

“An Analysis of the Use of Past Simple and Present Perfect in the English Translation of ‘Broken April’”

Arta Toçi, Ph.D

South East European University, Tetova, FYROM
a.toci@seeu.edu.mk

Elona Mustafi, MA

South East European University, Tetova, FYROM
em18514@seeu.edu.mk

Abstract

Translation is a kind of activity which inevitably involves at least two languages and two cultural traditions. Languages contain dialects with various cultural expressions. Ismail Kadare has created a great treasure of dialects from various parts of Albania. Dialects are important sources of words and their vocabulary is important for the understanding of the origin of certain words. The Albanian version of Broken April is a perfect reflection of the Gheg dialect spoken in the Northern part of Albania. According to Guynes (2012), ‘Kadare contradictorily provides readers with an image of the Kanun as both an outdated set of laws averse to modernism and a tradition as vital to the Albanians as the lifestyle of the highlanders and the national myth of the urbanites (p.7)

The aim of this research is to clarify the uncertainty of the use of the past simple and present perfect tense in the Albanian English translation. The aim of this research is to find out if the dominance of Geg dialect in the dialogues of ‘Prilli i thyer’ has any impact on the use of present perfect or past simple in the English translation. It also aims to observe if the change of present perfect from ‘Prilli i thyer’ into past tense or vice versa in the English translation ‘Broken April’, carry the same meaning from the source text to the target text.

Keywords: *Translation, dialect, language, tense*

Introduction

Translation is the process of changing the words from a source language into another language (target language) with the purpose to convey the first language’s author intended meaning. According to Wangia (2014) “A translator, working with any language, needs to be critically aware of its distinguishing typological properties” (p. 139). Through the process of transmitting meaning, the main part is the linguistic issue. The

translator/editor of the source work should significantly analyze and transform the sentences according to their syntactic structures. In this research the analysis was on how past simple and present perfect tense have been translated into English language in the novel "Broken April". "According to the Albanian linguist E. Çabej (1982, p. 35), Albanian language is a sister, not a descendant of the Indo-European family" (as cited in, Kurani&Trifoni, 2011, p.48). According to Kurani&Trifoni (2011), "Although both languages belong to the Indo-European family, in addition to common features in the phonetic, semantic and grammatical system, they naturally have differences from one another." (p.48). As each nation has its own language and culture, it is obvious that those differences should be known by a translator. Through translation they should compare these differences and know how to adapt the grammar and other components that a language has.

Literature and its translation

The literary text translation, as mentioned before is a delicate phenomenon which is criticized a lot. According to Hermans (2014) "Handbooks on literary theory and works of literary criticism almost universally ignore the phenomenon of literary translation: literary histories, even those that cover more than one national literature, rarely make more than a passing reference to the existence of translated texts (p.7). He states that the ignorance of translation when dealing with literary texts comes from educational institutions. "Educational institutions, which tend to ink the study of language and literature along monolingual lines – one language and one literature at a time – treat translations with barely veiled condensation." (Hermans, 2014, p. 7). The critiques are of the kinds which deny the translators efforts because of not carrying the originality of the first language's text. According to Davannezhad (2009), "The translator should be familiar with SL and TL cultures, know the purpose of the communication and the audience for correct and on-time decision making to do his/her translation as effective cross-cultural communication." (Conclusion section, para. 1). The translator should have his/her own artistic spirit and writing ability, and by combining his/her own abilities to the author's first language abilities, the translator's work becomes a new work of art, a work of art type known as a translation which makes the readers aware that the translation is not the original text but only a transfer of another language's culturally valued work.

The Albanian literature and its translation in the English language

As this research deals with the analysis of the English translation of 'Broken April' it is important to talk about the Albanian Literature which is translated into English language. According to Marinaj (2008):

It has been about two decades since the opening of Albania, after half a century of Stalinist dictatorship, and almost a decade since the liberation of Kosovo. Albanian literature remains, nonetheless, one of the least known national literatures of Europe. Many interested readers will have heard the name Ismail Kadare, but few other literary associations will come to mind (p.1).

Besides being the 'least known national literatures of Europe' the Albanian literature is worth reading. "While much Albanian literature has been translated into French, and some major and minor works are available in Italian, German, and Russian, even Spanish, English-language translations, with the exception of some works of Kadare, have been sadly missing in bookstores and on bookshelves" (Marinaj, 2008, p. 1).

The translation of Ismail Kadare's works in the English language

Ismail Kadare is a great Albanian novelist and poet, nominated several times for the Nobel Prize in literature and has received prizes like: Prix mondialCino Del Duca, Man Booker International Prize, and Prince of Austrias Award of Art. Ismail Kadare's work has been translated in many languages, which made it possible for the Albanian literature to become known all around the world. Translated novels of Ismail Kadare into English language are: *'The General of the Dead Army'* translated by Derek Coltman, *'Doruntine'* translated by Jon Rothschild, *'The Concert'* & *'The Palace of Dreams'* translated by Barbara Bray, *'The Pyramid'* was first translated into French language by JusufVrioni and from French language was translated into English language by David Bellos who is also the translator of *'Chronicle in Stone'*, *'The file on H'*, *'Spring Flowers, Spring Frost'*, *'The Successor'*, *'Agamemnon's Daughter'*, *'Twilight of the Eastern Gods'* and *'The Siege'*; *'The Three-Arched Bridge'* translated by John Hodgson; & *'Three Elegies for Kosovo'* translated by Peter Constantine. Most of the novels have been translated from the French language into English language. According to Terzi and Arslanturk (2014) "English language is now considered a global language and a lingua franca." (p. 2). The translation of 'Broken April' comes from New

Amsterdam Books and Saqui Books, from the publication itself. Kuçuku (2005) states that 'Broken April' is translated into 13 languages: French, English, German, Dutch, Greek, Romanian, Bulgarian, Danish, Japanese, Norwegian, Polish, and Portuguese. He adds that it is translated in English language by: "Saqi Books", London, 1990; "New Amsterdam", New York, 1990; "Harvill", London, 1991; "New Amsterdam", New York, 1998; and "Vintage Random House", (?). The translation of the novel is from the publication itself.

Literary criticism on Ismail Kadare's novel 'Broken April'

'Broken April' represents the Albanian situation in an unspecific time during the 20th century, where the canon laws have been somehow the order of living in the north region of Albania of which readers become aware. Kuçuku (2005) lists some of the American and English critics put on the novel 'Broken April' which were translated into Albanian language by ShpresaOsmani: 'Broken April, a ghost interrelation of the blood feud explosion in the north Albania between wars, is one of the climaxes of Kadare's career.', 'The novel describes a "prison" of waiting before the welcomed and inevitable death. The author would not have chosen such correct fatalism and code of honor. ~Andrew Sinclair, *The times*; 'According to every standard this is an important novel.' ~Tom Birchenough, *Sunday Telegraph*; 'With "Broken April" Ismail Kadare comes in paranoia as the greatest international novelist.' ~Herbert Mitgang, *New York Times*, (Kuçuku, 2005, p. 362).

Literature Review

As this research aims to analyze the use of present perfect and past simple usage in the English language translation of "Broken April" from Albanian language as grammatical parts, it is important to throw a glance at some previous studies that present these tense's confusion and serve as important data to achieve the goal of this research. It is important to preview some definitions, divisions and examples of present perfect and past tense in both languages. Thereon, detailed comparison becomes important to do when trying to trace the real reason causing tense confusion or tense shifting through translation.

The present perfect tense and past tense in the English language

Languages exist for communication, the communication functions based on the way how "the meaning" is expressed by a speaker. Each

grammatical component has its definition and explanation on its functions. The simple past tense, is used to: a) talk about an action that started and finished at a specific time in the past and is no longer happening; b) to talk about a series of actions that happened in the past; c) to talk about a duration of time that happened in the past; d) to talk about a habit that happened in the past; e) and to talk about facts that belong to the past and are no longer true (“Simple Past,” 2015). It can be used with no specific time but the speaker might have one in mind, the only case when the speaker uses time expressions is when talking about duration in the past, and they are: all day, all night, for two months, etc. (“Simple Past,” 2015). The present perfect tense is used to talk about actions that happened at an unspecified time before now (the exact time is not important and has influence in the present), and to show that something has started in the past and continues up until now (“Present Perfect,” 2015).

The present perfect and past tense in the Albanian language

“In Albanian language more rich in grammatical forms is the past tense (Demiraj Sh., 1985), with its subdivision past simple, present perfect, past perfect and other past tenses (so called relative tenses)” (as cited in Pinari, 2015, p. 159). In Albanian language the past tense is called “koha e shkuar”, there is not a specific past tense in Albanian, and the “koha e shkuar” is divided in: “e pakryera, e kryera e thjeshtë, e kryera, më se e kryera”. While the English language’s past tense is formed like: verb + ed/irregular verbs, the Albanian tense is formed like: verb + suffixes/irregular verbs, and the Albanian adaptable tense that matches the English’s past tense form is “e kryera e thjeshtë”: Example: You opened the window. Ti e hapeditaren. It matches because the verb changes radically, by taking the suffix –e. The ‘koha e kryer e thjeshtë’ is used to talk about an action that finished at a specific time in the past (Domi&Demiraj, 1976, p. 266). The definitions of the English language and that of Albanian language about the past tense when compared are the same.

The present perfect tense of the Albanian language is also a part of the “koha e shkuar”, and it’s called “koha e kryer”. According to Domi&Demiraj (1976), “‘koha e kryer’ is used to talk about an action that has finished, and has not disconnected until the moment of speaking, even though the action has finished, the speaker exposes the consequences in the moment of speaking” (p. 268). Domi&Demiraj contradict Kurani and Muho’s claim that in Albanian it is used to describe entirely past events,

even though they happened recently, he states that even in Albanian language the speaker notes the consequences, same as in English.

Research Methodology

Research aim

The aim of this research is to clarify the uncertainty of present perfect and past tense's use along translation from Albanian to English language, or vice versa. During translation tense shift can occur. The tense shift was analyzed in the translation of "Broken April". First of all, the tenses were identified, and after they were analyzed by their translation, on the context from Albanian to English language.

Research questions

This qualitative research answered the following questions:

Q1: Are past simple and present perfect in 'Prilli i thyer' used in different contexts in English translation of 'Broken April', by Isamil Kadare?

Q2: Does the dominance of Geg dialect in the dialogues of 'Prilli i thyer' have any impact on the use of present perfect or past simple in the English translation?

Q3: Does the change of present perfect from 'Prilli i thyer' into past tense or vice versa in the English translation 'Broken April', carry the same meaning from the source text to the target text?

Methods

In this qualitative research method a considerable effort to identify the use of past simple and present perfect tense in the English translation of "Broken April" was made by analysis. Generally, the research compares or analyses the causes of tense shift from the source language to the target language. During the identification of the tense change in the translation the examples were put in the research and analyzed in details to discover the cause of why past tense is transferred into present perfect, and vice versa. In this paper were presented only 4 cases of each past tense converted to present perfect tense examples and 6 cases of present perfect converted to past tense examples, and this is not the exact number of examples that were found in the use of tenses in this translation.

Procedure

The different experience of translators on the present perfect and past tense usage during their translation is very significant. The confrontation to tense shift varies on the different points of view of translators, but also on the equivalent tenses of the target language. When having to change the style or the form of a source language's sentence it becomes an inevitable

difficulty, but it is important for translators to have a clear idea why the tense shift is possible by convincing reasons. These data will serve as a tool for detecting qualitative effects reasoning and clarifying the tense change from source language to target language. The data gathered in this research aimed to give thorough insights on all the influential factors of tense shifting and the translator's attitude to them. Since the book is translated from Albanian to English language, the present perfect and past tense were identified in the Albanian book, and then, the tenses according to the Albanian book pages were found in the English translation of *Broken April*. After the identification of the present perfect and past tense in the Albanian book, started their identification in the translation of the English book where the shift from present perfect to past tense and past tense to present perfect occurred. The tense shift was analyzed by their translation, on the context from the Albanian "Prilli i Thyer" to English language "Broken April".

Data Analysis

The data collected in the study were analyzed depending on the content of the Albanian "Prilli i Thyer" and the English translation of "Broken April". The aim was to find the key features: past simple and present perfect, and analyze their usage according to their translation through identifying the influence of tense shift among the translation from Albanian language.

Past tense converted to present perfect encounter examples:

Analysis of case 1:

Case 1. Albanian version: "Gjorgu i Berishajve shtiu mbi Zef Kryeqyqen." p. 13

Translation: "Gjorg of the Berisha has shot Zef Kryeqyqe." p. 11

In the first case the author of the novel has used the verb 'shtiu', a verb which ends with the vowel 'i' and takes the suffix -u, which is translated from past tense to the present perfect from 'shtiu' to 'has shot'. In the original sentence past tense by the author is used to talk about an action that finished in the past, but not at a specific time. In the second language sentence that is created by the translator, the past tense is converted into present perfect. In this sentence the translator explains the action like happening at an unspecific time before the moment of speaking; the action that happened in the past has consequences in the present. This transition has happened because the author of the book has used the past tense by not mentioning the specific time of the action's occurrence. 'Shtiu's' synonym is 'vrau', it is mostly used in the Geg dialect, it is accompanied by 'mbi'

which means 'on', which is the case when the translator might have converted the past tense to present perfect in order to adapt the tense.

Analysis of case 2:

Case 2. Albanian version: “– Gjorg Berisha vrau Zef Kryeqyqen, e morëtvësh?” p. 15

Translation: “Have you heard? GjorgBerishahas killedZefKryeqyqe.” p. 13

In the next example there are two verbs in past tense that are shifted into present perfect. The first verb 'vrau' in the end has the vowel 'a' and is used in third person singular so it takes the suffix '-u', and the second verb 'morët' ends with the suffix 'ët', which ends with the consonant 'r' and is used in plural. In the first language 'vrau' is translated from past tense into present perfect as 'has killed', and 'morët' is followed by 'vësh', in which case the translator used both words as a phrase in past tense and translated them into present perfect as 'have you heard' in interrogative form, where the auxiliary verb comes before the subject and then follows the verb. In the first verb 'koha e kryer e thjeshtë' is used to talk about an action that finished in the past, but not at a specific time, and in the translated sentence it is transferred in present perfect which is used to talk about an action that happened at an unspecific time before now because it is not important and has influence in the present. Whereas in the second translation 'morëtvësh' the past tense by the author is also used to talk about a finished action with no specific time. Whereas in the translation the past tense is converted into present perfect denoting the action in an unspecific time of occurrence before the moment of speaking by having influence in the present. The phrase 'morëtvësh' means 'kuptove', in English 'understand'. In this case, the translator's artistic ability has created a new phrase as 'have you heard', which expresses the meaning of the first language in the proper manner. Ismail Kadare has used cultural expressions and the translator has such a good first language cultural background that has found the second language's equivalent. These cultural expressions in Albanian are used without mentioning the specific time; in this case they belong to the Albanian Geg dialect.

Analysis of case 3:

Case 3. Albanian version: “– Gjorgu i Berishajve lau gjakun e të vëllait.” p. 15

Translation: “Gjorg Berisha has taken back his brother's blood.” p. 13

The third example has the same form as the previous one about ‘vrau’. The verb ‘lau’ in the end has the vowel ‘a’ and is used in third person singular so it takes the suffix ‘-u’. In the first language ‘lau’ is translated from past tense to present perfect as ‘has taken’. In the source language sentence, the past simple tense is used to describe an unspecified finished action in the past, which is translated into present perfect to talk about an action which happened at an unspecified time before the speaking moment with consequences in the present. This expression by the author is also influenced by the cultural expressions because the past tense does not mention a specific time.

Analysis of case 4:

Case 4. Albanian version: “*Ai bërisikurnuk e dëgjoi, vetëmqeshi, por me njëqeshjetëftohtë, ngaatoqë i rrinëlargpërmbajtjessënjëbisede.*” p. 75

Translation: “*He pretended not to have heard her and simply smiled, but with the cold smile of someone who intends to skirt what might well be the real subject of discussion.*” p. 79

The verb ‘dëgjoi’ of the next example takes the suffix ‘-i’ because it is in third person singular and ends with the vowel ‘o’, and it is translated as ‘have heard’. The past tense is also used to talk about an unspecified action that finished in the past and is transferred into present perfect because it is used to talk about actions that also happened at an unspecified time before the moment of speaking. The author of the source language novel used the past tense without telling a specific time (he uses past tense by expressing occasional thoughts), same as the previous examples, and that is why the translator goes on by transferring the past simple tense into present perfect. As we can notice, Ismail Kadare has used the past tense of the Albanian language with no specific time to explain occasional thoughts (a case which happened only in using cultural expressions as Domi&Demiraj described).

Present perfect tense converted to past tense encounter examples:

During the tense shift of the present perfect tense and past tense point of view, there were four types of present perfect usage according to Domi&Demiraj as mentioned before. The divisions listed below depend to the use in the novel’s examples, and the past tense of the English language is analyzed after the source language’s division in order to verify the influence of the source language’s present perfect use to the target language’s past tense use. So, by relying into the first language’s present

perfect functions, the following division gives explanation of tense shift from one language to another by analysis.

Case 1.

The auxiliary verb and the verb 'kamkhyer' of the first language are translated into 'turned' in the second language:

Albanian version: "– Siçduket, kur e kamkthyermbarë, –tha." p. 13

Translation: "It must have happened when I turned him over." p.11

Analysis of case 1:

The present perfect in Albanian language is used when a finished action is connected to the speaking moment according to its consequences without time expression. Whereas in the English language the past tense is used to talk about an action that started and finished at an 'unspecific' time in the past not a specific time as the definition states. The present perfect tense of the first language's transfer into past tense in the second language has happened due to the use of present perfect with unspecified time expression, because the past tense in the transferred form is not accompanied with any specific time expression.

Case 2.

The auxiliary verb and the verb 'kebërë' of the novel in Albanian are translated into 'did' in the English translation:

Albanian version: "– Kurkebërëmortin?" p. 55

Translation: "When did you kill your man?" p. 58

Analysis of case 2:

The present perfect tense in Albanian language is used with the meaning of past simple tense to describe the conclusion of an action without connecting it to the moment of speaking. Whereas the past tense in the English language is used to talk about an action that started and finished at an unspecific time in the past not a specific time as the definition states. The tense shift has happened because Ismail Kadare has used present perfect with the meaning of past simple tense and the transfer in the past tense is influenced by the present perfect of the first language by not having a specific time of occurrence and the translator has transferred it into past tense in the second language context. This is a case that happens only in the spoken and sometimes in the written language.

Case 3.

The auxiliary verb and the verb 'kakalear' of the novel in Albanian are translated into 'came' in the English translation:

Albanian version: “*Para tri ditëshkakuarkëndejpër më Orosh, përtaksën e gjakut.*” p. 102

Translation: “*He came by three days ago on his way to Orosh, to pay the blood-tax.*” p. 109

Analysis of case 3:

The present perfect in the source language is used when a finished action is connected to the speaking moment according to its consequences and can be accompanied with an expression of time which marks a specific time. The past tense in the target language is used to talk about the duration of time that happened in the past by using a specific time expression. The tense transition in this case happens due to the use of present perfect with a specific time expression, and the past tense is also accompanied with a specific time expression.

Case 4.

The auxiliary verb and the verb ‘kavrarë’ of the novel in Albanian are translated into ‘killed’ in the English translation:

Albanian version: “– *Kavrarë paracditëshdhetanipokthehetnga Oroshi*”. p. 103

Translation: “*He killed a man a few days ago, and now he’s coming back from Orosh.*” p. 109

Analysis of case 4:

The present perfect of the first language is used when a finished action is connected to the speaking moment according to its consequences accompanied with unspecific time expression. Whereas the past simple of the second language is used to talk about an action which started in the past at an unspecific time in the past, and is no longer happening. The transfer of present perfect into past tense has occurred due to the use of present perfect of the Albanian language with unspecific time of expression, and the translator adapted it into the past and is accompanied with unspecific time expression not a specific time expression as the definition states.

Conclusions

From the data gained important conclusions were brought by the analysis of this research. It is an important confirmation of issues in translating the present perfect and past tense in a second language from the point of view Albanian to English language and clarify why these tenses were mixed in the translation. These are the conclusions brought from the analysis:

- When in the first language the author uses past tense (with the function of talking about an action that finished in the past to express occasional thoughts) without a specific time expression,

the translator can transfer it in present perfect (which functions to talk about an action that happened in the past with consequences in the present) without a specific time expression by linking their functions.

There was only one case when past tense of source language was converted to present perfect in the target language, and that was because the author used past tense to express occasional thoughts and this only occurred when using cultural expressions of the 'Geg' dialect according to the novel 'Broken April'.

- When in the first language the author uses present perfect (with the function of talking about a finished action that is connected to the speaking moment according to its consequences) without time expression, the translator can transfer in the past tense (with the function to talk about an action which started and finished in the past) without a specific time expression, by linking their functions.
- When in the first language the author uses present perfect (with the function of the past tense to describe the conclusion of an action without connecting it to the moment of speaking, a case encountered in the spoken or occasionally written language) without time expression, the translator can transfer in the past tense (with the function of talking about an action that started and finished in the past and is no longer happening) without a time expression, to link both functions.

In this case the use of present perfect with the meaning of past tense which could be encountered only in the spoken or written form means the 'Geg' dialect has influence in the shift that occurs in the translation.

- When in the first language the author uses present perfect (with the function of talking about a finished action connected to the speaking moment according to its consequences) with a specific time expression, the translator can transfer in the past tense (with the function of talking about the duration of time that happened in the past) with a specific time expression, to link both functions.
- When in the first language the author uses present perfect (with the function of talking about a finished action that is connected to the speaking moment according to its consequences) with unspecific time expression, the translator can transfer in the past tense (with the function of talking about an action that started and finished in the past and is no longer happening) without a specific time expression, by linking both functions.

The present perfect and past simple from “Prilli i Thyer” of IsamilKadare, are used in different context in the English translation of ‘Broken April’, since in both novels of ‘Broken April’ the one in Albanian language and its translation in English language the present perfect and the past tense are used in different contexts because there were cases where the translator converted past tense into present perfect, and the present perfect into past tense. The Geg dialect in the dialogues of ‘Prilli i thyer’ influences the use of present perfect and past tense in the English translation, because in the view of the conversion of past tense of the L1 into present perfect in the L2 there was a case where the past tense was used with no specific time expression to explain occasional thoughts (a case which happened only in using cultural expressions), and in the view of present perfect conversion from the L1 into past tense in the L2 there was the second case where Ismail Kadare used the present perfect of the source language with the meaning of past tense, (a case which was encountered only in the spoken and written language). The change of present perfect tense from ‘Prilli i thyer’ into past tense and vice versa in the English translation ‘Broken April’, carry the same messages from the source text to the target text, because the changes of present perfect from the source text into past tense in the target text or vice versa, do carry the same meaning in the move from one text to another.

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