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Criteria of Simplification of Old Literary Texts: A Case Study of *Kelile and Demne*

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Abstract

Classic literary texts are of special cultural importance. Although Persian speakers still can read and understand these old texts after hundreds of years, for the younger generation and recent Persian learner is hardly possible due to lexical and slightly syntactic changes. Therefore, many of these texts have been simplified for children and even adults. This research tries to compare some stories of *Kelile and Demne* with their simplified versions to examine the changes of the literary text through the process of simplification, and at the same time, to extract patterns of simplification. The reason for picking up *Kelile and Demne* is that on the one hand, it is one of the technical and ornate literary texts in Persian, and on the other hand, it is recurrently simplified. In this research, changes have been classified in four levels of morphology, syntax, lexicon and text. As result, three different approaches to the mechanism of simplification of old literary texts of Persian were observed:

1) The tendency to keep both the content and the form of the original text

2) The tendency to keep the content unchanged, but manipulate the form of the original text

3) The tendency to manipulate both the content and the form of the original text

Thus, the form has been always under change. The maipulations can be grouped into four levels of lexical, morphological, syntactic and textual changes.

Keywords: Simplification, Rewriting, Original text, Simplified text, *Kelile and Demne*

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1. Introduction

Classic literary texts are of special cultural importance. Many Persian speakers still can read and understand old texts after almost a millennium; this is due to a peculiar feature of Persian language used to be the official or cultural *lingua franca* in a vast area from India to the eastern borders of nowadays Europe throughout those days. However, the younger generation has a hard task to decipher some old texts largely due to lexical and slightly due to syntactic changes. Therefore, a considerable number of old texts are increasingly being simplified for children and even adults.

Simplification is inevitable; but literary texts need to be conserved as well. This study helps us uncover almost unconscious mechanisms used to simplify prominent texts, while reserving at least parts of its outstanding aesthetic peculiarities. Having this in mind, this study tries to find and categorize mechanisms used by simplifiers of Persian *Kelile and Demne* as a prominent literary text of 13th century in modern times.

2. Literature Review

There are regulations introduced by authorities such as *Kānoon-e Parvaresh-e Fekri-e Koodakān va Nojavānān* (Center for the Intellectual Development of Child and Adolescent) and some private publishers. But they are based on individual experiences rather than researches. One important source dealing with the process of simplification in Persian is Payvar (2009). The inspirational source to this study, however, was Crossley, Allen & McNamara (2011).

Bahar (1951) divides Persian prose into four stylistic eras:

a) Early modern Persian texts from 11th to 12th centuries;

b) Ornate literary style with plenty of Arabic loanwords from 13th to 15th centuries starting with *Kelile and Demne*;

c) The era of decline from 13th to 18th centuries; and

d) Recursion style from 19th centuries onward.

As it might be expected, the ornate texts of the second era are the most problematic texts to understand, including *Kelile and Demne*.

3. Methodology

Due to this fact, this research tries to compare some stories of *Kelile and Demne* with their simplified versions to examine how literary texts changes through the process of simplification. Consequently, it tries to extract patterns of simplification. The reason for picking up *Kelile and Demne* is that on the one hand, it is one of the most technical and ornate literary texts in Persian, and on the other hand, it is recurrently simplified. It is also translated into many different languages.

Three different approaches to the mechanism of simplification of *Kelile and Demne* were spotted:

1.The tendency to keep both the content and the form of the original text;
2.The tendency to keep the content unchanged, but manipulate the form of the original text;
3.The tendency to manipulate both the content and the form of the original text.

4. Results and Discussion

As it is obvious in all approaches, the form always changes.

The most important manipulations found in the simplified versions are summed up under four different levels of lexical, morphological, syntactic and textual changes, as follows:

1.Lexical manipulation:

1.1. Persianization

1.2. Modernization

1.3. Omission of the preverbal particle "*bar*"

2.Morphological manipulation:

2.1. Addition of the prefix "*be-*" in subjunctive mood

2.2. Change of "*be-" to "mi-*" in verbs in present tense

2.3. Omission of the initial prefix of "*be-*" the final suffix of "-*i*" from verbs of present tense

2.4. Change of the passive verbs with "*āmad*" (literally *s/he came*) into the modern passive verbs with "*shodan*" (literally *s/he became*)

2.5. Change of nonfinite verbs into finite ones

2.6. Omission of the so-called decorative prefix "*be-*" from verbs of past tense

2.7. Change of derivational suffixes

3.Syntactic manipulation:

3.1. Harmony of verbal tenses

3.2. Change of the word order of adjective + noun into noun + adjective

3.3. Change of simple sentences into complex ones

3.4. Maintaining word order in sentence level

3.5. Omission of conditional constructions

4.Textual manipulation:

4.1. Change of fictional macro-structure of "story within story"

4.2. Change of fictional elements

4.3. Textual shortening

4.4. Textual lengthening

4.5. Substitution of idioms

4.6. Change of the story beginning

4.7. Omission of many figures of speech such as rhyming, symmetry, and rhythm

4.8. Repetition of verbs instead of ellipsis

4.9. Omission of synonyms

4.10. Modernization of orthography.