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Simplification: A Case Study of the Persian Translations of *The Little Prince*

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Abstract

The present study explores the application of 'simplification, as a translation universal, in three Persian translations of *The Little Prince,* a novel by Saint-Exupery, to find out whether there is any significant difference among them in terms of using this translation strategy. The study also aims to determine which translation is the most successful in simplifying the text in translation. The three translations examined belong to Shamloo, Qazi and Najafi, respectively. To this purpose, Kludy's (2003) classification is used as the theoretical framework of the study. So, the data regarding simplification are extracted from the three translations on the basis of the categories of this framework. Then, the frequency of simplification strategies present in the three translations is calculated and comparisons are made.

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Introduction

All over the world, people of various nations have always tried to communicate with each other. They have used different means to achieve the purpose. One of the major means they have utilized is translation. Thus, translation has been important as a medium of international communication and cultural contact, resulting in the development of global communication which has evolved into a more complex system in terms of technology and organization.

According to Toury (1978)" Translation is a kind of activity which inevitably involves at least two languages and cultural traditions"(p.200). Translators are permanently faced with the problem of how to treat the cultural aspects implicit in a source text and of finding the most appropriate technique to successfully convey these aspects in the target language. These problems may vary in scope depending on the cultural and linguistic gaps between the two languages.

Munday (2001) believes that today translation is considered as an original text its own right. Some translation scholars such as Baker (1998) believe that all types of translated texts have a number of common features which are called universals of translation. Simplification is one of them. According to her, it means that translated texts are always longer and simpler than original texts. In doing that, one important issue is the genre of the original text which has to be saved in translation. Every text can be claimed to belong to a particular genre. Colina (2003) has defined genre as " a conventional form of text that reflects features of a social occasion " (p.16). Examples of genres are poems, book reviews, novels, abstracts and recipes. The translator must be aware of the culture – specific features of a genre and the implications for translation. Prior to embarking on translating a text, the translator must be able to recognize genre features of the source language and reproduce them according to the norms of the target language.

Since the present research examines the Persian translation of *The Little Prince* in terms of simplification in translation, and tries to clarify how and to what extent each translator has been successful in this regard, translation students, novice translators and other interested groups may find its results helpful for their future works. It would help them get a better understanding of this strategy, make better translation decisions and render texts more competently in the future. The following questions were addressed in this study:

RQ1. Are there any significant differences among the three Persian translations of *The Little Prince* in terms of the application of simplification strategies?

RQ2. Which translation is the most successful in applying the simplification strategies?

Literature Review

After cultural turns in translation studies, a new era has begun in this field. Many researchers have tried to explore the effect of different cultural factors on the process and product of translation. One of these factors is simplification--one of the universals of translation. Chesterman (2004) believes that translation universal is a feature which characterizes all translations and distinguishes them from non-translated texts. As mentioned earlier, different kinds of studies have been carried out to verify simplification hypothesis. Some of these studies and their results are reviewed below.

Øverås (1998) has worked on different cohesion markers in translations between English and Norwegian and has found that two of cohesive ties are added: Connectives and replacement of connectives with more simple ones. In Øverås' research, simplification was considered as potential shifts between STs and TTs with no reference to comparable original TTs. Seguinot (1988) has examined translations from English into French and from French into English. According to her, French makes grammatical gender simple which leads to simpler anaphoric reference. French has no choice but to express logical links with prepositions or relatives where English creates noun strings. English, on the other hand, prefers overt linking words to French absolute constructions. English verbs are generally more precise and descriptive, and in directions and procedural writing, English is simpler than French. She has found that use of the semi-colon which shortens the text is more typical of English than French, as are the use of the dash and the highlighting of technical terms which enhance the readability of the text. She has stated while there is an overwhelming tendency to simplification of these text-related types, there was no evidence of a tendency to simplification on the level of lexical choice: the English –to-French translations generally used less precise vocabulary than the source text, the opposite of what was found in the studies of French-to-English translations. This was partly due to the dropping of jargon and partly to the use of more general vocabulary. Olohan and Baker (2000) have analyzed the omission and inclusion of 'that' in translated and non–translated English texts. They have found that there is a preference for the use of 'that' in translated texts. Vehmas-Lehto (1989) has compared the frequency of

connective elements in Finnish journalistic texts translated from Russian with their frequency in texts in the same genre, originally written in Finnish. She has found that the Finish translations are simpler than the texts originally written in Finnish. Is it possible, therefore, that simplification strategies inherent in the translation process cause translated texts in a given genre to be simpler than texts of that genre originally composed in the target language for the translations. Puurtinent (2004) has investigated simplification of clausal in translation and non- translated Finish children literature. The results of study have not fully supported the hypothesis nor have they rejected it. Some connectives are more frequent in TTs and some are more frequent in non-translated texts. Eskola (2004) also has supported this finding for non-finite constructions in Finish. Mesa-Lao (2011) has conducted a study to show the impact of translation editing environments on one of the most studied translation phenomena: simplification. The finding of the study has approved the effect of allocated time, software and organizational aspects on the simplification of translation.

Method

A descriptive corpus-based approach has been adopted in this study to compare the first chapter of an English novel and its three Persian translations. Full details of the source text and its translations are as follows:

The Little Prince (de Saint-Exupery, 2018)

<div dir="rtl">

قاضی، محمد. (1389). شازده کوچولو. تهران: انتشارات امیرکبیر

نجفی، ابوالحسن. (1379). شازده کوچولو. تهران: انتشارات نیلوفر

شاملو، احمد. (1388). شازده کوچولو. تهران: انتشارات نگاه

</div>

Procedure

The unit of analysis in the present study was 'sentence'. According to Longman (2002), it is defined as "the largest unit of grammatical organization within which parts of speech (i.e. nouns, verbs, adverbs, adjectives) and grammatical classes (e.g., word, phrase, and clause) function.

The major source based on which instances of simplification strategies were extracted was Klaudy's (2003) Classification. Following Klaudy's (2003) model, first, translation units, i.e. sentences which have traces of the application of simplification strategies were identified in the three target texts. Then, their English counterparts were identified). The abbreviations TR1, TR2 and TR3 refer to Najafi, Ghazi and Shamloo, respectively. Moreover, T1, T2 and T3 refer to the

sentences taken from the translation of these three translators, that is, Najafi, Ghazi and Shamloo. For the sake of clarity, the analysis of each sentence was shown in a table. The first row of the table shows the abbreviation for the five categories of Klaudy's (2003) framework:

1. G.M S.M: A more general meaning of SL (source language) unit is replaced by a TL (target language) unit with more specific meaning.

2. W.N.W: The complex meaning of a SL word is distributed over several words in TL.

3. Add: New meaningful elements added in the TL text.

4. S.N.S.: One sentence in the SL is divided into two or several sentence in the TL.

5. Ph Cl: SL phrases are extended into clauses in TL.

Different cases of simplification were listed under the respective headings.

Example 3.1: E.T: She didn't wish to go out into the world all rumpled.

نمی‌خواست مانند گل شقایق با جامه پر چین و شکن بیرون آید. می‌خواست با تمامی جلوه جمالش تجلی کند.*

1. S X. S	Ph Cl	G.M S.M	1. W N. W	Add
نمی‌خواست مانند گل شقایق با جامه پر چین و شکن بیرون آید می‌خواست با تمامی جلوه جمالش تجلی کند.	نمی‌خواست مانند گل شقایق با جامه پر چین و شکن بیرون آید		پر چین و شکن	می‌خواست با تمامی جلوه جمالش تجلی کند

After extracting the data and classifying them based on the model and listing them in tables, the frequency and percentage of each simplification strategy in the three translations were calculated separately and presented via tables and figures. Finally, a total comparison of the three translations was done to see which translation is the simpler and which simplification strategy has been used more frequently in the process of translating the English novel into Persian.

Results and Discussion

First, the corpus -the source and target texts- were divided into sentences and the sentences of the three Persian translations were matched with their English counterparts. It was revealed that there were 191 cases of the application of simplification strategies at work. Some of these cases are presented below:

ST: They are <u>malicious</u> creatures.

<div dir="rtl">

T1:مارها موزی‌اند.

T2:مارها بدجنسند.

T3:مارها خبیثند.

</div>

According to Millennium Dictionary (2001) 'malicious' means "مغرض"،"بدخواه"(p.986). Both translations have applied simplification strategy and have rendered it as "موزی and "بدجنس", but T2 is more successful to convey the simple meaning of 'malicious'.

ST: It has done me good, "said the fox" because of the color of the wheat fields.

<div dir="rtl">

T1:چرا دارد .رنگ گندمزارها.

T2: به سبب رنگ گندمزارها گریه به حال من سودمند خواهد بود.

T3:برای خاطر رنگ گندم.

</div>

T1 has applied general meaning of ST but T2 applied specific meaning to avoid ambiguity which makes the sentence simpler. Therefore, T2 is preferable.

ST: She is so naïve.

According to *Millennium Dictionary* (2001) *naïve* means "ساده"،"بی آلایش"،"معصوم"،"ساده "زودباور""لوح"(p.1085)

Both translations have applied the strategy quite plausibly to avoid misunderstanding.

ST. I'm very busy with matters of consequences.

<div dir="rtl">

T1: من دارم کارهای جدی می‌کنم!

T2: آخر من کارهای جدی‌تری دارم!

T3: آخر من گرفتار هزار مساله مهم‌تر از آنم!

</div>

To translate the sentence, TR1 and TR2 both applied the strategy of 1. S→N.S to make their translations simpler.

ST. My hairs are still disarranged.

T1: موهایم را هنوز شانه نکرده‌ام.

T2: گیسوانم چقدر آشفته است.

T3: موهایم اینجور آشفته است.

To translate this sentence, all the three translators applied the strategy of W →N.W. In this way, they have made the meaning of the source text sentence simpler for TT readers. Also, T1 applied G.M→S.M. So, T1 would be more preferable.

ST. This time, one more, I had the sheep to thank for it.

T1 : این بار هم گوسفند بانی این تصادف بود.

T2: این بار نیز به سبب گوسفند بود که فهمیدم.

T3: این بار هم بره باعثش شد.

All of the three translators applied the strategy of G. M→S.M. The source text is complicated. So, they used simpler words to avoid ambiguity. As a result, all translations are acceptable.

Translation 1 (A. Najafi)

In the analysis of this translation, 89 cases of simplification were found. The frequency and percentage of these cases are presented below in Table 1.

Table 1

Frequency of Simplification Strategy in T.1
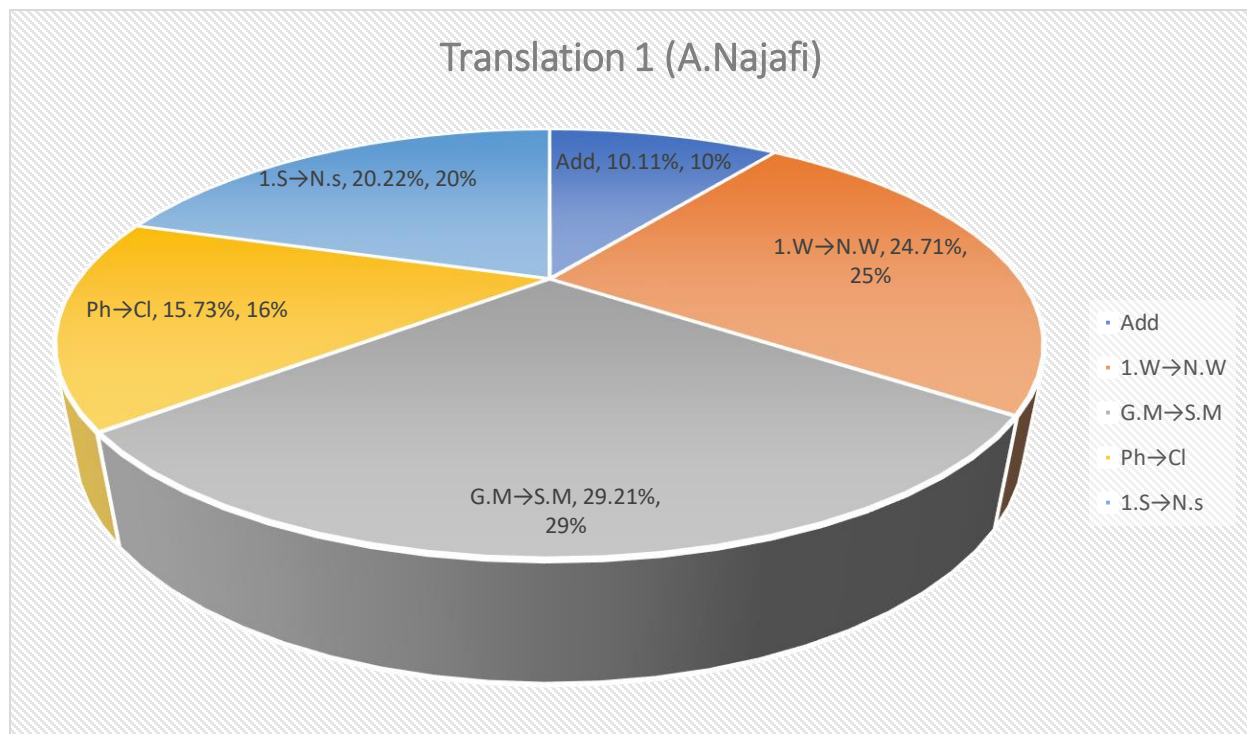
Strategies	Frequency	Total Frequency	Percentage
Add	9	89	10.11
1.W→N.W	22	89	24.71
G. M→S.M	26	89	29.21
Ph→Cl	14	89	15.73
1.S→N.s	18	89	20.22

As the table shows, 9 out of 89 cases of simplification belong to the application of 'addition' strategy by which new meaningful elements have been added in the TT text. This strategy was the most frequent strategy in translation. In 22 cases, one word in the ST has been replaced by several words in the TT. There were 26 cases in which the translator has used more specific meaning instead of general meaning of TT unit. There were also 18 cases in which one sentence in the ST has been changed into two or more sentences in the TT and 14 cases in which ST phrases have been replaced by TT clauses. The following figure shows the percentage of each simplification strategy.

Figure 1

Percentage of simplification strategies in T1

Translation 2 (M. Ghazi)

There were 73 cases of the application of the strategy of simplification in T2. The frequency of these cases is presented Table 2 below.

Table 2

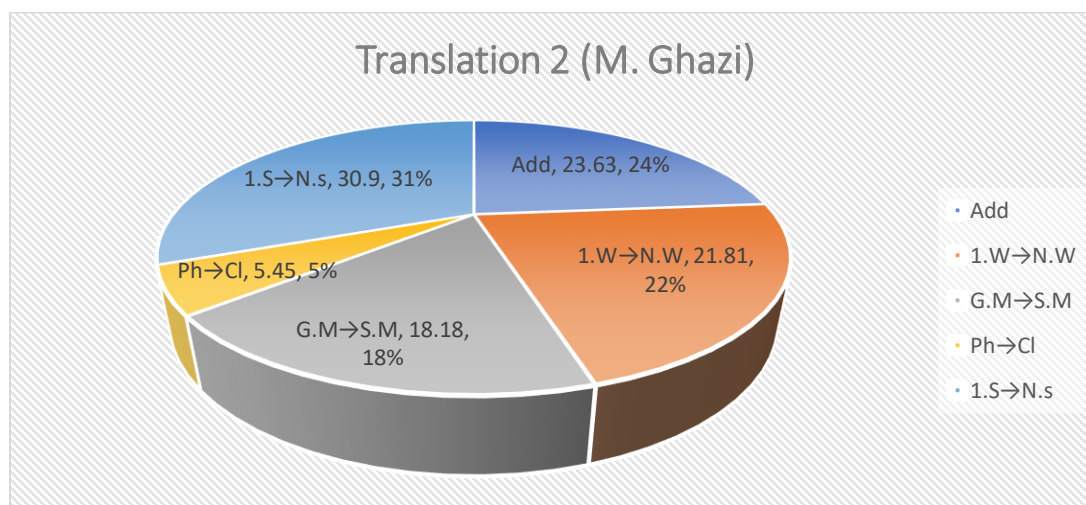*Frequency of Simplification Strategy in T2*

Strategies	Frequency	Total Frequency	Percentage

Add	13	55	23.63
1.W→N.W	12	55	21.81
G. M→S.M	10	55	18.18
Ph→Cl	3	55	5.45
1.S→N.s	17	55	30.90

As Table 2 shows, 13 out of 55 cases of simplification belong to the application of 'addition' strategy by which new meaningful elements have been added in the TT text. This strategy was the most frequent strategy in translation. In 12 cases, one word in the ST has been replaced by several words in the TL. There were 10 cases in which the translator has used more specific meaning instead of general meaning of TL unit. There were also 17 cases in which one sentence in the ST has been changed into two or more sentences in the TT, and 3 cases in which ST phrases have been replaced by TT clauses. Figure 2 shows the percentage of each simplification strategy.

Figure 2

Percentage of simplification strategies in T2

In this translation, 47 cases of the application of the strategy of simplification were found. The frequency of these cases is presented below in table 3

Table 3

Frequency of Simplification Strategy in T3

Strategies	Frequency	Total Frequency	Percentage
Add	10	47	21.27
1.W→N.W	12	47	25.53
G. M→S.M	8	47	17.02
Ph→Cl	2	47	4.25
1.S→N.s	15	47	31.91

As Table 3 reveals, 10 out of 55 cases of simplification belong to the application of 'addition' strategy by which new meaningful elements have been added in the TT text. This strategy was the most frequent strategy in translation. In 12 cases, one word in the SL has been replaced by several words in the TL. There were 26 cases in which the translator has used more specific meaning instead of general meaning of TT unit. There were also 2 cases in which one sentence in the ST has been changed into two or more sentences in the TT, and 15 cases in which ST phrases have been replaced by TT clauses. Figure 3 shows the percentage of each simplification strategy.
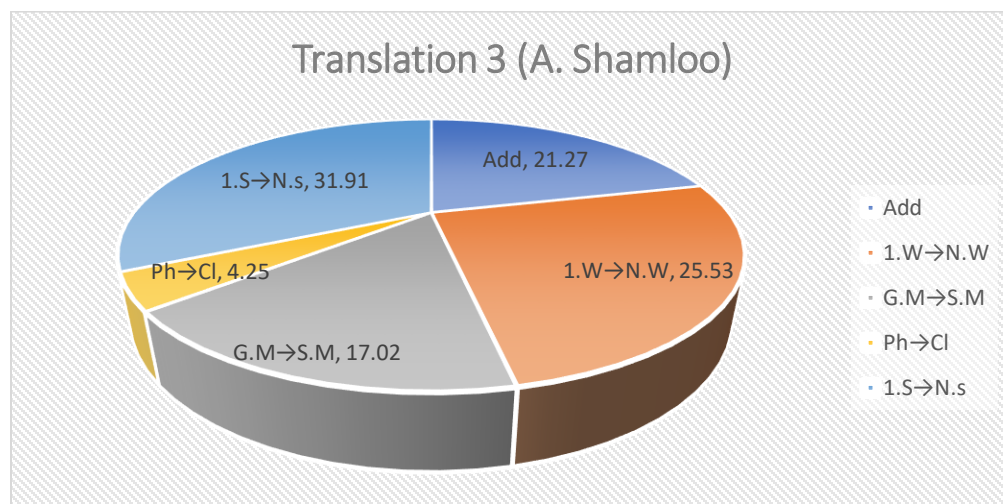
Figure 3

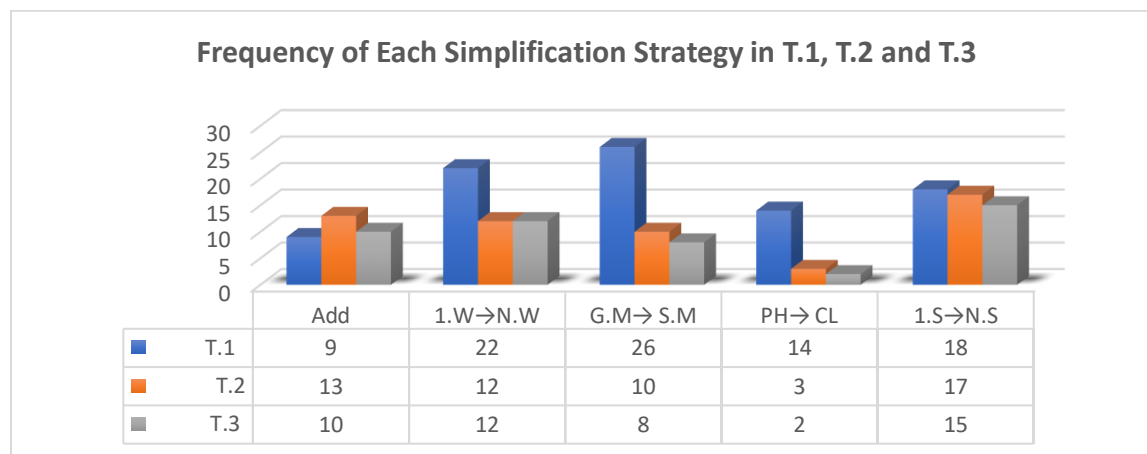*Percentage of simplification strategies in T3*

Jalali: Simplification: A Case Study of the Persian Translations of The Little Prince

Table 4

Frequency of Each Simplification Strategy in T1, T2 and T3

Strategies	T.1	T.2	T.3
Add	9	13	10
1.W→N.W	22	12	12
G.M→ S.M	26	10	8
PH→ CL	14	3	2
1.S→N.S	18	17	15

Table 4 compares the frequency of each simplification strategy in T1, T2 and T3. TR1 has recorded the highest number of application of strategies. For example, He has used the strategy of G.M→ S.M 26 times, while TR2 and TR3 have applied it 10 and 8 times, respectively. The table also shows that T2 has used the strategy of 'addition' the most. However, T1 has higher records for the strategies of 1. W→N.W, PH→ CL and 1. S→N.S. Figure 4 shows the data graphically.

Figure 4

Frequency of Each Strategy in T1, T2 and T3

Frequency of Each Simplification Strategy in T.1, T.2 and T.3

	Add	1.W→N.W	G.M→ S.M	PH→ CL	1.S→N.S
T.1	9	22	26	14	18
T.2	13	12	10	3	17
T.3	10	12	8	2	15

According to the table, TR1, TR2 and TR3 have applied 89,55 and 47 cases of simplification strategies, respectively.

Table 5

Total Number of Simplification Strategies in T1, T2 and T3

	T.1	T.2	T.3
Total Number	89	55	47

Figure 5

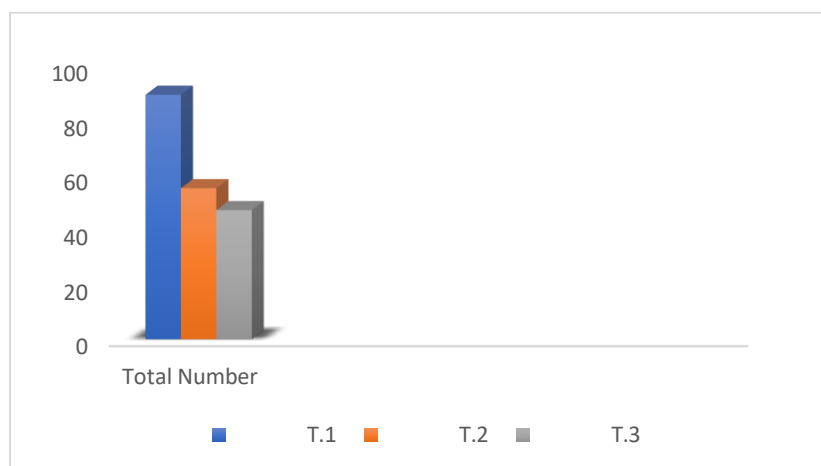*Total Number of Simplification Strategies in T1, T2 and T3*

Table 6 below shows the average of each simplification strategy in the three translations.

Table 6

Average frequency of Each simplification Strategy in T1, T2 and T3

Strategies	Frequency Average	Total Frequency	Percentage
Add	10.66	32	16.75
1.W→N.W	15.33	46	24.08
G.M→ S.M	14.66	44	23.03
PH→ CL	6.33	19	9.94
1.S→N.S	16.66	50	26.17

This table shows that the average frequency of the strategy, i.e., 1. S→N.S, was 16.66. It was the most frequently used strategy by the three translators. In the second place, the strategy of 1. W→N.W was the most frequent one. In the third place, G.M→ S.M and Add strategies have obtained the third and fourth ranks, respectively. The strategy of PH→ CL has the least average frequency. Figure 6 below shows the percentage of average frequency of each simplification strategy in the three translations.

Figure 6

Percentage of average frequency of each simplification strategy in T.1, T.2 and T.3
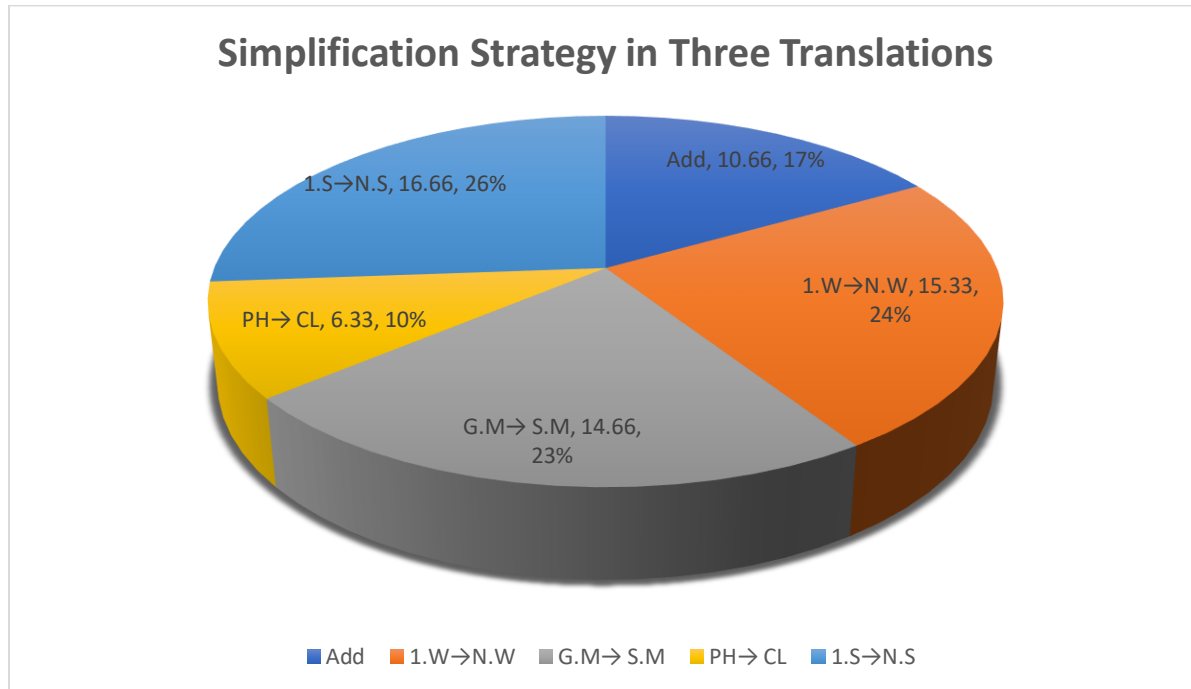
Conclusion

Translation is not an activity taking place in a vacuum with no factor influencing it. Translation teachers and trainers should make the students familiar with the universal and cultural-specific features of different text types, so that they would be able to recognize them in the source and transfer them more skillfully while translating a text. Familiarity with translation universals including simplification would help translation students and novice translators render texts simpler in the future. They could also approach translation criticism more skillfully. It seems necessary for translators to be aware of all kinds of simplification strategies to apply them consciously when needed. Also, it seems necessary for the course designers to incorporate teaching simplification strategies in the curriculum for translation students.

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Jalali: Simplification: A Case Study of the Persian Translations of The Little Prince

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