

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC ELEMENTS IN TWO ALBANIAN TRANSLATIONS OF GEORGE ORWELL'S NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR

Doktorante Stelina Ndreu

Departamenti i Gjuhës Angleze

Fakulteti i Gjuhëve të Huaja, Universiteti i Tiranës

E-mail: stelina_ndreu.fgjhdr@unitir.edu.al

ABSTRACT

This paper presents a comparative analysis of two Albanian translations of George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1984), focusing on cultural elements, neologisms, proper names, and syntactic structures. The study examines Çelo Hoxha's 2005 version (*Njëmijë e nëntëqind e tetëdhjetë e katër*) and Sokol Çunga's 2020 version (*1984*), applying Newmark's taxonomy of translation procedures and the notion of translation shifts. Selected excerpts from the source text are compared with both target texts to identify the used procedures and to assess their impact on meaning, cultural equivalence, and stylistic fidelity. The findings indicate that the first translation generally maintains a closer faithfulness to the source text's cultural markers, while the second favors adaptation strategies aimed at enhancing accessibility for Albanian readers. The study highlights how translators' strategic decisions influence readers' engagement with Orwell's dystopian vision and contributes to the understanding of literary translation in the Albanian context.

Keywords: translation procedures, cultural elements, neologisms, stylistic fidelity, Albanian translation

PËRMBLEDHJE

Ky artikull paraqet një analizë krahasuese të dy përkthimeve në gjuhën shqipe të romanit "1984" të George Orwell, duke u fokusuar te përkthimi i elementeve kulturore, neologjizmave, emrave të përveçëm dhe strukturave sintaksore. Studimi shqyrton versionin e Çelo Hoxhës (2005, *Njëmijë e nëntëqind e tetëdhjetë e katër*) dhe atë të Sokol Çungës (2020, *1984*), duke aplikuar taksonominë e procedurave të përkthimit të Njemark-ut. Fragmente të përzgjedhura nga teksti burimor krahasohen me të dyja versionet për të identifikuar procedurat e përdorura dhe për të vlerësuar ndikimin e tyre në kuptim, barazblefshmërinë kulturore dhe besnikërinë stilistike. Rezultatet tregojnë se përkthimi i parë ruan më shumë shenjat kulturore të tekstit original, ndërsa i dyti priret drejt përshtatjes për ta bërë tekstin më të kapshëm për lexuesin shqiptar. Studimi kontribuon në kuptimin e përkthimit letrar në kontekstin shqiptar.

Fjalët çelës: procedura përkthimi, elemente kulturore, neologjizma, besnikëri stilistike, përkthim shqip

1. Introduction

George Orwell's novel 1984 is one of the most important works of dystopian literature, known for its sharp criticism of totalitarianism and for its use of language as a tool for manipulation and social control. The research problem addressed in this article is related to the way in which the cultural elements, neologisms and linguistic structures of the work are conveyed in the Albanian language and to the effect that the translators' choices have on the original meaning and tone.

The aim of the paper is to comparatively analyze two complete translations of the work into Albanian: the translation by Çelo Hoxha (2005) and that by Sokol Çunga (2020), to identify the translation procedures used and to assess their impact on preserving or adapting Orwell's message and atmosphere. The analysis draws on well-known theoretical frameworks in translation studies.

The background and significance of this study is related to the fact that literary translation into Albanian has a rich history but is still relatively limited in comparative analyses of different versions of the same work. Comparing the two "1984" translations not only helps to assess the decisions made by translators but also contributes to the development of a more in-depth tradition of translation studies in the Albanian context. Orwell's work, with its specially-created language and ideological charge, offers a rich terrain for examining strategies for preserving or adapting cultural elements and stylistic structure.

The importance of this analysis lies in the fact that "1984" is a highly ideologically charged text and a language specifically constructed to create a particular political and cultural reality. Its translation into Albanian requires strategic decisions that have the potential to change the way the Albanian reader receives the work. By examining those kinds of decisions in two different translations, the study contributes to an understanding of literary translation challenges and the impact translation decisions have on the transmission of the meaning, style, and ideology of a source text.

2. Theoretical framework

Literary translation studies emphasize that translation is not simply a linguistic act, but a complex process that involves ideological, cultural, and functional decisions. One of the most important divisions in this field is that proposed by Lawrence Venuti (1995), who distinguishes between domestication and foreignization as two strategies in the face of the foreign culture in the source text. Domestication aims to adapt the text to the culture of the target language reader, while foreignization preserves the "foreign" characteristics to respect the originality of the work. In the translation of ideologically charged works, such as "1984", the choice between these strategies can profoundly affect the way the text is experienced.

To specifically analyze translation choices, one of the most widely used models is that of Peter Newmark (1988), who categorizes translation procedures into several types: literal translation, transposition, modulation, equivalence, adaptation, etc. This system allows for the classification of translator interventions and helps to identify the effects they produce on meaning. The application of these categories is evident in practical analyses such as that of Petrescu (2004), who compares translations of a literary work to detect semantic shifts and changes in style. Her study shows that theoretical classification can be used flexibly to analyze different translations of the same text.

Another key contribution comes from Hatim and Munday (2004), who propose the concept of “translation shifts”: inevitable changes that occur between languages due to structural, cultural, or pragmatic differences. They treat translation as an act of communication and emphasize that translation decisions should be analyzed in the context of the purpose of the text, the expectations of the audience, and the cultural norms of the target language. This functionalist approach is useful for understanding why two translators of the same work may follow different strategies, depending on the cultural and temporal circumstances in which they operate.

Drawing on these theories, this paper aims to comparatively analyze two Albanian translations of George Orwell’s novel 1984, identifying the procedures used and reflecting on the impact they have on the transmission of original meanings and on the preservation or adaptation of cultural and ideological elements.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, comparative approach to examine two Albanian translations of George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four*: the 2005 version by Çelo Hoxha (*Njëmijë e nëntëqind e tetëdhjetë e katër*, Botim Zenit) and the 2020 version by Sokol Çunga (*1984*, Botime Pegi). The purpose is to identify and compare the translation procedures applied to key cultural and linguistic elements of the novel.

The analysis focuses on selected excerpts that include:

1. Cultural words and references
2. Proper names
3. Neologisms and political terminology
4. Structural and syntactic features
5. Notable shifts in emphasis and word order

Passages were selected based on their relevance to Orwell’s thematic and stylistic construction, especially where translation choices could significantly alter meaning, tone, or ideological impact. The theoretical framework is grounded

in Peter Newmark’s (1988) taxonomy of translation procedures, supplemented by Venuti’s (1995) concepts of foreignization and domestication, and Hatim & Munday’s (2004) notion of translation shifts.

For each excerpt, the source text (ST) is presented alongside both target text versions (TT1 and TT2). The applied translation procedure is identified, and the impact of each choice is discussed with reference to cultural equivalence, stylistic fidelity, and ideological resonance. This method allows for a systematic comparison that goes beyond surface-level lexical changes, offering insights into the translators’ broader strategic orientations.

4. Comparison of TL texts with SL text and the Translation Procedures used: Analysis and findings

4.1 Title

The title has stayed the same in both TL texts and SL text, since it is a year, 1984. Even though it is just a numeral, it has become a cultural symbol and a political statement. (Blakemore, 1984). The only difference remains in the fact that the primary title of the book was Nineteen Eighty-Four, later stylized as 1984. The 1st translator has decided to translate the original title as well, whilst the 2nd one has not.

4.2 The structure (paragraphs and sentence connectors)

ST- Similar slits existed in thousands or tens of thousands throughout the building, not only in every room but at short intervals in every corridor. For some reason they were nicknamed memory holes.	
TT1-Çarje të tilla kishte me qindra e mijëra në të gjithë godinën, jo vetëm në çdo dhomë, por në korridore ishin edhe më të shpeshta, të cilat, kushedi për ç’arsye, quheshin vrimat e kujtesës.	TT2-Nëpër të gjithë ndërtesën gjendeshin mijëra, dhjetëra mijëra të tilla, jo vetëm në çdo dhomëz, por edhe në korridore, në distanca te vogla nga njëra-tjetra. Për arsye të panjohura, quheshin “vrimat e kujtesës”.

Table 1: paragraph and sentence connectors

We notice a change in syntax. The 1st translator has decided to join the sentences together and create a longer one by adding new elements, hence: *expansion* procedure.

4.3 Faithful translation VS idiomatic translation

In Albanian, it is more natural to say “qindra e mijëra” than “mijëra, dhjetëra mijëra”. Sentence connectors and paragraphing vary between translations. TT1 tends to combine sentences, introducing expansion, while TT2 maintains shorter, more segmented structures. These choices affect rhythm, readability, and perceived emphasis.

4.4 Cultural elements

ST- containing an outfit of Snakes and Ladders.	
TT1-me pjesët e lojës Gjarpërinjtë dhe Shkallaret brenda.	TT2- kishte nje lojë “Mos u nxehtë”

Table 2: Cultural words

TT1 has remained faithful to the ST, and I am inclined to say that over translation procedure has been used since it is not necessary to translate a cultural word like a game in this case, into TL if that game does not exist at all in TL. TT2 on the other hand has used adaptation procedure/cultural equivalent. This illustrates a domestication approach in TT2 versus foreignization in TT1.

4.5 Untranslatability

In both translations, certain cultural terms are retained in their original form, reflecting foreignization. For instance, *wallop*, a British English term denoting a type of beer, is left untranslated. This decision preserves the source-culture specificity and authenticity of the original text, even at the risk that the Albanian reader may be unfamiliar with the exact beverage.

Similarly, *Jus primae noctis*, a Latin phrase referring to a historically debated feudal or capitalist “right” to sleep with any woman working for the ruler or factory owner on her wedding night, is also kept in its original form. This represents a case of untranslatability, where rendering the term into Albanian might diminish its historical and cultural resonance.

In both cases, the translators’ strategy aligns with Venuti’s (1995) concept of foreignization, in which the translator deliberately retains elements of the source text that signal its cultural and linguistic “otherness,” rather than adapting them to target-language norms. These choices highlight a commitment to preserving the ideological and cultural texture of Orwell’s narrative.

4.6 Proper names

Below, some character names are listed in both Source Language and Target Language (TL). The names have been altered so that they conform more closely to the phonology or orthography of the TL, hence the procedure of *naturalization* has been used.

Source Text	Target Text 1&2
Winston	Uinston
Julia	Xhulia
O'Brien	O'Brajen
Parsons	Parsoni
Syme	Sajmi
Goldstein	Goldshtejni

Table 3: Proper names

4.7 Neologisms

Componential Analysis takes place in translating these types of words/phrases: analysis of the meaning of a word by breaking down the word into different pieces called ‘component parts’.

ST-BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU, the caption beneath it ran.	
TT1 -Poshtë kishte diciturën: Vëllai i madh ju vrojton.	TT2 -Vëllai i madh po të vëzhgon, thoshte legjenda poshtë saj.

Table 4: Neologisms

Both TTs have used “Vëllai i madh” which is a direct translation or *word-for-word translation* procedure. The 1st translation addresses everyone, whereas the 2nd addresses the character personally. (consider the fact that the 2nd one means scrutinizing the people). Intra-system Shift is used, where the most focus is on the change of singular/plural words in English into singular/plural ones in Albanian.

TT1 uses a more impersonal address (“vrojtoj= ndjek me sy dikë a diçka; e studioj duke ndjekur me vëmendje zhvillimin ” (Akademia e Shkencave e Shqipërisë, 2006)), while TT2 personalizes the surveillance (“vëzhgoj= përgjoj e gjurmoj dikë; hetoj: vëzhgonin lëvizjet e armikut; vëzhgon ditë e natë; / ndjek si kryhet një punë a një detyrë; vështroj: vëzhgo si zbatohen rregullat!” (Akademia

e Shkencave e Shqipërisë, 2006)), subtly shifting the tone.

ST-His mind hovered for a moment round the doubtful date on the page, and then fetched up with a bump against the Newspeak word DOUBLETHINK .	
TT1-U hallakat një hop rreth datës së dyshimtë në ditar, pastaj u përball me togfjalëshin e Gjuhës së Re: mendim i dyfishtë.	TT2-U përsiat për pak, rreth datës së dyshimtë në fletë, pastaj ndaloj te fjala DYMENDIM e rigjuhës.

Table 5: Neologisms

We notice *a change in the number of lexical units* in the 1st translation. The ST provides us with one word, whereas the TT1 creates a collocation. or *Doublethink*, TT1 opts for a collocation (*mendim i dyfishtë*), while TT2 uses a coined compound (*dymendim*), demonstrating different strategies for lexical innovation.

Newspeak: a purposefully ambiguous and confusing language with restricted grammar and limited vocabulary used in Oceania, according to Orwell, “to diminish the range of thought.” & Doublethink: the act of simultaneously accepting two mutually contradictory beliefs as correct. (Center for the Arts, 2019, para. 3-5)

4.8 Through translation

All the names of Ministries and bars such as The Ministry of Truth, the Ministry of Peace, the Ministry of Love, and the Ministry of Plenty have been translated literally into both TTs: Ministria e të Vërtetës, Paqes, Dashurisë dhe Bollëkut. The names of the bars have been translated in the same way as well: bar “Gështenja”. Saint Martin into “Shën Martini”.

4.9 Expressive renderings, Word order and Change of Emphasis

ST —a voice was singing: ‘Under the spreading chestnut tree I sold you and you sold me——’	
TT1 Nën gështenjën degëgjërë Ti shite mua, unë shita ty...	TT2 Nën gështenjën gjetheshumë më shite ti, të shita dhe unë...

Table 6: Change of imagery emphasis

The word order has changed. It is not only a syntactic change where phrases can be easily interchangeable, because the emphasis has changed as well. TT1’s rendering (*Nën gështenjën degëgjërë*) versus TT2’s (*Nën gështenjën gjetheshumë*) shows different imagery emphasis. The lexical substitutions alter the evoked mental picture and potentially the symbolic weight.

4.10 Transposition

Translation Shift is the shift of word class as change of grammatical category because of two different linguistic systems and cultures, and it is unavoidable in translation. In this case the AdjP in the ST has turned into a VP in both TTs.

ST- He sat back in his chair, slightly ashamed of himself, and laid down the pen.	
TT1- U tërhoq mbrapa në karrige, i erdhi disi turp nga vetja, uli penën.	TT2-U mbështet në karrige, i erdhi disi turp prej vetes, dhe lëshoi penën.

Table 7: Shifts

5. Conclusions

The comparative analysis of the two Albanian translations of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* shows that while both translators successfully convey the central plot, tone, and ideological weight of Orwell’s novel, they adopt different strategies when dealing with cultural, linguistic, and stylistic challenges. The examples examined reveal variation in the use of literal translation, adaptation, transposition, and expansion, with each translator showing a clear preference for certain procedures.

Cultural references and neologisms emerge as one of the main points of divergence. The first translation often favors more literal renderings, preserving the terms and expressions even if they might be unfamiliar to Albanian readers. The second translation is more inclined to adapt cultural references and create new terms that sound natural in Albanian, which can make the text more accessible but slightly less anchored to the original’s cultural context.

Structural and syntactic choices also differ. The first translation tends to merge sentences and expand them, creating a denser and more complex narrative flow. The second translation retains shorter sentences and clearer segmentation, maintaining a rhythm closer to that of the source text. These differences influence not only how the text reads, but also the way in which certain ideas or emotions are emphasized.

Overall, both translations stand as valuable contributions to the Albanian literary landscape. The first offers a version that retains more of the original’s

cultural markers, while the second integrates them into a style and rhythm that may resonate more immediately with contemporary readers. Neither approach is superior; each reflects a coherent translation philosophy. This comparison highlights how translation is not a mechanical act but a series of choices that shape the reader's experience, and it emphasizes the importance of understanding these choices when assessing or producing literary translations.

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