

## Investigating the readability of literary texts translations

### A step towards formulating the ‘Nativity Hypothesis’

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The present study aims at formulating a tentative hypothesis for the issue of ‘Nativity.’ It focuses on the readability level of the translations by source-language native and target-language native translators. The corpus selected for analysis was the Persian Modern novella *The Blind Owl*. The original work was written by the most widely-known Persian short-story writer Sadeq Hedayat (1903-1951) and it was translated by Bashiri (the SL native translator) in 2016 and Costello (the TL native translator) in 1957. The corpus was investigated in terms of total word number, ‘Long Words’ number, ‘Hard Words,’ ‘Gunning Fog Index’ and ‘Lexical Density’ in order to give a clear picture of the readability of the two translations. One principle in favour of the tentative ‘Nativity Hypothesis’ was found to be that TL native translators produce a wider, more domesticated, more target-reader friendly, more fluent and more readable translation than SL native translators.’ The study was just a single and humble step towards formulating the NH. Prospective researchers are encouraged to conduct confirmatory research focusing on different text-types, such as classical literary texts, and sacred texts. A researcher working on such subjects would hopefully take a further step towards the formulation of a somehow reliable ‘Nativity Hypothesis.’

**Keywords:** Nativity Hypothesis, readability, lexical density, Gunning Fog Index

### 1. Introduction

Formulating a hypothesis is, of course, by no means a simple task. It naturally requires taking a lot of factors into consideration. In the specific case of translation readability, such factors as the number of corpuses, the direction of translations from major to minor cultures or vice versa, and the text-types investigated, among others, must be considered in order to enable the researcher to confidently formulate a somehow reliable hypothesis. Although it appears as a very long journey, it really needs to be remembered that even “the longest journey begins with a single step” (Simpson and Speake 2003: 20).

In the present study, the researcher intended to take one single step to set out on this long journey of formulating a hypothesis on the issue of ‘Nativity’ (i.e., translator’s being a native of the SL or the TL) by focusing mainly on the readability of the target-text (TT). This tentative hypothesis would be called ‘the Nativity Hypothesis’ (henceforth the NH) since it describes the features of the TTs carried out by source-language native and target-language native translators. SL native translators are those who translate from their mother-language into a foreign-language and are expected to possess a “full familiarity” (Afrouz 2017: 9) with their own cultural system. Accordingly, TL native translators are defined as those who translate from a foreign language into their mother language.

As was emphasized, it was just a single step towards possibly formulating the NH and its delimitation was as follows: from among various languages, Persian was taken into consideration since it was the researcher’s mother tongue; from among various text-types, *The Blind Owl* as a masterpiece in modern Persian literature was selected since it was the only work rendered by a SL native and a TL native translator the researcher had access to.

The study seeks to find answer to the following questions:

1. What are the main formal features of the translations by the SL native and the TL native translator of the modern Persian piece of fiction?
2. How are the translations presented by the SL / TL native translator comparable in terms of readability?
3. Which translations are more foreignized or domesticated?
4. What would be the main principles of the new tentative ‘Nativity Hypothesis’?

## 2. Literature review

The results of previous studies comparing native and non-native translators and recent studies on *The Blind Owl* are reviewed in section 2.1 and 2.2, respectively. Section 2.3 reviews some previous studies dealing with readability issues.

### 2.1. Previous studies on translations of *The Blind Owl*

Differences between the culture of the source-language and the target-language pose great challenges to literary translators (Ordudari 2008a, 2008b; Parvaz and Afrouz 2021). The majority of the articles or theses conducted on *The Blind Owl* focus on the issue of culture-bound-concepts (CBCs). CBCs are those SL concepts which are “entirely unknown” (Afrouz 2019: 5) to the majority of the TL

readership. The corpus of Salehi's (2013) study investigated the strategies employed by Costello (1957) and Bashiri (1974) in rendering cultural items of *The Blind Owl*. He investigated the strategies since it is approved that they can highly affect the type of equivalents selected for the SL terms (Golchinnezhad and Afrouz 2021a, 2021b; Afrouz 2021a, 2021c, 2021d, 2022; Latifi Shirejini and Afrouz 2021a, 2021b). On the basis of Salehi's (2013) findings, Bashiri (1974) adopted more source-oriented strategies than Costello. In other words, as the researcher concluded, the TL native translator had greater tendencies towards domestication strategies than the SL native translator.

The results found by Salehi (2013) were confirmed by Dehbashi Sharif and Shakiba (2015), who had worked on the same corpus.

Interestingly, part of the results was also confirmed in the study conducted by Vasheghani Farahani and Mokhtari (2016). The word 'part' was employed here since the corpus of their study included only Costello's translation. Costello (1957) was found by them to show great tendencies towards domestication strategies. In other words, the TL native translator translated *The Blind Owl* "in a fluent way" in order "to make it more comprehensible" for the target readership (Vasheghani Farahani & Mokhtari 2016: 321).

Afrouz (2017) also compared two translations of *The Blind Owl*, one by Costello (1957) and the other by Bashiri (2013). The only difference between his corpus and those selected by the previous researchers reviewed up to now was his selection of Bahiri's then latest translation (in 2013). Afrouz's (2017) findings indicated that Costello (1957), the TL native translator, showed greater inclinations (84%) towards domestication strategies than Bashiri (70%), the SL native translator. In other words, the results found by Afrouz (2017) were in line with the findings of previous researchers.

In general, the works reviewed here revealed one significant characteristic of translations carried out by the SL / TL native translators of *The Blind Owl* which can partly contribute to the formulation of the Nativity Hypothesis. However, none of the works reviewed in this section focused on the latest translation carried out by the SL native translator (i.e., Bashiri 2016). Furthermore, none of them had concentrated on the 'readability' factor. Therefore, the present study was conducted to fill this research gap.

## 2.2. Studies focusing on foreignizing /domesticating translations

Oittinen (1997) investigated three Finnish translations of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (by Lewis Carroll 1865). Translations included that of "Anni Swan in 1906" which was "domesticating," "Kirsi Kunnas and Eeva-Liisa Manner in 1972" which was "free," and "Alice Martin in 1995" which was "foreignizing" (Paloposki and Koskinen 2004: 34). Anni Emilia Swan (1875- 1958) was a Finnish writer.

Eeva-Liisa Manner (1924) is a Finnish translator, poet and playwright. Kirsi Kunnas (1924-1995) was also a Finnish translator, children’s literature author and poet. Alice Martin (1959) is a Finnish translator. Unfortunately, none of the translators were native speakers; therefore, the results could not be employed and compared to the findings of the current study.

Birdwood-Hedger’s (2006) paper dealt with domestication and foreignization in English translations of *Anna Karenina*. Translators included Pevear (American) and Volokhonsky (Russian) in 2000, Nathan Haskell Dole (American) in 1886, Garnett Constance Clara Garnett (English) in 1901, Edmonds (English) in 1954, Louise and Aylmer Maude (English) in 1918. On the basis of the results, Pevear and Volokhonsky (2000) had presented the most foreignized translation of *Anna Karenina* into English. In other words, the group of translators consisting of a TL native and a SL-native translator had shown the least tendency towards domestication. The result is again of not much use in the present study since the study does not deal with collective translations.

The corpus of Brownlie’s (2006: 145) study comprised “Zola’s novel *Nana* and its five major British translations”: an anonymous translator (1884), Victor Plarr (1895), Charles Duff (1956), George Holden (1972), and Douglas Parmée (1992). The researcher found “that the first translation is adaptive to the target system, and the later translations are more source-oriented” (Brownlie 2006: 166). All translators were SL native translators.

Tobias (2006) analyzed two translations of a work by Kawabata (1926). Both translators, Seidensticker (1954) and Holman (1997), were American, although the former had presented a more domesticated translation.

Vándor (2010) dealt with some English novels written by female writers: Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* translated by Sötér (1957), Borbás (1993), Feldmár (2006); Austen’s *Sense and Sensibility* translated by Borbás (1976) and Sillár (2008), Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1969) translated by Mária (1959), Zsuzsa (2007) and its adaptation for girls. All translators were SL natives.

Akef and Vakili (2010) investigated two English translations of the Persian novel *Savushun* by Ghanoonparvar (1990) and Zand (1991). Although the latter translator’s work was found by the researchers to be less source-oriented than the former’s translation, the results were not of much use in the present study since both translators were SL native speakers.

Bollettieri and Torresi (2012) worked on the two Italian translations of James Joyce’s *Ulysses*: one by Angelis (1960), and the latest one by Terrinoni and Bigazzi (2012). The two translations were carried out by TL native speakers.

Darvishi (2013) explored a corpus including two children’s novels and their six Persian translations. All translators were SL native speakers.

Vahid Dastjerdi and Mohammadi (2013) worked on the stylistic features of Austen's (1813) novel *Pride and Prejudice* and its translations into Persian by Mosaheb (1955) and Pooraanfar and Adelpoor (2007). The first translation was found to be more domesticated. Both group of translators were SL native speakers

The corpus of Heino's (2013) study consisted of the English novel *Mary Poppins* (by Pamela Lyndon Travers 1956) and its three Finnish translations called *Maija Poppanen*. The work has been translated into Finnish by Tuulio (1980), Makkonen (2009), and Kapari-Jatta (2010). The two retranslations were found to be closer to the source-text than the initial translation. As far as 'nativity' is concerned, all translators were of the same type.

Askari and Akbari (2014) focused on the two Persian translations of Orwell's *Animal Farm* by Firuzbakht (1988) and Amirshahi (2010). The retranslation was found to be more source-oriented. Both translators were TL native speakers.

De Letter (2015) dealt with translations of Thackeray's (1855) *The Rose and the Ring*. Translations investigated by her included: Lindo (1869), van der Hoeve (1888), Blom (1961), and Foppema (1976). As far as 'nativity' is concerned, all translators were of the same type.

Obeidat's (2019) study worked on methods of rendering collocations in the Arabic novel *Awlad Haratina* and its English translations by Stewart (1981) and Theroux (1988). The retranslation was found to be less source-oriented than the initial translation. Obeidat and Mahadi (2019) also investigated religious collocations in the same corpus. As far as 'nativity' is concerned, both translators were of the same type.

Ziemann (2019) investigated three English translations of a story by Schulz (1892–1942) including that of Wieniewska, Davis and Levine. While Wieniewska was a SL native translator, the two other were TL native translators. It was found that the SL native translator had shown greater tendencies towards domestication than the two TL natives.

Widman (2019) worked on *A Paixão Segundo G. H.* by the Brazilian writer Lispector (1964) and its two English translations by Sousa (1988) and Novey (2012). Both translators were of the same type.

Alshehri (2020) concentrated on three case studies: the first one consisted of Poe's *The Tell Tale Heart* and its two Arabic renditions by Alqurashi (1993) and Alawadh (1992); the second one was included O. Henry's *While the Auto Waits* and its translations by Alammar (2003) and Alawadh (1992); and the third case study comprised O. Henry's *Hearts and Hands* and its translations by Alqurashi (1993) and Alammar (2003). All translators were SL native speakers.

As the review revealed, and as far as the researcher could find, only two works investigated and compared translations carried out by both TL native and SL native speakers. Interestingly, the results

of the two works were contradictory since, in one of them, the TL native translators had shown greater tendencies towards domestication while in the other one, the case was totally different. Therefore, the current study was conducted to fill the research gap and focused on the potential influence of ‘nativity’ on the characteristics of the final product of translation and attempted to formulate a hypothesis in this regard. Formulation of such hypotheses may trigger prospective researchers to focus more on the works of both the TL native and the SL native translators and attempt either to confirm or disprove the tentative principles presented as the results in the current study.

### 2.3. Previous studies on ‘readability’

Readability, according to Martinc *et al.* (2021: 141) “is concerned with the relation between a given text and the cognitive load of a reader to comprehend it.” Translators “should prioritize the readability of the text for the target reader” (McDonald, 2020: 25). Some studies concentrated on the readability of texts as perceived by a particular group of people, such as foreign or second language learners (François 2009), children (Schwarm and Ostendorf 2005), or individuals suffering intellectual disabilities (Feng *et al.* 2010). While a number of studies focused on the concept of readability in specific fields of studies, such as agriculture (Madhushree *et al.* 2020) or medical texts (Leroy and Endicott 2011), others preferred to investigate the issue of readability in “generic” texts “without targeting a specific audience” or text types (De Clercq and Hoste 2016: 457-458). Some of the recently conducted studies on readability issues are reviewed below.

Simply defining readability as “what makes some texts easier to read than others,” DuBay (2004: 7) gives a short history of research in readability and the readability formulas. He first introduced a number of classic readability studies whose aim “was to develop practical methods to match reading materials with the abilities of students and adults” (DuBay 2004: 14). Then, the researcher described some recent studies which he called “the new readability studies,” including “the cloze test,” “reading ability, prior knowledge, interest, and motivation,” “reading efficiency,” “the measurement of content,” “text leveling,” etc. Reviewing a number of ‘new readability formulas,’ such as the Coleman formulas, the SMOG formula, the FORCAST formula, the ATOS formula, the Bormuth Mean Cloze formula, Dale-Chall readability formula, DuBay (2004: 62) finally asserted that “the readability formulas, when used properly, help us increase the chances of that success.”

Collins-Thompson’s (2014: 97) paper provided “background on how readability of texts is assessed automatically” and the researcher reviewed “the current state-of-the-art algorithms in automatic modeling and predicting the reading difficulty of texts,” Collins-Thompson (2014: 113)

criticized some traditional readability measures such as the Flesch-Kincaid score (Kincaid *et al.* 1975), the Revised Dale-Chall formula (Chall and Dale 1995), and the Fry Short Passage measure (Fry 1990) due to the fact that they “are based only on surface characteristics of text, and ignore deeper levels of text processing known to be important factors in readability, such as cohesion, syntactic ambiguity, rhetorical organization, and propositional density.”

De Clercq and Hoste’s (2016) study aimed at identifying “whether it is possible to build an automatic readability prediction system that can score and compare the readability of English and Dutch generic text.” They collected texts from various text types in the two languages and got the data assessed by a crowdsource and some experts. The researchers finally claimed that they have “succeeded in building a fully automatic readability prediction system for both English and Dutch generic text” (De Clercq and Hoste’s 2016: 486).

Madhushree *et al.* (2020: 508) attempted to develop a sort of readability formula by focusing on the following three readability variables “Word length, Average sentence length and Percentage technical words.” Their findings indicated “a significant relationship between the developed readability formulae with the readability formula developed by earlier social scientists” (Madhushree *et al.* 2020: 508). Also notable is the fact that the corpus opted for by the researchers was limited to agricultural texts.

Tsebryk and Botchkaryov (2021) investigated the challenges of developing a software service for text readability assessment and employed “the Python programming language and the Natural Language Toolkit (NLTK) library” (Tsebryk and Botchkaryov 2021: 1). The researchers emphasized that the “length” of sentences and words, “the variety (uniqueness)” of lexical items in the text, “the number of syllables in a sentence,” and “the presence of complex words and terms in the text” are “[a]mong the factors influencing the readability of the text” (Tsebryk and Botchkaryov 2021: 1). Their short paper did not work on a corpus to practically assess the readability of a piece of text.

Gunning Fog Index (GFI), Dale-Chall Readability Formula (DCRF), Flesch Reading Ease Test (FRET), Automated Readability Index (ARI), Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level (FKGL), McLaughlin's SMOG Formula, Coleman-Liau Index (CLI) are among the most frequently employed methods for assessing the readability of texts (Tsebryk and Botchkaryov 2021; Liu *et al.* 2021). GFI was used in the present study since the online software<sup>1</sup> using this metric was the most user-friendly and readily accessible one which could analyze the text and assess its readability in a fraction of a second. As far as the researcher knows, no study has yet employed the GFI to assess the readability of modern Persian

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.usingenglish.com/resources/text-statistics.php>

literary texts translated into English by two various types of translators (i.e., the SL / TL native translators) in order to formulate a new hypothesis.

### 3. Methodology

The current study is a corpus-based, descriptive, library research carried out as an attempt to formulate a new tentative Nativity Hypothesis to account for the main factor affecting translation readability.

#### 3.1. Corpus

Sadeq Hedayat (1903-1951) is the most widely-known Persian short-story writer and contemporary novelist. He is praised by many researchers as Iran’s literary figure of paramount importance (Beard 1975), and is considered as the “most influential” and brilliant writer of modern Persian literature (Rahimieh 2014: 107).

His only novella, *بوف کور* /buf-e kur/ *The Blind Owl* (first published in 1936) is an acclaimed work of modern Persian letters which “has stirred abundant scholarly contemplation in the academic world” (Afrouz 2021b: 6). It is described by researchers and literary figures as Hedayat’s most famous and “mature” work (Katouzian 2012: 171), an “opaque masterpiece” (Beard 1979: 742), “the cult book of modern Persian literature” (Ghanoonparvar 2010: 555), “the greatest” (Farahmandfar and Samigorganroodi 2015: 25) and highly praised “work of twentieth-century Persian fiction” (Mansouri-Zeyni 2013: 553).

The “atmosphere” in *The Blind Owl* is “generally gloomy” and the “literary techniques” used by Hedayat include the “deliberate distortion of time and space for special effects,” the “juxtaposition of scenes for special effects,” the “repetition of scenes,” and “borrowing images from Indian and European sources for narrative enhancement” (Bashiri 1974: 10).

The *Blind Owl* was first translated into English in 1957 by Desmond Patrick Costello (Afrouz 2020). Costello is a TL native translator. Iraj Bashiri (2016) is the last person who rendered the novella into English. Bashiri is a SL native translator. All these characteristics made it a special work to be investigated.

Thirty percent of the entire work (including 10% from the beginning, 10% from the middle, and 10% from the end) was selected as the corpus of the study.

### 3.2. Procedures

The study was conducted in two stages. In the quantitative stage, the target text (TT) produced by the SL native and the TL native translators were studied in terms of the total number of words, the number of 'Long Words,' 'Hard Words,' 'Gunning Fog Index' and 'Lexical Density.' These are calculated by an online-software.<sup>2</sup> This text analyzer software was preferred to others since it was the only online and comprehensive text analyzer software the author had access to. These criteria are explained<sup>3</sup> as follows:

- Long Words: words with “more than six characters;”
- Hard Words: “complex words” with “three or more syllables” which typically “do not contain a hyphen;”
- Lexical Density: it reveals “how easy or difficult a text is to read and is calculated using the following formula:” Lexical Density (without stop words) = (lexical words/words) \* 100;
- Gunning Fog Index: it refers to the “number of years of formal education that a person requires to easily comprehend the text on an initial reading.” It is calculated using the formula: “Gunning Fog Index= 0.4 \* (ASL + ((SYW/words) \* 100)),” where: Average Sentence Length refers to “the number of words divided by the number of sentences” and SYW refers to the “number of words with three or more syllables.”

In the second phase, the qualitative stage, a sample of the source-text was extracted, and then, the two translations were compared in order to make the discussion more tangible.

### 4. Results and discussion

Table 1. shows different words, words per sentence, and the total number of characters, syllables, words, and sentences in each translation.

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<sup>2</sup> Adopted from '<http://www.usingenglish.com/resources/text-statistics.php>'

<sup>3</sup> All explanations within the double quotation marks are also adopted from <http://www.usingenglish.com/resources/text-statistics.php>

Criteria	Costello (1957)	Bashiri (2016)
Total Word Count	8561	6525
Word Count (Excluding Common Words)	3902	2958
Number of Different Words	3229	2514
Different Words (Excluding Common Words)	2731	2069
Number of Sentences	459	368
Words per Sentence	18.75	17.95
Number of Characters	45144	34679
Syllables	11624	8898

Table 1. General features of Bashiri and Costello’s translations

The TL native translator’s work was about 2000 words or 14% longer than the SL native translator’s translation. Exclusion of the number of common words does not change the percentage. Although it may be assumed that greater readability is usually associated to shorter texts, in this case (i.e., literary texts), when the translated text is shorter, it would be of greater ‘lexical density’ than longer translations of the same source-text (Table 2.). The need of the TL native translator to expand may be ascribed to his Orientalist tendencies. It is noteworthy to mention that the TL native translator showed greater tendency towards expansion in order to render nuances and explain cultural subtleties to the TT reader.

In terms of ‘Number of Different Words,’ in the TL native’s translation 12% more different words were used. As regards the ‘Number of Sentences,’ the SL native translator’s work included 12% less sentences than that of the TL native translator. Concerning the number of ‘Words per Sentence,’ the difference between the two works is less than 1% and, therefore, it seems that the ‘length of sentences’ in the two translations is not significantly different.

Table 2. reveals the readability of translations by the SL native and the TL native translators.

Criteria	Costello (1957)	Bashiri (2016)
Hard Words	7.09%	7.07%
Long Words	15.15%	15.60%
Lexical Density	37.75	39.98
Lexical Density (without Stop Words)	45.63	45.19
Gunning Fog Index	10.33	10.01

Table 2. Readability of Bashiri and Costello’s translations

As for the percentage of 'Hard Words' employed in the translations of the two translators, the difference is insignificant (0.02%).

Regarding 'Long Words,' in the SL native translator's work 'long words' are used more (0.45%) comparing to that of the TL native. Longer words can, to some extent, reduce the readability of the target text.

As regards 'Lexical Density,' the difference between the two translations is about 2%. It shows how difficult or easy a piece of text is to read. Based on what is presented in Table 2., Bahiri's work is less readable than Costello's. Phrased more accurately, the translation by the TL native translator shows greater tendencies towards providing target-readership with highly readable texts.

The SL native translator showed greater tendency towards contraction. His translation contained 2000 words less than the TT carried out by the TL native translator. The TL native translator had employed more words in an attempt to seemingly render nuances and explain cultural subtleties to the TT readers. But what would possibly be the reason behind the fact that the SL native translator did not show equal tendencies towards providing the TT readers with clarifying notes concerning cultural terms? One possible reason could be the time gap between the two works. The SL native translator's work was published 59 years after the TL native translator's work. Therefore, it would not seem improbable to expect some changes that may affect the translator's strategies, e.g. different reading habits, language change, the readership's greater knowledge of other cultures due to globalization (hence the possibility of reducing explanations of culture-specific aspects).

Concerning 'Gunning Fog Index,' the difference is insignificant and shows that anyone with 10 years of formal education can read both of these target texts and easily comprehend them.

Taking 'Long Words,' and 'Lexical Density' into consideration, we can observe that the TL native translator's work is more readable, more domesticated and more target-reader-friendly than that of the SL native translator.

#### 4.1. Discussing a number of cases

In this section, a number of instances consisting of the source text (ST), its transliteration (Tr), and the two target texts (TTs) are compared and contrasted mainly based on the number of words, characters, sentences, etc.

ST	آیا روزی به اسرار این اتفاقات ماوراء طبیعی، این انعکاس سایهٔ روح که در حالت اغما و برزخ بین خواب و بیداری جلوه می‌کند، کسی پی خواهد برد؟ (Shamisa 1993: 148)
Tr	/āyā-ruzī-be-asrāre-īn-etefāgate-mavara‘e-tabī‘ī-īn-en‘ekāse-sāyeye-rūh-ke-dar-hālate-eqma-va-barzakh-beyne-khāb-o-bidārī-jelveh-mīkonad-kasī-pey-khāhad-bord/ <sup>4</sup>
TT1	Will anyone ever penetrate the secret of this disease which transcends ordinary experience, this reverberation of the shadow of the mind, which manifests itself in a state of coma like that between death and resurrection, when one is neither asleep nor awake? (Costello 1957: 6)
TT2	One day would someone reveal the secret behind these supernatural happenings, this reflection of the shadow of the soul that manifests itself in a coma-like limbo between sleep and wakefulness? (Bashiri 2016: 4)

Table 3. Examining one sample sentence

According to Table 3., while the TL native translator’s sentence consists of 42 words and 218 characters, the sentence translated by the SL native translator includes 30 words and 164 characters. In other words, in this instance, TT1 is 16% longer than TT2. As was illustrated in Table 1., in the translation by the TL native translator, the number of ‘long words’ exceeded that in the SL native translator’s work. Some instances could be observed in the use of the lexical items ‘wakefulness,’ ‘supernatural’ and ‘happenings.’

<sup>4</sup> Persian is transliterated according to the UN System (1972). Retrieved from <http://ee.www.ee/transliteration>.

ST	افکار پوچ—باشد! ولی از هر حقیقتی بیشتر مرا شکنجه می کند: آیا این مردمی که شبیه من هستند، که ظاهراً احتیاجات و هوا و هوس مرا دارند برای گول زدن من نیستند؟ آیا یک مشت سایه نیستند که فقط برای مسخره کردن و گول زدن من به وجود آمده‌اند؟ آیا آنچه که حس می‌کنم، می‌بینم و می‌سنجم سرتاسر موهوم نیست که با حقیقت خیلی فرق دارد؟ (Shamisa 1993: 149)
Tr	/Afkāre-pūch-bāshad!-valī-az-har-haqīqatī-bīsh-tar-marā-shekan-jeh-mīkonad: āya-īn-mardomī-ke-shabihe-man-hastand-ke-zāheran-ehtiyājāt-va-havā-va-havase-marā-dārand-barāye-gul-zadane-man-nīstand? āya-yek-mosht-sāyeh-nīstand-ke-faqat-barāyeh-maskhareh-kardan-va-gūl-zadane-man-be-vojūd-āmadeh-and? āya-ānche-ke-hes-mīkonam-mībīnam-va-mīsanjam-sar-tā-sar-mohūm-nīst-ke-bā-haqīqat-kheilī-farq-dārad?/
TT1	Idle thoughts! Perhaps. Yet they torment me more savagely than any reality could do. Do not the rest of mankind who look like me, who appear to have the same needs and the same passions as I, exist only in order to cheat me? Are they not a mere handful of shadows which have come into existence only that they may mock and cheat me? Is not everything that I feel, see and think something entirely imaginary, something utterly different from reality? (Costello 1957: 7)
TT2	Absurd thoughts! Fine, but they torture me more than any reality. Are not these people who resemble me, who seemingly share my whims and desires—are they not here to deceive me? Are they not a handful of shadows that have been brought into existence only to mock and deceive me? Isn't that which I feel, see and measure imaginary throughout and quite different from reality? (Bashiri 2016: 5)

Table 4. Examining one sample paragraph

Table 4. contains one paragraph of the ST and the two TTs. Basiri's paragraph consists of 5 sentences and 66 words, while Costello's paragraph includes 6 sentences and 82 words. In other words, the TL native translator's paragraph is generally 10% longer and contains one sentence more than the SL native translator's paragraph. This increase in length has been generally assessed to result in the increase in the readability level of the TL native translator's work. Furthermore, the use of lexical items such as 'look like,' 'needs' and 'entirely' in TT 1 instead of 'resemble,' 'whims' and 'throughout' in TT 2 (as equivalents for the ST terms شبیه /shabih/, احتیاجات /ehtiyājāt/, and سرتاسر /sar-tā-sar/) reduce the level of its 'Lexical Density.'

ST	بعد از او من دیگر خودم را از جرگه آدم‌ها، از جرگه احمق‌ها و خوشبخت‌ها بکلی بیرون کشیدم و برای فراموشی به شراب و تریاک پناه بردم. زندگی من تمام روز میان چهار دیوار اطاقم می‌گذشت و می‌گذرد. سرتاسر زندگی من میان چهار دیوار گذشته است (Shamisa 1993: 155)
Tr	/b'd-az-oū-man-dīgar-khodam-rā-āz-jargeye-ādamhā-āz-jargeye-ahmaqhā-va-khoshbakhthā-bekolī-bīrūn-keshīdam-va-baraye-farāmūshī-be-sharāb-va-taryāk-panāh-bordam-zandegīye-man-tamāmeh-rūz-mīyāne-chāhār-dīvāre-otāqam-mīgozasht-va-mīgozarad-sar-tā-sare-zendegīyām-mīyāne-chāhār-dīvār-gozashteh-ast/
TT1	After she had gone I withdrew from the company of man, from the company of the stupid and the successful and, in order to forget, took refuge in wine and opium. My life passed, and still passes, within the four walls of my room. All my life has passed within four walls (Costello 1957: 10)
TT2	After seeing her, I withdrew from the circle of people. I withdrew completely from the circle of the fools and the fortunate; and, for forgetfulness, took refuge in wine and opium. I passed, and continue to pass, my life daily within the four walls of my room. My whole life has passed within four walls (Bashiri 2016: 7)

Table 5. Examining one sample paragraph

In Table 5., although the number of words in TT1 and TT2 were approximately similar, the TL native translator’s paragraph contains one sentence more than that of the SL native. The use of ‘successful’, ‘forget’, and ‘All my life’ in TT 1 instead of ‘fortunate’, ‘forgetfulness’, and ‘My whole life’ in TT 2 (as equivalents for the ST terms ‘خوشبخت‌ها’ /khoshbakhthā/, ‘فراموشی’ /farāmūshī/, and ‘سرتاسر زندگی من’ /sar-tā-sare-zendegīyām/) reduce the level of its ‘Lexical Density.’

ST	از حسن اتفاق خانهاام بیرون شهر، در یک محل ساکت و آرام دور از آشوب و جنجال زندگی مردم واقع شده، اطراف آن کاملاً مجزا و دورش خرابه است. فقط از آن طرف خندق خانه‌های توسری‌خورده پیدا است و شهر شروع می‌شود. نمی‌دانم این خانه را کدام مجنون یا کج‌سلیقه در عهد دقیانوس ساخته. چشمم را که می‌بندم نه فقط همهٔ سوراخ سنبه‌هایش پیش چشمم مجسم می‌شود، بلکه فشار آنها را روی دوش خودم حس می‌کنم. خانه‌یی که فقط روی قلمدان‌های قدیم ممکن است نقاشی کرده باشند. (Shamisa 1993: 155)
Tr	/āz-hosne-etefāq-khāne-am-bīrūne-shahr-dar-yek-mahalle-sāket-va-ārām-dūr-āz-āshūb-va-janjāle-zendegīye-mardom-vāqe'-shodeh-atrāfe-ān-kāmelan-mojazzā-va-dorash-kharābe-ast-faqat-az-ān-tarafe-khandaq-khānehaye-tū-sarī-khordeh-peydāst-va-shahr-shorū'-mīshavad-nemīdānam-īn-khāneh-rā-kodām-majnūn-yā-kaj-salīqeh-dar-ahde-daqyānūs-skhteh-cheshmam-rā-ke-mībandam-na-faqat-hameye-sūrākh-sonbehāyash-pīshe-cheshmam-mojasam-mīshavad-balke-feshāre-anha-rā-rūye-dūshe-khodam-hes-mīkonam-khāneyī-ke-faqat-rūye-qalamdanhāye-qadīm-momken-ast-naqashī-karde-bāshand/
TT 1	I am fortunate in that the house where I live is situated beyond the edge of the city in a quiet district far from the noise and bustle of life. It is completely isolated and around it lie ruins. Only on the far side of the gully one can see a number of squat mud-brick houses which mark the extreme limit of the city. They must have been built by some fool or madman heaven knows how long ago. When I shut my eyes not only can I see every detail of their structure but I seem to feel the weight of them pressing on my shoulders. They are the sort of houses which one finds depicted only on the covers of ancient pen-cases (Costello 1957: 10)
TT 2	By a lucky chance my house is located outside the city, in a quiet and restful spot, away from the hustle and bustle of people's lives. Its surroundings are completely free and around it there are some ruins. Only from the other side of the ditch some low mud-brick houses are visible and the city begins there. I do not know which madman or which ill-disposed architect has built this house in forgotten times. When I close my eyes, not only do all its nooks and crannies materialize before my eyes but I also feel their pressure on my shoulders. It is a house that could only have been painted on ancient pen-cases (Bashiri 2016: 7)

Table 6. Examining one sample paragraph

In Table 6., although the ST paragraph rendered by both translators consists of 6 sentences, Costello's paragraph includes 11 more words than that of Bashiri. One tangible instance of the increase in the level of 'lexical density' and, consequently, the decrease of the 'readability' factor, could be observed in the two equivalents 'every detail' (by Costello) and 'all its nooks and crannies' (by Bashiri) for the ST term سوراخ سنبه /sūrākh-sonbeh/. The equivalent selected by the TL native translator (i.e., 'every detail') only consists of two simple words, while the equivalent chosen by the SL native translator (i.e., 'all its nooks and crannies') consists of five words—these five words has made an informal idiom whose meaning may not be readily comprehended by the target-text readers. It is also noteworthy to mention that the idiom is documented in English monolingual dictionaries (such as Oxford Advanced

Learner’s Dictionary) as ‘every nook and cranny.’ The way it is manipulated by the SL native translator may lead to the reduction of readability and can be considered as an impediment in adequate understanding of the meaning of the target-text by the TT readers. Besides, the word كجسليقه /kaj-saliqeh/ is simply rendered by Costello as ‘fool’, while Bashiri selected ‘ill-disposed architect’ which enjoys higher ‘lexical density’ and is, consequently, less readable.

#### 4.2. Answering the Research Questions

1. What are the main formal features of the translations carried out by the SL native and the TL native translator of the modern Persian fiction?

In terms of general formal features, the TL native translator’s work was 14% more expanded, and it contained 12% more sentences than the SL native’s translation. The TL native’s translation used 12% more different words in his translation.

2. How are the translations presented by the SL / TL native translator comparable in terms of readability?

As for readability features, the translation by Bashiri contained more ‘long words’ (0.45%) than the one produced by Costello. On the other hand, Costello’s work exceeded that of Bashiri (by 2%) in terms of ‘Lexical Density.’ Altogether, it was found that the translation carried out by the TL native translator had higher level of readability than that of the SL native translator.

3. Which translations are more foreignized or domesticated?

On the basis of what is illustrated in Table 2, the SL native translator’s work was less domesticated than that of the TL native translator. According to Munday (2016: 225), domestication “entails translating in a transparent” and “fluent” style and Venuti (1995/2008, quoted in Munday 2016: 225) “allies” domestication “with Schleiermacher’s description of translation that ‘leaves the reader in peace, as much as possible, and moves the author toward him.’” Furthermore domesticated texts would bring the ST “closer to the linguistic standards and literary canon of the recipient culture” and make the TT more readable for them (Venuti 1995, quoted in Bollettieri and Torresi 2012: 37). All these indicate that highly domesticated target texts would seem more readable than the foreignized ones. The factors included in Table 2, i.e., Hard Words, Long Words, Lexical Density and Gunning Fog Index, showed that Bashiri’s translation was less domesticated than Costello’s translation. In Schleiermacher’s terms, the TL native translator (Costello) has left the target readers in peace and moved the ST author towards them.

#### 4. What would be the main principles of the new tentative ‘Nativity Hypothesis’?

On the whole, according to the tentative NH, the TL native translator’s work is more expanded, more readable, and more target-reader-friendly than that of the SL native translator.

#### 5. Conclusion

In the present study, the researcher intended to formulate a tentative hypothesis on the issue of ‘Nativity.’ A number of previously carried out studies which focused on the product of the target- and the source-language native translators were reviewed and new results were achieved.

Ziemann (2019) found that the SL native translator had shown greater tendencies towards domestication than the TL natives. However, based on the studies conducted on *The Blind Owl*’s English translations, all researchers (i.e., Salehi 2013, Dehbashi Sharif and Shakiba 2015, Vasheghani Farahani and Mokhtari 2016, and Afrouz 2017) unanimously concluded that the TL native translator had made a more target-reader friendly translation than the SL translator. Altogether, all researchers (except one) indicated that the TL native translator produced a more domesticated translation than the SL native translator. The main finding of the present study is in line with and confirms the results found by previous studies.

Therefore, as an initial step towards formulating ‘the Nativity Hypothesis’, the tentative principle would be that ‘the TL native translators produce a translation which would be more expanded, more domesticated, more target-reader friendly, more fluent and more readable than the SL native translators.’

Of course there are many factors influencing a translator in addition to their native language, e.g. the intended audience, the translator’s purposes and principles, translation norms etc.; however, the scope of this paper was delimited to one single factor and none of those factors or variables could be investigated in this study. Other researchers would hopefully take other factors into consideration. Prospective researchers interested in the subject are also encouraged to conduct a confirmatory research focusing on other aspects such as: different text-types (e.g., informative and vocative texts); classical literary texts; sacred texts and other text-types; direction of translations; collective translations (produced by a group of natives, TL natives, or a mixed group consisting of both natives and TL natives); texts translated from major into minor cultures; the issue of foreignization (and domestication), explicitation and other stylistic issues. Each researcher who would work on such subjects, would hopefully take one step towards the formulation of a somehow reliable ‘Nativity Hypothesis.’

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