Iranian translators before the fall of Qajar dynasty from the establishment of Constitutional Monarchy in 1926. Her study showed that translators were visible, mainly due to their high social and educational status. She also proposed a model termed “network of visibility” which can be used to represent connections among those who are involved in the production and reception of translated books.

According to [Giannossa \(2010\)](#), “study of paratexts [...] in translation is still in its infancy and paratexts are a neglected subject in translation studies. They constitute an alternative object of

study and a different way of looking at translation” (pp. 1-2). In his concluding remarks, he mentioned that in exploring the translation process and product, mostly verbal elements of the text are emphasized whereas less is talked about other elements or traces that translators and other agents left in the translation. He contends that these traces are a rich source of information for translation procedures and readers’ reflection on the phenomenon of translation; consequently, studying translational paratexts may be helpful in filling the gap in translation history.

Paratexts can reflect the role translators play within their society and can be used to shed light on the implicit “translation pact” between the translators and their readers and “invite readers to read translated books as if they were originals, composed solely by one agent.” (Alvstad, 2014, p. 282). Chesterman (2006) is also among the scholars who recognized the significance of studying paratexts in translation studies. He asserts that translation is not restricted to its events; but embraces elements concerning these events, such as criticisms, prefaces, footnotes, etc. Such paratexts enrich translation system via reflecting and affecting its existence. These peripheral items illuminate people’s reactions towards translation that are partly evoked by translators in the self-developing and self-reflecting translation system. With respect to the significance of paratexts as “what enables a text to become a book” and as a threshold through which texts are “to be offered as such to its readers, and more generally, to the public” (Genette, p. 1), more research on these elements seems necessary.

In Iranian context, [Namvar Kohan \(2012\)](#) in her MA thesis worked on translators' visibility to see whether strategies contributing to translators' visibility, i.e. foreignization and neological translations on textual level, use of footnotes, dedications and prefaces on the paratextual level applied by two Persian translators of Silverstein's books. She concludes that translators used these strategies to different degrees and they were visible in terms of foreignizing strategy with a slight difference of tendency. Preface, as the most prominent kind of paratext, is a rare albeit precious instrument for translators to reflect on their translation process and its nuances. They are valuable gateways through which translators are able to talk directly to their audience and convince them for reading the result of their endeavor.

2.2. Preface

They (translators) are invisible only when a communication is clear and leaves nothing to question. In other cases, where there is doubt or cultural bias [...]They should write a separate preface, explaining how she has treated the work, how she has interpreted any controversial key-terms...a translated novel without a translator’s preface ought to be a thing of the past, and therefore the preface as well as the work should draw the reviewer’s attention. ([Newmark, 1983](#), p. 41)

After more than three decades from Newmark's remarks concerning the paucity of translators' prefaces, they are still uncommon in many translated works, especially in fictions. Genette claims that most techniques and themes of prefaces were established in the mid-sixteenth century and since then no fundamental evolution has occurred (1997). Translators’ prefaces refer to “introductions, notes, afterwards, or any other commentary preceding or following a translation written by the translator” ([McRae 2010](#), p. 7). [Bush \(1997\)](#) admits that translators’ prefaces, along with their footnotes and names on the book cover is a way for underscoring the authority of translators. He believes that publishers are among the agents resisting the addition of translational prefaces in fictions. As a remedy, [Landers \(2001\)](#) recommends submitting translations to academic presses because they are more likely to publish a preface to discuss peculiarities of source text and solutions made.

Prefaces have appeared to receive more consideration compared to other paratexts. Genette devoted a large proportion of his discussion on paratexts to prefaces. The paramount significance of these introductory elements may originate from the fact that they are almost completely detached from the source texts and give translators more latitude to elaborate on their presentation and visibility. Various functions and potentials of prefaces have been introduced by several scholars. Landers (2001) and [McRae \(2010\)](#), for example, declare that prefaces are incredibly rich and can offer ample evidence and fascinating insights into the designation of translators’ self-perceptions,

motivations behind the translation of a given book and explanations about the decision-making process, among other things. [Venuti \(1986\)](#) refers to preface as a significant, concrete struggling tool for unearthing translation process and discussing “labor of transformation” within the text. [Munday](#) also acknowledges the value of prefaces and concedes that “translation prefaces are a source of extensive information on the translation methods” ([2016](#), p. 52).

According to [Dimitriu](#), a detailed analysis of the translators’ prefaces and their comparison with actual translations may also be of use and value for translation researchers in discovering translation norms and translation ideals at a given time ([2009](#)). Through prefaces, translators find opportunity to add arguments or information for which no place has been found in the translations. Moreover, they will prove enlightening in addressing readers and advertising the translated book. Among paratexts, [Tahir-Gürçağlar](#) regards prefaces of particular importance as through them the translator’s agency could be identified ([2011](#)). In [Norberg](#)’ view prefaces bring some opportunities for translators that include “the chance to strengthen his/her reputation”, “satisfy the translator’s desire to write about the translation task without being immediately challenged” and “anticipate and prevent criticism from reviewers and readers” ([2012](#), p. 104). Research on prefaces can move translation studies away from a mere theoretical discipline, which has been the frequent complaint of many students in this field. As [Dimitriu](#) stresses, prefaces can be useful for practitioners, trainees and TS researchers. She believes that for researchers, prefaces function as “documents, case studies or complementary instruments providing clues to analyzing the translators’ actual behavior” ([2009](#), p. 201). Translators’ prefaces, therefore, provide the space for translators to talk about their concerns, problems and attitudes regarding difficulties in the process of translation. In this way, writing prefaces contributes to enriching applied branch of Holme’s map by equipping the translator training courses with ample empirical evidence including guidelines and suggestions made by professional translators. Against this background, this study is an attempt to examine the prefacial visibility of Iranian fiction translators in the time period 1986-2016. More evidently, this article sets up to address following questions:

Research Question One: What is the taxonomy and percentage of the types of fiction prefaces and the content of translators’ prefaces?

Research Question Two: Do the themes derived from translators’ prefaces contribute to translators’ visibility?

3. Methodology

3.1. Research design

This empirical study follows a product-oriented research design wherein the focus is on the translation and context surrounding it ([Saldanha & O’Brien, 2013](#)). The overall exploratory purpose of the research, which is to make inferences about the translators’ attitudes, is achieved through a content analysis of the prefaces made by the translators. The quantitative phase of the study provides evidence on the distribution of the prefaces and the different functions they may serve. The quantitative part is supported with strong examples extracted from the corpus for the ease of understating the presented analysis.

3.2. Materials

In the present inquiry, 300 English to Persian fiction translations, published in the last three decades that are the years 1365 to 1395 of the Persian calendar, covering the period of 1986 to 2016, were selected through convenience sampling. By fiction here, we mean novels, novelettes and short stories that are based on imaginary and unreal events, made up by their authors ([Abrams & Harpham, 2011](#)). Therefore, the study does not address non-fictional products. The works were authored by a wide range of English writers and have been translated by a many Iranian translators. The diversity of original works and translations could offer a more thorough knowledge of context and functions of the prefaces. Data analysis was performed in two stages. The initial stage helped us to unearth those translations, which lacked any preface. This, in turn, offered new evidence

concerning the presence or absence of prefaces in Persian fictional translation. The second stage concerned the analysis of the content of the prefaces.

3.3. Data Analysis procedures

Translators' prefaces found in the corpus (97 prefaces) were analyzed using the "thematic analysis" proposed by [Braun and Clarke \(2006\)](#) that is viewed as an accessible and flexible qualitative method that "provides core skills that will be useful for conducting many other kinds of analysis" (p. 78). Furthermore, it is a method rather than an approach, i.e. devoid of any particular theoretical background (in comparison to critical discourse analysis). This qualitative analytical technique, as [Braun and Clarke \(2006\)](#) put it, was conducted through six steps:

1. Becoming familiar with the data: In this initial phase, all the translators' prefaces were extracted and read several times to take an image of the whole context. In this stage, some notes were taken and early impressions were made for the subsequent steps.

2. Generating initial codes: In this step, initial codes were created based on interesting or meaningful patterns found in the data. Here, research questions were borne in mind and each segment of data relevant to the questions were coded. Since the electronic versions of the fictions were not available, all the steps were conducted manually through hardcopies of the corpus.

3. Searching for themes: This step included the extraction of themes through pinpointing the connections between the data. These were temporary themes that could be classified subsequently as the main themes or sub-themes or could be completely discarded.

4. Reviewing themes: Initial themes generated in the previous stage were refined and reviewed. They were broken down into more themes or merged with other themes. The relationship between each theme and its relevant data was examined and finally, consistency of the themes in the entire data set was reviewed.

5. Defining and naming themes: In this step, each theme was analyzed in detail to ensure its content and fitness into the whole work. Finally, after determining the scope and subject matter, themes were defined in concise and explicit names.

6. Writing-up: the final stage started with a well-developed group of themes that were studied for the final analysis. "It is important that the analysis (the write-up of it, including data extracts) provides a concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive and interesting account of the story the data tell" ([Braun and Clarke, 2006](#), p. 20). At the end, some clear and simple examples were presented to clarify each theme. Thematic analysis resulted into seven themes that their numbers in all the corpus were counted and the numerical data entered SPSS software (version 18) to reflect an overall image of prefacial visibility of Iranian fiction translators in the last three decades.

4. Results

4.1. Frequency of the kinds of the prefaces

The prefaces, found in the fictions under the study, were classified into three broad categories of which the first and second were taken from [Genette](#)' terms (1997, p. XVI): "autographic" (written by the author of the original), "allographic" (written by another agent i.e. publisher, famous person, etc.) and translators' prefaces. It should be mentioned that in the present research, translation is considered as an independent text with its own paratexts. As [Tahir-Gürçağlar](#) argues, translators' prefaces are neither allographic nor authorial, but should be "handled separately in a category of their own" (2013, p. 93). Generally speaking, less than 30 percent of the works of fiction had no prefaces and the equal percentage of fictions was found with translators' prefaces. Twenty-six percent of the prefaces were the original authors' prefaces transferred to the translated versions; and 15 percent of the prefaces were inscribed by a third agent (Figure 1).

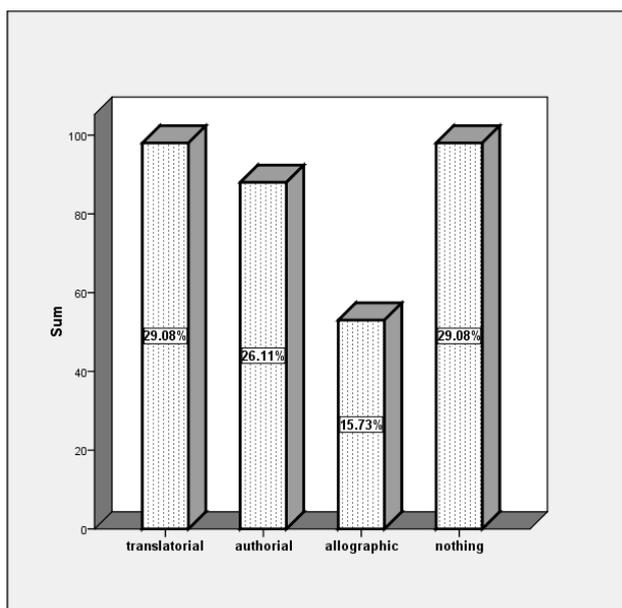


Figure 1: Overall Percentage of Fiction Prefaces During the Last Three Decades.

4.2. Content of translators' prefaces

4.2.1. Genesis

This theme revolves around fiction content, its characters, motive behind its creation, its background, and so forth. It also includes the popularity of the originals among source language readers, their translations into other languages and cinematic productions made based on them. "Genesis" term is taken from [Genette](#)'s content of prefaces that is defined as "the origin of the work, the circumstances in which it was written, the stages of its creation" (1997, p. 210).

4.2.2. Authorial information

This content embraces, among other points, the original writers' biographical information, their social and political status, and their earlier works or interviews. In the current study, some translators' prefaces were abundant with details and elaborations on the original authors and their works. These prefaces just carried the name of the translators at their beginning and in some cases even their names were not mentioned and the reader could figure out about the writer, by some hints through their reading.

4.2.3. Lightning rods

Lightning rods includes modesty assertions of the translators, "is the surest way to ward off critics, that is, to neutralize them -and indeed- to forestall criticism by taking the initiative" ([Genette 1997](#), p. 208). On this ground, translators acknowledge their possible mistakes and any addition or deletion, especially in rendering great works which entail considerable challenges. Khajepour, for example, as the translator of the [Colossus of Maroussi](#) in his preface notes: "[...] and this is the final version; its beauties and elegances result from others' help and its ugliness and frailty are my fault [...] definitely you have heard this proverb that 'the translator is a traitor [...]'" (1941, pp. 10-11).

4.2.4. Choice of the public

[Genette \(1997, p. 212\)](#) claims that "guiding the reader also, and first of all, means situating him and thus determining who he is. [...] authors often have a fairly specific idea of the kind of reader they want, or the kind they can reach, but also the kind they want to avoid." Determining the fiction's audiences and guiding them through the reading process can be effective in drawing their attention and decreasing the long-standing gap between translators and their readers. [Behnam \(1909, p. 3\)](#) in

his translation of Mark Twain's *The Prince and the Pauper* (1909) specifies and addresses his readers "It is hoped that dear readers, specially adolescence and youth who are interested in reading amusing and advisable stories, enjoy this book."

4.2.5. Genre indication

This theme "can serve as a relatively autonomous paratextual element [...] or it can take over- to a greater or lesser degree- the title or subtitle" (Genette 1997, p. 58). Clarification of the genre of fictions, eliminate readers' confusion and help them to make informed decision in choosing their appropriate books. Miralae (1974, p. V) in his preface, while introducing the genre of the fiction, talks about the value of detective genre and encourage his readers to read these kinds of stories:

In the previous years, there has been some reluctance toward detective stories that moved well-known translators and writers away from this area. However, the reality is that reading masterpieces in this genre is a necessity; Borges resorted to this stories and Edgar Allan Poe, the father of short stories, has written some fantastic cases in this genre.

4.2.6. Personal indication

This mostly included "exit notes" which could be found at the end of the prefaces such as translator's gratitude, wish for popularity of the book, dedications, etc. It also covered other personal features including narrating personal memories using first-person-singular point of view, expressing feeling about the work and reflecting the feeling of being fond of the original author. Personal indications are among the most significant elements leading to attracting the attention of readers to the translators' presence.

Here is an example, where the translator expresses his strong feeling toward the original author:

"I tried my best to get rid of O'Conner and grotesque characters of her stories. I decided to choose another writer; a modern, sweeter and more friendly one. [...] but it seemed that O'Conner herself, her spirit from the depth of her little tomb in Milledgeville urged me, with a blaming and demanding look, to finish translating her books. Finally, in this covert and overt struggle, she was the winner and I became the unquestionable slave of her stories" (Alipour, 2015, pp. 7-8).

4.2.7. Translation process

This theme covers any information with regard to the process of translation including challenges found in the rendering process, translation methods and procedures in translating proper nouns, culture-specific elements, various aids and sources facilitated this process etc. Gouadec argues that there are still some unrealistic misconceptions about translation; many people underestimate translation as a matter of languages in such a way that everyone familiar with two languages can become a translator and that translation is a simple and unchallenging phenomenon (2007). Through this channel, translators can get their readers acquainted with the complexity and delicacy of their profession. Several scholars (Landers, 2001, McRae, 2010) viewed prefaces as a ground against which translation phenomenon can be foregrounded. Some items associated with this theme are elaborated separately:

Commentary on the title: According to Genette providing comments on title may be influential in defending possible criticism. It may also assist in shedding light on changes in titles from previous known titles in advertisements or serial publications. "Commentary on the title may also serve as a kind of delayed repentance on the title [...] It can be a warning against – and therefore a sort of partial correction to- the misleading correction of the title" (1997, pp. 214-215). In the present study, some translators changed the title of the original because of difficulty in finding an appropriate equivalent, its unpopularity among TL readers and everything. The translators attempted to justify their intentions through these implements. Spelling out the meaning of the title can be a common approach, especially if it is allusive or enigmatic. Angali (1993, p. 7) in his preface elaborates on the change in the original title:

Finding an appropriate yet identical equivalent for the title “A Study in Scarlet” was of difficulty in Persian. “Hard Work without Reward” or “Beautiful albeit ugly in innermost” could be suggested. But, regarding the process of events in the story and their final result, I chose “Thirst for Revenge” on the account it is a more expressive and eloquent choice.

Truthfulness: [Genette \(1997, p. 206\)](#) asserts that “the only aspect of treatment an author can give himself credit for in the preface, undoubtedly because conscience rather than talent is induced, is truthfulness or, at the very least, sincerity- that is the effort to achieve truthfulness.” Genette, here, talks about the original authors’ truth that cannot be restricted to any concept. However, in the present study, truth refers to adherence to several aspects of the source text and its intention. [Behtarin \(1948, p. 8\)](#) talks about his loyalty to Faulkner’s style, in spite of the dilemmas faced in the rendering process: “In translating the present book, I strived to preserve the delicate and idiosyncratic style of Faulkner along with his figurative language. Consequently, his distinctive style could be distinguished from that of other writers.”

Translation methods and strategies: prefaces are looked upon as a "source of extensive information on the translation methods" ([Munday, 2016](#)). [Norberg \(2012\)](#) believes that through shedding light on translation strategies in prefaces, translators can “anticipate and prevent criticisms from reviewers and readers. As an example, [Etrak \(1989, p. 5\)](#) in his preface elaborates on the translation method followed in the rendering the people of the abyss by Jack London (2009): “The free method was applied for the translation to enable the translator in choosing domesticated equivalents and considering a name for the anonymous chapters of the original. Consequently, readers will enjoy the fluency of the book.”

Some other themes were also obtained from the analysis that did not follow a consistent pattern and occurred only once. Therefore, they were excluded from the study. The results of exploring 97 translators’ prefaces of the Persian translated works of fictions are illustrated in table 1.

Table 1: Overall percentage of the themes extracted from translators’ prefaces

Contents	Percentage
Genesis	28.33%
Authorial information	26.00%
Translation process	15.34%
Personal indication	12.00%
Choice of the public	5.33%
Lightning rods	5.00%
Genre indication	4.00%

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Translators have to work within the constraints of the source text and should come up with appropriate equivalents for a given original challenge. Everything mentioned in this in-between space may place them in the controversial position of betrayal and untruthfulness. Under this condition, many translators prefer to remain in their blurry presence and stand silent and hidden behind their translation. Consequently, they fall victim to their fluent and self-effacing renderings. However, if as [Baker \(2000\)](#) asserts, we consider literary translation as a creative rather than a reproductive activity, it is the translator that should be given prominence rather than the author. Paratexts, or more specifically prefaces, appear to be the best secure zone for translators to leave some stamps of their presence and write an account of their work. [Wechsler \(1998\)](#) believes that the paucity of translators’ prefaces results in lowering their position and status in the society. In his words, understanding translators’ role is significant, and prefaces are a ground for understanding and appreciation of this significance.

Writing prefaces will not play a pivotal role in highlighting the translator’s status in case they merely reflect the backgrounds of the original author and his/her performance and open up no

opportunity for translators to get rid of their covert and disguised position. The overall goal of this study was to present a snapshot of paratextual visibility of Iranian fiction translators in the last three decades in terms of prefaces. In response to the first research question regarding the kinds and contents of prefaces, it was revealed that nearly one third of all prefaces written by translators were abundant with details on the biographical information of the original authors and the description of their books. With respect to the content of translators' prefaces, seven themes of "genesis, authorial information, translation process, personal indication, choice of public, lightning rods, genre indication" were extracted. Some of the themes driven from this study such as biographical information on the author, genre indication, readership, clarification of title, strategies or problems in translation process, were also found in [Harron \(2017\)](#) and [Hosseinzadeh \(2015\)](#) investigations.

Regarding the second research question, translators usually chose the third-person point of view; therefore, a few traces of their name, gratitude or any other personal feeling or assertion were uncovered. Another surprising point was the abundance of authorial information and genesis in comparison to translation-related information. While details on source text writers occupied more than one-fourth of the contents, no translator was introduced in the corpus. The main problem of these explanations was not with their relevance to the original authors or their works, but relied on the nature of these accounts that was not originated from translators' own arguments and opinion and were transferred from the source text or copied from encyclopedia or internet. This point necessitates investigations to clarify whether this invisibility results from translators' deliberation and intention to be hidden in their own books or is a policy imposed from other influential factors such as publishers. Since [Bush \(1997\)](#) and [Landers \(2001\)](#) consider publishers as resisting agents in inserting translators' prefaces in fictions, manipulating the contents of prefaces by them may not be peculiar. Consequently, contents of the translators' prefaces in this study did not fulfill the expectations of [Venuti \(1986\)](#), [Munday \(2016\)](#) and [Bush \(1997\)](#) to appear as a rich source of information about translation process and methods. We can conclude that the Iranian translators' prefaces are mostly at the service of the original authors and their works.

Unlike the present research, [McRae \(2010\)](#) in her dissertation on studying the function of prefaces of contemporary literary translations, concluded that one of the most served functions of the prefaces is "promoting understanding of the translators' role and intervention in the text" (p. 2). [Jing-yi and Zhi Xiang's \(2015\)](#) study on the content of English-Chinese publications of American authors, similarly, showed that the themes of prefaces have shifted the attention away from the information on the original to translation processes and translators' visibility. Given the small size of the study corpus, more research on other kinds of paratexts such as epitexts: reviews, interviews, criticism, diaries, etc. and peritexts including footnotes, titles, dedications, blurbs, and so forth are required to give a more comprehensive image of the paratextual (in)visibility of Iranian fiction translators. Studying the possible effect of various genres and translators' gender on this area is suggested and further research is recommended to employ larger corpora to ensure more generalizable results. To achieve more valid results, paratexts studies could be accompanied with exploring the actual translations. Future research could address the same issue and topic in other areas of translation such as audiovisual translation, scientific translation, and religious translation, to name but a few topics.

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