



Reception of Literary Translation in Iran: A Case Study of Fasihi's Translation into Persian of Aşk by Elif Şafak

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ABSTRACT

Translation readers' interest in classic or modern texts determines the translation trend in any society and culture. Not surprisingly, in the context of Iran where Irfan and mysticism have a long history, rich literature and cultural roots, translations of mystical books have received more attention. One literary work that has come to the center of attention is the novel Aşk written by the Turkish author Elif Şafak (2010) and translated as Mellat-e Eshgh into Persian by the famous Iranian translator, Arsalan Fasihi. The purpose of the present paper was to study from a cultural point of view how this translated novel has been received in Iran. To serve the purpose of the study and in light of the Juass's reception theory, the researchers chose to interview five participants including the translator of the book. The results of the study revealed that the Persian translation of Aşk is well-received in Iran. It is argued that the role of the translator, the genre of the book, proper timing and locality, and the role of the publication and distribution are the most important causes behind the popularity of the translated novel.

Keywords: Reception; Literary translation; Mowlaana; Aşk; Persian; Fasihi.

1. Introduction

A completed translated (literary) text is not the end but the beginning of the road. As every translation is produced for an audience, what should be important for a translator (or publisher) is how the final product is received by the intended audience. We constantly see in the market translations (of a text) that are well-received by the target readers, and appear as bestsellers. At the same time, we see translations (of the same text) which fail and are left untouched on the shelves of bookstores. Why some literary translations are widely read and sell best, but others are unsuccessful? What is it, in fact, which governs the reception of a completed translation? The broad answer to this question is the main topic of discussion under the reception in translation studies.

Reception is the process through which the reader changes the text potential into an acceptable atmosphere (Juass, 1982, as cited in Brems & Ramos Pinto, 2013). Success and reception of

a completed translation is determined by the interaction of different factors: the linguistic and semantic content of the translation as a product of the translator's intentions and their ability to realize those intentions; and the readiness of the target audience to accept a target text with those encoded intentions. When the two align, a translation is well-received (McAuley, 2015).

As Brown (1994) declares, "one way of examining the reception is by looking at the reviews of a work, since they represent a 'body of reactions' to the author and text" (as cited in Munday, 2016, p. 232). Munday (2016) confesses that no set model for analysis of reviews (thus reception) has been specifically proposed for studying reception of literary translation.

In light of Horizon of Expectation as a theory of reception proposed by Juass, the present study seeks to explore the reception of the translation of the classical mystical Turkish text, *Aşk*, in the society of Iran and via the horizon of Iranian readers' general expectations of the style, form, content, etc. In other words, the study intends to explore how they comprehend, decode, and appraise the translation based on cultural codes and conventions particular to their own time in history. *Aşk*¹ is a Turkish novel by Elif Şafak which was revealed in both Turkish and English versions simultaneously in 2010. It is a book about the life of a western woman who is involved in eastern Irfan beliefs. The main subject of *Aşk* is of the relationship between two prominent historical characters. It narrates a story of a Persian Dervish named *Shams-e Tabrizi*² and his inspiring relationship with a high reputation poet, *Rumi*³. Rumi³, also known as Mowlaana, fell in great love with the Dervish and this adoration led to the inspiration to indite the *Masnawi*. *Aşk* is a romance literary work dealing with adoration on one hand and liberation of soul on the other. As the theme of the book concerns Islamic Irfan and mysticism and also two mystic scholars and poets, it increases the significance of its translation from Turkish into Persian. Islamic Irfan is a wide ground and is associated with Sufism in many religious ways. Sometimes both of them used as a substitution for the other. The literary meaning of Irfan is 'knowledge, awareness, wisdom.' Irfan is knowledge and cognition in which love is in conformity with divine revelation. Mysticism is derived from Latin 'mutus' and Greek 'myein'. 'mutus' means silent and 'myein' means closing the eyes and lips (Acarli, 2011). Accordingly, mysticism has two meanings; 'silent' and 'secret-secrecy' (Sunar, 1992:236, as cited in Acarli, 2011).

Aşk was translated by the Iranian translator Arsalan Fasihi in 2010 and published in 2015. According to *Qoqnoos* Publishing Group, Fasihi's translation became one of the bestselling translations of Turkish books in the book market of Iran. It was translated by many other Iranian translators including Ali Asghar Shojaei, Elahe Keyhanfar, Mina Amiri, Pooran Hasanzadeh, etc. The present study seeks to prove the above claim and also to explore some most possible causes of the popularity of the translation so as to open new horizons to future generation of translators as well as publishers.

1 *The Forty Rules of Love: A Novel of Rumi (in English)*

2 *Shams al-Din Mohammad*, known as *Shams-e Tabrizi*, was a Persian mystic Muslim (Gamard, 2004). He credited as the spiritual teacher of Rumi. *Shams-e Tabrizi's* Persian prose book named "The *Maqalat-e Shams-e Tabrizi*" is a mystical interpretation of Islam and spiritual advice. *Shams* lived in Konya with Rumi, but after several years, he left there to be settled in Khoy. As a sign of love and since they were parted, Rumi attributed most of his poetry to *Shams*.

3 *Jalal ad-Din Muhammad Rumi*, known as Rumi (1207-1273), was a Persian poet in the thirteenth century. He also was an Islamic Scholar, theologian and Sufi mystic from greater Khorasan (Lewis, 2008). His poems were translated into more 20 languages of the world. He has been the "most popular poet" and the "best selling poet" in the United States. (Chittick, 2004; Lewis, 2008). Rumi's works are mostly written in Persian, he also used Arabic, Greek and Turkish in his verse (Lewis, 2008). His meeting with *Shams-e Tabrizi* on fifteen November 1244 changed his life and transformed Rumi to an ascetic. The death of *Shams* and the shock of bereavement led Rumi outpour the lyric poems of "*Divan-e Shams-e Tabrizi*" (Chittick, 2004). Rumi belongs to the class of Islamic philosophers and many of his poems are about the importance of the Quran (Lewis, 2000).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Cultural translation

In its rather long history, translation has been undertaken for many purposes. Before the twentieth century, it had been restricted to language learning in order to understand religious texts for dissemination (Munday, 2001). Then, in 1950s and 60s, Nida (1914-2011), a theorist in Bible translation, offered a scientific approach and adopted a linguistic perspective toward translation which was mostly used for translating sacred text, including the Bible. Nida's preferred approach was 'dynamic equivalence' where the translator attempts to give target readers the same response which was given to source text readers (Nida & Taber, 1969). Later, in 1970s and 80s and with the advent of 'cultural turn' and sociology of translation, there was a big shift in the purpose for which translation was used. Now, translation was no more considered as a language learning tool only or a tool for faithful translation of sacred texts, rather was considered as a tool for enriching cultures, importing and exporting cultural values and in a more critical view, as a 'social activity' and translator as 'social agent' (Berneking, 2014). Katan (2012) in his article *Cultural Translation* introduced the "Translation for Culture". Very much following Nida's dynamic equivalence in sacred text translation, *Translating for Culture* means reducing the ST cultural elements to avoid "culture bump" or highlighting them to show the superiority or inferiority of ST culture (Katan, 2012). 'Translation for Culture' (Cultural Translation) approach leads to more text comprehension in TT readers due to more cultural affinity. Therefore, that makes target readers look for and follow a cultural translation which may help with the popularity of the book. Several translations such as 'Me before you' (Moiz, 2012) translated by Meftahi, 'The little prince' (Exupery, 1943) translated by Shamloo, 'Aşk' (Şafak, 2010) translated by Fasihi, 'A fraction of the whole' (Toltz, 1972) translated by Khaksaar enjoyed cultural affinity toward our country as main causes and agents behind their popularity (*Donya-e Eqtesad*, 2017, August 12). Irfan and mysticism are two popular themes under literary genre in Iran. In recent years, Iranian readers had a wide interest in pursuing the Persian translation of the mystical *Aşk*, written by the Turkish novelist and translated as *Mellat-e Eshq*. Due to the fact that Iranian culture and literature is rich in Irfan and mysticism, highlighting cultural differences in the translated version of the book is considered in this study for analysis.

2.2 Translation reception

In the study of reception, there exists two European and American traditions in theorization. The American Stanley Fish whose theory of "interpretive community" sees text in cultural assumption (Fish, 1980, as cited in Brems and Ramos, 2013), and the Germany Hans-Robert Jauss whose work in "aesthetic of reception" considered in this study. Jauss's reception theory with a shift from 'text' to 'reader' has been the most influential and was adopted in the reception studies of translation, initially adopted by Brown in 1994 (Munday, 2016). Specifically, it is the structure by which a person comprehends, decodes and appraises any text based on cultural codes and conventions particular to their time in history. To determine a set of criteria for readers' evaluation of literary works at a specific period, Jauss introduced *Horizon of Expectation* from phenomenology and hermeneutics. These horizons are, therefore, historically flexible meaning readers may interpret and value a text differently from previous (or future) generations. It emphasizes the reader as an important element in the processing of texts. According to Jauss, the reader approaches a text armed with knowledge and experience gained from interactions with other texts. These earlier texts arouse familiarity for the reader based on expectations and rules of genre and style. Applied to translation, many scholars have commented on the key word 'expectation'. For example, Gutt states that "the success of the translated text is crucially dependent on the expectations of the target audience" (1996: 252), both in terms of what a translation should be, how a text in a particular genre should be expressed, and what those expectations. Nord (1991:92) suggests that the expectations an audience has for "translation" vary between cultures, and within cultures at different times, which is a major reason why translations once judged acceptable and "why there will never be a common translation code for all cultures" (Nord 1991: 92). Tashakor (2019) has carried out a sociological analysis in which she analyzed the external factors of the reception of *Mellat-e Eshq* in Iran. She described the social environment of Iran to find out why Iranians showed interest to this book.

Tashakor (2019) complained about various Persian translations of *Aşk* which resulted in localization of this book in Iran. She believes that in a country such as Iran where less advertisements carries for reading, popularity of a book and it becomes one of the best sellers is indebted to the social relations among people. The recommendation of political and intellectual leaders of a society are also effective since they introduce books of parallel themes with the society's present condition. According to Tashakor (2019), social reasons are the only way that make people follow a book, and in this case, the *40 rules of love* by Safak (2010) acts as a remedy for today's people's social pains.

2.3 Reception of literary mystical works

Various researches are conducted on the relationship between mysticism and people's beliefs, culture, mind and what effect the books with that content have on readers' selections and also book marketing. Many researchers selected and analyzed 'Aşk' as their case of studies. Acarli (2011) considered the relationship between mysticism and literature marketing and for this purpose, took *Aşk* as an example since it narrates the mystical elements. He declared that people are looking for sources to fulfill their mental and spiritual needs by reading literary works and this is in linear with book marketing. Acarli included four factors which lead the readers to choose mystical literary works: 1) The reader chooses mystical theme to express his identity because mysticism helps him to demonstrate to others the differences between routine lifestyle of him and what his identity really is. 2) The reader prefers mystical product so he is able to recall a nostalgic memory and enjoy the reading process. 3) By reading mystical literary works, reader finds solutions to solve his problems by relying on religion. 4) Inasmuch as the mystical content brings a variety of emotions as hope, joy, excitement, adventure and love, the reader's dependence on the book will increase. Acarli (2011) concluded that a book like 'Aşk' with more than 550,000 copies and also other books with similar content have been sold in Turkey and would bring profit for book marketing; that is because the secrecy of Irfan and mysticism have raised people's curiosity throughout history. Mohd Ganai and Ahmad Dar (2017) conducted a study and analyzed the role of Islamic mysticism as a guide for creating a noble being in book 'Aşk'. They concluded that mysticism has a considerable role for those who seek the truth and search for a path toward a noble being and prosperity will be achieved when people purify their Nafs/ego. A research by Annisa (2018) further investigated how hope is reflected in 'Aşk' and what is the function of having hope as reflected in this book.

Though the above-mentioned researchers analyzed 'Aşk' as to study the relationship between mysticism and people's beliefs, culture, mind and book marketing, still none has proceeded to study its reception or analyze the causes that made it popular. The present survey aims at undertaking an analysis of the reception of the novel 'Aşk' in the Iranian social context and also the most possible reasons from the point of view of the readers. To the researcher's best knowledge, no comprehensive study on this topic appears to exist. Therefore, the study addresses the question: How is the Persian translation of 'Aşk' by Fasihi received in Iran?

3. Methodology

3.1. Research design

This study was a context- and participant-oriented research (Saldanha & O'Brian, 2013). It is context-oriented in that the social context of the selected translation reception, various social factors and agents (human and non-human) affecting its reception in the form of a case study and statistical information collected about the translation, its market, publications and publishers, reprints and number of copies are taken into account. It is participant-oriented in that the consumers' opinions about the selected translation in the form of interviews are surveyed and analyzed.

3.2. Procedure

The methods used to carry out the current study was mixed based on combination of official statistics and reports announced on Iranian official agencies' websites (including Islamic

Republic News Agency) and interview with a trustable sample of Iranian readers who had read Fasihi's translation as well as publishers, translators and editors. As for the present study, the participants of the interview were the translator of the book, Fasihi, who is an Iranian translator and the editor of Qoqnoos publishing Group, and four other participants which were located in two groups of readers (coded as participants 1 and 2), and translators (coded as participants 3, 4, and 5). All participants claimed to have read the translated novel. Participant 1 was an 18-year-old male student, participant 2 was a 30-year-old male, participant 3 and 4 were a 24-year-old undergraduate and a 36-year-old postgraduate female student respectively studying translation studies. The translator was coded as participant 5.

The interview consisted of five questions, two of them representing specific causes and agents of popularity of the selected translation in Iran (the role of the translator and publication and distribution of the book) and the other three designed with the aim of directly extracting some other possible reasons from the interviewees. Due to problems of access to the translator, the questions were sent to him via Telegram. It lasted a week for the researcher to receive Fasihi's answers to the interview questions. The process of collecting data from the other four interviewees followed the interview with the translator. Following data collection, the interviews were transcribed and entered in MAXQDA (v.12) to be coded and analyzed. The researcher brought some codes and sub-codes to the data category deductively and made some changes in categorizing codes during the analysis of interviews. The software provided visual map, chart, and code frequencies.

3.3. Corpus

Arsalan Fasihi in Iran translated the Turkish novel 'Aşk' by Elif Şafak as '*Mellat-e Eshq*'. This translation was published and released by Qoqnoos Publications in 2014. The rationale behind selecting '*Mellat-e Eshq*' translated by Fasihi as the case of the present study is that it introduced as one of the bestsellers of the Iranian book market according to the ranking of Qoqnoos Publication Group. The translated text has been reprinted a hundred times (2019)⁴ and over 400,000 copies of it have been released. 'Aşk' consists of two parallel stories: one, narrated in contemporary era, is about a woman named 'Ella', a wife and a mother who works as an editor in a publication, and 'Aziz Z. Zahara', the author whose book Ella is editing. Ella acquainted with mysticism through this book and her life would change. The other story, which narrates Zahara's book takes place in thirteenth century, is about a mystical Dervish named *Shams-e Tabrizi* and his inspiring relationship with the poet Rumi.

4. Results

Initially, using a quantitative method, the results of the participant-oriented research (interview with the participants) are illustrated and reported. In the following, the statistical results with regard to the reception of Fasihi's translation are presented.

4.1 Context-based findings for the reception of 'Aşk'

Aşk was translated by the Iranian translator Arsalan Fasihi in 2010 and published in 2015. According to Qoqnoos Publishing Group, Fasihi's translation became one of the bestselling translations of Turkish books in the book market of Iran.

As reported by the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA), the official circulation of *Mellat-e Eshq* is around 500000 copies in Iran, published by eighteen publishers: Selsele Mehr-Parsine (about 25000 copies), Do Yar Moaser (9000 copies), Atisa (5500 copies), Mina Amiri (5000 copies), Ayandegan (4000 copies), Armaghan-e Gilar (2500 copies), Akhtar (2000 copies), and Fanoos-e Danesh and Yaghout publications (500 copies) (IRNA, 15, June 2019)⁵. Evidently, according to Qoqnoos publication, Fasihi's translation as *Mellat-e Eshq*, with a reprint of a hundred times and

4 Retrieved from <https://qoqnoos.ir/>

5 Retrieved from <https://plus.irna.ir/news/83354137/>, Qoqnoos Publishing Group, 2019, retrieved from <https://qoqnoos.ir/>

over 400,000 copies, has had the highest number of reprints in this publication and has been the most received by the Iranian readers. According to SMT Newspaper (12, September, 2018), and based on top-sale statistics published by Khaneh Ketab organization, thirty best-selling books were announced in 2018, twenty six of which were translations with *Mellat-e Eshq* as a leading one.⁶

Based on Katan's 'Translation for Culture' approach, in which translation is a channel for cultural affinity, it can be argued that Iranians like other people of the world read books not only authored by Iranian authors, but also imported from other cultures in the form translations. For instance, several translations such as 'Me before you' (Moiz, 2012) translated by Meftahi, 'The little prince' (Exupery, 1943) translated by Shamloo, 'Aşk' (Şafak, 2010) translated by Fasihi, 'A fraction of the whole' (Toltz, 1972) translated by Khaksaar enjoyed cultural affinity as the main cause behind their popularity (*Donya-e Eqtesad*, 2017, August 12). Amongst various genres and books, Iranians are much interested in Irfan and Mysticism. These are two popular themes under literary genre in Iran. Irfan and mysticism show humans the path to the truth and its perception through heart and not sensory experiences. This is something lost, more or less, in the modern life of human. As claimed by the Iranian readers, such books and topics would help them find themselves and the reality of life. Fasihi's translation grew in this context. Throughout history and particularly in recent years, Iranian readers have shown a deeper interest in reading the Persian translation of the mystical works including *Aşk*, written by the Turkish novelist and translated as *Mellat-e Eshq*. The reason could be the rich literature and culture of Iranians in Irfan and mysticism and also the presence of *Shams-e Tabrizi* as a mystic character who was an Iranian from Tabriz. Hence, this leads Iranians to a feeling of affinity and proximity.

4.2 Participant-based findings for the reception of 'Aşk'

The determined categories of causes and agents contain a number of sub-categories. Each code and sub-code is interpreted as causes and agents of popularity of the translation of 'Aşk' (*Mellat-e Eshgh*) in Iran. To present a clear image of the two groups' considerations of popularity of the book, each code and sub-code is tabulated with examples in Table 1.

Table 1. Conceptualization of Codes and Sub-codes of Reasons of Popularity of 'Aşk'

Causes and agents	Readers	Translators
Proper timing and locality	publication can be successful when it publishes and distributes a specific book in a proper time and locality	Locality
	P2	P5
Vacuum in mystical theme	because of the story narration of it	could have been written by an Iranian author rather than a Turkish one
	P1	P4
Role of the translator	The translator plays a vital role	the translator was a new creator
	P2	P4
The title of the book	People easily attracted by the title 'Mel-lat-e Eshq'	used a combination of <i>Masnawi</i>
	P1	P5
Genre of the book	genre of it	an appealing genre and theme
	P1	P5
Presence of Prominent literary characters	two great Iranian characters	story of <i>Shams-e Tabrizi</i> and <i>Mowlaana</i>
	P2	P3
Mysticism and Irfan	mystical theme and the subject of Irfan	unearthly dimension
	P1	P4
Role of the Publication and Distribution	publication can be successful when it publishes and distributes a specific book in a proper time and locality	popularity of the publication
	P2	P5

The frequency of each code in the two groups of interviewees is represented in Table 2; the frequency of sub-codes is included in the related codes. As can be seen, the 'role of the translator' has the most frequency.

Table 2. Frequency of Codes and Sub-codes of Reasons of Popularity of 'Aşk'

	Proper timing and locality	Role of the translator	Genre of the book	Role of the publication and distribution	Total
Readers	10	17	12	5	44
Translators	5	24	22	9	60
Total	15	41	34	14	104

Figure 1 displays the percentage of coded and sub-coded segments for all determinants.

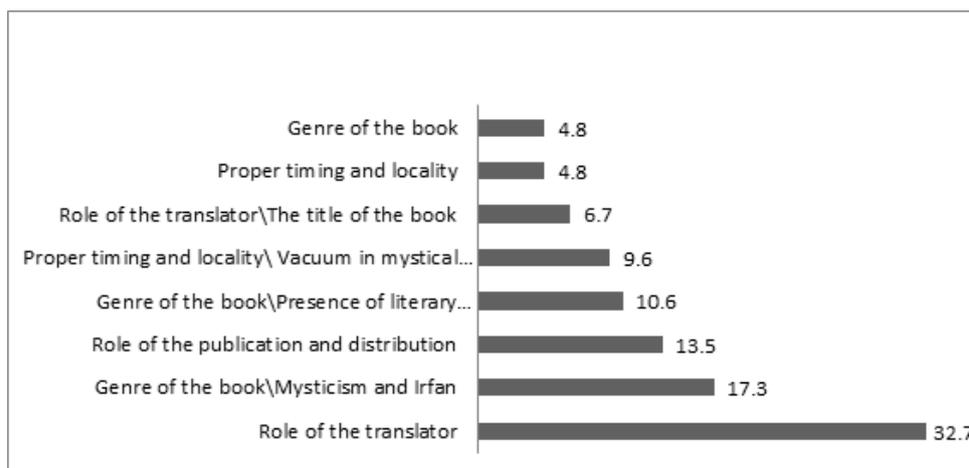


Figure 1. Percentage of coded and sub-coded segments

In the following section, the coded and sub-coded determinants of the causes and agents of popularity of the selected translation of 'Aşk' (*Mellat-e Eshgh*) are discussed under similar categories.

4.3. Role of the translator

No doubt that the translator of 'Aşk' (*Mellat-e Eshgh*) made a salient amount of readers through this job in comparison with other translations offered by other translations mentioned earlier. As represented in the results, the 'role of the translator' is the most frequent, thus the most important cause of the popularity of the selected translation. As participant 4 of translator group mentioned, "if the translator could not bring the sense and aesthetic dimensions of words of the author, the beauty of the original text would have been disappeared, so the translator was a new creator of this novel." As Fasihi, the translator of the book, argued "wherever a citation appeared in the source text, I tried to found the original sayings and substitute them instead of doing back translation." This is consistent with what participant 1 of the reader group mentioned in the interview: "those verses of Rumi which the translator brought originally from *Masnawi*, added much more beauty to its translation." As Fasihi indicated, "once a translator has experience and awareness of his job, knows the translation skills and techniques, and has all the ability to use them, the consequence would be desirable that the majority of readers can put it to use." Enjoying the reading process attracts the Iranian readers and this is because of eloquent, simple, and fluent translation of the book. All the interviewees commonly indicate this. Fasihi also stated, "translation is finding the answer to the question: how would the author write if he or she would write in Farsi. My policy in translation is answering this question and then translating based on the answer." Therefore, this is the duty of any translator to choose the most efficient method for translation based on the taste of the readership. As Berneking (2016) puts it, "translation happens in the mind of translators as social beings who function in multiple roles and negotiate meanings, situated within an environment of social and cultural dimensions. Sociology of translation shifts the focus from texts to the translators, their roles, social networks, and lasting effects on society." (p. 265)

4.4. Title of the book

Participants 1 and 2 of the reader group found the title of the book eye-catching, in that it arouses people's curiosity to buy the book. As Fasihi revealed, "the version I translated was titled as 'Aşk', which means 'Love'. I could choose the same word for the title of the translated version, but to avoid any misunderstanding by the readers that it is a psychology book, I used the phrase used by *Mowlaana*. Here are the Farsi and English translation of the verse:

ملت عشق از همه دین ها جداست

عاشقان را ملت و مذهب خداست

The sect of Love is different from all other religions

For lovers, their sect and religion is simply God⁷

4.5. Genre of the book

As participant 1 said, "most of the people like to gain knowledge about historical events by reading them as a story or a novel, so if the genre of the book was historical, people wouldn't follow it this much." Furthermore, there are two narrators in the novel: first person and third person. The reader can see the events of seventh century from different narrators. According to Fasihi, this technique increased the attractiveness of the book.

4.5. 1. Mysticism and Irfan

As presented in Table 3 and due to the analyzed interviews, the sub-code of mysticism and Irfan has the second most frequency. All interviewees in both groups mentioned the importance of mystical theme as a reason that readers showed interest in the book. As participant 4 suggested, "Iranian people are engaged with Irfan and it is more tangible for us and that is because of our poets, wise stories, or the history of our prominent characters. Reading the story of seventh century was appealing to me as an Iranian reader; however, the second story of contemporary era was not compatible with Iranian people beliefs and did not sound correct." Irfan and mysticism is a sect of Islam and just as participant 1 described, "that makes readers become curious to know what is Irfan that Shams was engaged with and how it is related with Islam religion." As Participant 3 suggested, "mystical content books could change the intimidating view of Islam and made it easier for the reader to become closer to the creator." Fasihi, the translator of the book, noted, "It is because of spiritual and locality situations that people come to Irfan and show interest to it. Irfan and mysticism bring peace in difficult situations." Both Fasihi and participant 1 mentioned that books with the same content as '*Mellat-e Eshq*' become the field of interest for readers because once they read it, they want to follow and gain more knowledge about Irfan and mysticism.

4.5.2. Presence of prominent literary characters

Participants 3 and 4 proposed that knowing what happened between the two eminent scholars (Shams and *Mowlaana*) that led to that great adoration and divine love, is what made us follow the book.

As Fasihi said, "the life of *Shams-e Tabrizi* and *Mowlaana*, their beliefs, and thoughts are appealing to Iranian people and most of the eastern nations. So, people especially well-readers are interested in a book which has been written about them."

4.5.3. Proper timing and locality

As participant 2 commented, "a publication can be successful when it distributes a specific book in a suitable locale and on a proper timing." Participant 4 pointed to this factor which is described in 4.3.1.

4.5.4. Vacuum in mystical themes

According to Table 3, the frequency of this sub-code is ten. As participant 4 of the translator group pointed, "This book must have been written by an Iranian author rather than a Turkish one. In other words, there was a vacuum and it leads to import this foreign novel into our literature." Participant 2 discussed, "there exists so much less mystical content books in these last few years in Iran and this demonstrates the smartness of possessors of that publication to distribute a translation in a time period which there was a vacuum of these kind of books in the book marketing."

⁷ May, 30, 2014 retrieved from <https://blogs.harvard.edu/sulaymanibnqiddees/tag/hafez/page/4/>

4.6. Role of publication and distribution

According to Table 3, the frequency of this code reveals that it is the least evaluated causes and agents of popularity of '*Mellat-e Eshq*'. Still, the importance of this factor is assumed differently in both groups.

Participants in translator group pointed to importance of the role of publication more than the reader group. Meanwhile, the translator of the book saw the role of publication and distribution of the book so vital since the publisher promoted the translation in an innovative way; He mentioned, "the first edition of '*Mellat-e Eshq*' was printed as a Nowrouz gift by Qoqnoos Publications for the first time in Iran. So before the public edition, this book was offered as a gift to other publishers and bookstores, and distribution companies, so they read the book knowing that it has been published and they were waiting for its public edition and distribution."

5. Discussion and Conclusion

As stated earlier, the present study sought to analyze the causes and agents that made the translation of '*Aşk*' so popular among the Iranian readers. Based on the results, four codes and four sub-codes, thus four reasons, were obtained through the qualitative method of interviewing.

Based on the results and in line with sociology of translation that gives the primary attention to the translator (Berneking, 2014), the role of the translator has been the most important factor in the popularity of the book. Fasihi acted wisely because choosing this book is also relevant to most of other causes of popularity of the book in Iran. The translator was aware of the closeness of Iranians to Irfan and those literary characters in the book, and he also was aware of the weakness or the vacuum of mystical themes in Persian literature. Therefore, he considered translating this book in a proper time and locale. A translator should have a comprehensive knowledge of the literature and also the culture of his country. Each chapter of '*Aşk*' starts with the letter 'B'. For Muslims and especially mystics, this letter indicated a code in the Holy Quran. Most commentators of *Masnawi* emphasize that Rumi started this literary work by the letter 'B' because the first word of this high literary work is 'Beshnow' (in English: Listen). Fasihi deliberately observed this element in his translation and that shows his perfect awareness of Iranian culture and Persian literature.

Choosing '*Mellat-e Eshq*' as the title of the book is also a link between Persian literature and the content of the book which is undertaken by the translator's creativity. It was a fort point of his translation and guide the reader to the subject matter of the book.

Irfan and mysticism is a sect of Islam and located under the sub-code of 'Genre of the book'. It is one of the popular themes in literature genres and the cause of this could be the closeness of mystic schools with our religion. Furthermore, as Fasihi and another participant of the interview suggested, reading '*Mellat-e Eshq*' and other books with the same content raise the readers' curiosity so it become the field of interest for them.

The 'Genre of the book' was the presence of prominent literary characters. Although Rumi's and *Shams-e Tabrizi's* works are for people all around the world, still Iranian people and Persian speakers believe that they would own a greater share of them. That is because more than sixty thousand verses of Rumi are in Persian. Hence, this is because of Iranians' sense of belonging to the original text and their interest in *Mowlaana*.

Presenting '*Mellat-e Eshq*' in a proper timing and locality is another important factor which lead this translation become best seller in Iran. The translator of the book chose a proper locality for presenting the translation since Rumi has an important role in Persian speakers' literature. Obtaining a best seller translation in book marketing of a community requires knowing the people's tastes and needs. Polysystem theory which is developed by Even-Zohar (1970), sees translated literature as a part of the cultural, literary and historical system of the target language (as cited in Munday, 2001). In order to occupy a primary position in the target language, the polysystem theory imports and locates translations with new genres (Munday, 2001). The primary position for a translation takes place when the target language has a young literature or there is a weakness or a vacuum of a specific genre in the target literature (Munday, 2001). Recently, people's interest in *Mowlaana* and his poems has been increased. Nonetheless, there is a weakness or somehow a vacuum of mystical

themes in Persian literature. Therefore, this vacuum leads the translation of a mystical content novel as '*Mellat-e Eshq*' to occupy a primary position in Iran's literature.

Fasihi mentioned that people need a way to escape from difficult social and economic conditions by experiencing the reading process of these kind of books with mystical contents as '*Aşk*'. Therefore, they become interested in pursuing books with this same genre to increase their knowledge in this field. This is in line with the results of previous study by Acarli (2011) which indicated that there are four factors that lead the reader choose mystical content: to express his identity due to life routines, to produce the ability to recall a nostalgic memory, to find solutions for solving problems relying on religion, and since the mystical contents increases a varieties of feeling, the reader would want to follow books with similar contents.

The present study was conducted to explore the reception of the translation of a mystical content novel '*Aşk*' and to investigate why it responded efficaciously in the target culture, i.e. Iran. To accomplish the purpose of the study, the researcher used interview as an instrument for collecting data. Two groups of people were the target of the interview: two translators who had read '*Mellat-e Eshq*', two readers and of course Arsalan Fasihi, the translator. Having analyzed the interviews, the researchers came to a number of causes stated by the interviewees. At the top of the list was 'The role of the translator'. Wise choices of the translator, Fasihi, either in selecting the book or the translation process, declared that no person other than him could have been involved so much in the process and receiving feedbacks from the Iranian readers. Therefore, interviewing with the translator of the book precipitated the process of finding the results and authenticated them.

Good translation of '*Aşk*' and numerous reprints and huge number of copies per reprint has made it well-received by the Iranian readers who are interested in Irfan and mystic texts. Even those who do not normally include reading in their daily schedule rush through reading this book. Considering the low per capita of reading in Iran, if translators present worthy translations, people would appreciate reading. Furthermore, successful translations show the path to novice literary translators. It is vital for them to have a comprehensive knowledge of the literature of their country and their culture. Translators' creativity to make use of these knowledge in translation strategies and procedures is also a matter which brings about worthy translations for TT readers. They also should keep in mind the other factors which made this specific book popular, when choosing a text for translation. Hence, once a translation with eloquent words and sentences is being read, the reader would understand that it is possible to find rhetorical books in translation works and make connection with the text and the world.

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