Ideological Study of Lexical choices in Translation of a Novel from English into Persian

Rajabali Askarzadeh Torghabeh (Ph.D)
Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Mashhad, Iran
asgar@um.ac.ir

Hamideh Shirmohamadi (M.A)
Department of English, Quchan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Quchan, Iran

Abstract

Culture and the dominant social power has always been important in translation studies and had a great impact on the translators as well. The writers of this article have chosen a novel in English and its three Persian translations to look for a remarkable relationship between lexical choices of the translators in the different social periods in Iran. The theoretical framework of this study is Toury’s Descriptive Translation Theory and Fairclough’s model of Critical Discourse Analysis. To do the study, the researchers have chosen three translations of the above mentioned English novel from the three different phases of Iranian society, to see if there is a significant difference between the lexical choices of these translations in these different periods or no? The results of the study show that, there is a significant relationship between the social forces of the time and the lexical choices of the translators in these three different translations.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Idiom, Macro level, Experiential value, Relational value, Expressive value
1. Introduction

Speaking about translation studies requires many considerations. One of the most important issues in translation is found in the differences between SL culture and TL culture (Larson, 1998). In literary translation, finding proper equivalence of idioms causes serious problems because idioms are culture bound and never occur in simple or denotative meanings. In order to deal with this kind of problems, different strategies are used by translators, so it is useful to discuss and categorize these strategies in order to help translators to make the best and appropriate decisions while translating.

2. Review of the Related Literature

Translation is known as a process by which a chain of signifiers constituting the Source Language (SL) text is replaced by a chain of signifiers in the Target Language (TL) text which are the translator's choices (Venuti, 1995; Derrida, 1982). Venuti (1995) focuses on cultural differences and defines translation as a forcible replacement for the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text with a text that is intelligible to the target reader (Nida, 1964; Toury, 1978; Newmark, 1988; Baker 1992; Shuttleworth & Cowie, 1997).

Meanwhile, Lamberts (1998) claims that the aim of literary translation, among other types of translation, is to meet a need in the literary culture of the target language; therefore, to deal with them the translation strategies are applied to discuss that is useful for explaining the literary relationships and convention. Moreover, Lamberts (1998) emphasizes the impact of translated literary works in creating the dynamics of discourse and culture, mentioning that the nature of literary translation makes scholars consider and investigate the conditions under which translation is produced; therefore, it is not easy to study state of translated literary works. In line with this, culture remains a key issue which should be considered in translation of literary texts. Snell-Hornby (1990) introduces a new concept called 'the cultural turn' and states that this is a viewpoint that regards translation as a cultural and political issue not merely as a textual one. Bassnett and Lefevere (1990) explain that cultural turn emphasizes on the relationships between language and culture and show that how culture influences and constrains translation and contains other areas such as history and conventions. Other scholars believe that translating cultural words and expressions in literary works is difficult due to cultural implications in translation (Newmark, 1988; Nida, 1964; Bassnett, 1991).

Concerning the conception of culture and translation, Toury (1978) believes that translation involves both language and culture. Thus, the way of treating the cultural aspects of a SL and finding the most appropriate technique for a successful conveying of these aspects in the TL is
one of the most problems of translators. Baker (1992) states that sometimes in translation, a SL word express a social or religious concept which is not known in target culture, and it usually occurs due to cultural differences in languages which this cause problems in translation from SL into TL. Venuti (1995) notes that because of differences between SL and TL, linguistic and cultural similarities should be found. In addition, he believes that translation should emphasize on cultural differences. On the other hand, Shuttleworth & Cowie (1997) argue that cultural approach in translation is used for anthropological studies. In a novel, language plays a very important role. It introduces the character, his or her social class, and the culture of the speaker. It also reflects the atmosphere of the novel. Language is one of the most important devices applied by the author in presenting the characters. In fact, authors communicate to their readers through the tongue of their characters, and they state their ideas, thoughts, and intentions through these characters. Furthermore, the language of characters leads the readers to their identity, social class, their level of literacy, and so on. In this regard, Landers (2001), states that in any language, every utterance and even a word in isolation convey a set of associations that go beyond the literal denotation of words. In fact, Landers believes that human beings, consciously or unconsciously, equate words, expressions, grammatical construction, and even intonation patterns with non-linguistic characteristic such as class, status, and educational level, which are defined socially (2001).

Thus, translating with the same level of formality is of great importance in translation, especially when the author uses the languages as his or her stylistic tool (Saffari & Hashemian, 2012). As a result, the first and the most crucial responsibility of the translator is the recognition of the language and the style that has been used in a novel and render them with the same level in order to produce the same feeling on the target reader.

Considering the formality of language, idiomatic language is one of the language levels that might be used by the author for an effective characterization and making the atmosphere of the story and they should be reflected in translation thoroughly. According to Nopper (2010), a proper assessment of the nonstandard language like idiomatic language, youth language, and so forth of the source text is necessary in order to create the same effect of the nonstandard language in the target text. A translator should keep in mind that such an effect is not an incidental consequence, but an intentional one (Saffari & Hashemian, 2012); therefore, the proper translation of this language and finding correct equivalences by the translator in order to achieve the author's intended goals and to provoke the same impact from the target readers and to preserve cultural and local coloring of the original text are of great importance.
3. Statement of the Problem

One of the most difficult problems in translation is found in the differences between SL culture and TL culture (Larson, 1998). In literary, translation of idioms causes serious problems because idiom is language and culture bound and never occurs in simple or denotative meanings (Stolt, 2010; Eriksen 2010). Particularly, when translating literary works that belong to two wholly culturally different countries may be indispensably and instantly recognized. In order to deal with this kind of problems in translation, different strategies are used by translators; therefore, it is useful to discuss and categorize these strategies in order to help translators to make the best and appropriate decisions while translating. Although translating idioms in The Cather in the Rye may present challenges, it may be one of the most important aspects of preserving the flavor of the presented idiolect and effect it has on readers (O'Mara, 2007). Since no two languages are alike, target languages cannot always provide correspondences in both form/structure and meaning (O'Mara, 2007) and scrutinizing the translations meant for this study will yield invaluable information about the idiomatic expressions and the strategies used by the authors through time. In fact, it is admitted that in the above-word level, the main problem is the lack of appropriated equivalence. It is perfect if a translator could find an idiom in the target language which is same in its form and meaning as the source language. Since each language has its idioms that are context and culture bound, it is hard to find the exact equivalence. Also, they are problematic for translators because of their unpredictable meaning and grammar. In order to deal with the problems that arise in the process of translation, different translators use various strategies to achieve the equivalent above-word level. As a result, translators leave out some parts of the story, add some extra information to it, exaggerate some parts of the story or underestimate some others, and choose different equivalents for specific parts, in order to make it compatible with their strategies. The main purpose of this investigation is to determine how the three translators have translated the idiomatic expressions at the macro levels according to translation strategies within the CDA model of translation criticism during three different eras before and after the revolution of Iran? What are the similarities and differences between their applied strategies?

4. Method

4.1. Corpus of the Study

The corpus of this study is a body of idioms presented in dialogues of Salinger’s The Catcher in the Rye with three Persian renderings, one by A. Karimi (first edition in 1966), and the other by Najafi (first edition in 1998 and the eighth edition in 2010) and one by M. Karimi (2014).
4.2. Procedure

The main procedure of this study is based on Fairclough (1989) model of CDA. He proposes text, interaction, and social context as three elements of a discourse, presents a procedure for critical discourse analysis, and poses ten main questions (and some sub. questions) in vocabulary, grammar and textual structure levels which can be asked of a text. These questions are discussed mainly at the vocabulary level in three parts namely experiential, relational, and expressive values. The extracted strategies to be discussed are as follows:

- Rewording/omission
- Addition/ Over-wording
- Alternation (Synonymy, Hyponymy, antonym)
- Euphemism
- formal vs. informal words
- Positive expressive value vs. negative expressive values of words
- Metaphorical representation

4.3. Theoretical Framework

This research is a descriptive one conducted in the form of "case study". It discusses idiom translation in dialogues both in English and Persian languages, on the basis of Toury’s (1995) coupled-pairs model. Toury (1995) calls for the development of a properly systematic descriptive branch of the discipline to replace isolated free-standing studies that are commonplace and proposes a methodology for the branch of descriptive translation studies (DTS). He recommends the following three-phase methodology, incorporating a description of the product and the wider role of the sociocultural system:

Situate the text within the target culture system, looking at its significance or acceptability.

Compare the ST and the TT for shifts, identifying relationships between coupled pairs of ST and TT segments, and attempting generalizations about the underlying concept of translation.

Draw implications for decision making in future translating.

4.4. Data Collection

It is carried out manually according to the following steps:

- Reading the English text with its three mentioned renderings, thoroughly.
- Then, adapting the 90 challengeable dialogue items from O’MARA (2007), and comparing and contrasting, based on the original meaning according to oxford idiom dictionary (New Edition, 2010).
- The next step is determination of the translators' strategies by using the study criteria proposed by Fairclough at vocabulary level: experiential, relational, and expressive values.
• Collected data are presented in tables and charts, being evaluated with the help of Microsoft Office Excel Program and the final results are analyzed to determine the frequency of any strategy applied by translators to discuss about their reason in different eras.

4.5. Data Analysis and the Findings

To address the research objectives, all the extracted idioms were analyzed and presented in tables. The results related to the type of strategies being used as well. Further discussion on the frequency of the strategies for each era being used by the relevant translator is presented in next table to better illustrate the existing difference. As follow:

Table 4-1: Frequency of using the strategies in three translations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Applied Strategies</th>
<th>Frequency of occurrence in the 1st era</th>
<th>Frequency of occurrence in the 2nd era</th>
<th>Frequency of occurrence in the 3rd era</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experiential value</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Rewording</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>omission</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Addition/Overwording</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Synonymy</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hyponymy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Antonym</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational Value</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Euphemism</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Formal words</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>informal words</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressive Value</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Positive expression</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>negative expression</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Metaphorical representation</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At this stage it is necessary to highlight that the research of the current study consider whether the three studied translators used formal or informal strategy to translate the idiomatic expressions in Persian because of the fact the chosen idiomatic expressions were majorly stated by the author of The Catcher in the Rye in very casual and informal (even slang) context and we tended to observe whether these idiomatic expressions were translated conveying the same meaning or not in Persian over three different eras. It is well agreed that the idioms are referred to as the informal features of the language. Yet, we need to draw a distinction here between formal and informal translations in Persian; in the three translations, the translators used formal language in order to make literal renderings rather than being polite. On the other hand, for the usage of informal words in the Persian translations, it is necessary to highlight that the translators used informal language (not to
imply impoliteness or slang language) but to write in no-literary way. A difference between these sayings is reflected in the examples below:

“It's a funny kind of yellowness... but it's yellowness, all right (p.81)”, as an idiom which means being afraid. In the pre-revolutionary era, it seems translating or composing in a more literal and formal way was more customary as the example number 1 below indicates. Yet, for the post-revolutionary eras, the trend of translation shifted, tending to write as we speak in the streets and this influenced the translation. A similar translation of the same idiom is reflected in example number two below indicating a non-literary and more informal style of writing:

To this end, it seems that the 1st translator used the highest number of frequency for formal words (56 instances) versus 16 and 28 instances for the post-revolutionary eras. As for the informal words, yet, the post-revolutionary translations indicated 74 and 62 instances respectively for the 2nd and 3rd eras, opposing the pre-revolutionary rendering containing 34 instances. This huge difference, which was inspected for all the idioms, shows that in the post-revolutionary eras the authors tend to use more non-literary renderings in order to accord with the society’s interest in using more informal or casual writing style. Figures 4.1 and 4.2 illustrate how using formal and informal writing style differed in different eras. As it is clearly discerned in figure 4.1, the trend for using formal words (more literary) declined significantly over time. On the other hand, figure 4.2 exhibits that informal words being used in the translations after revolution shifted, more in the 2nd era followed by the 3rd era.

![Formal words](image_url)

**Figure 4-1: The trend for formal strategy used by the three translators**
Another interesting finding is related to the type of the strategies being used by the three translators. As stated earlier, Faircough’s (1989) model was discussed at three levels, namely experiential, relational, expressive values) which deal primarily with macro level (above-word level). Figures 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5 demonstrate that in all three translations, the translators used relational values significantly more than the other two types. A formal feature with relational value is a trace of and a cue to the social relationships which are enacted via the text in the discourse. Relational value deals with relations and social relationships (Fairclough, 1989). Within this category, strategies such as euphemism, formal and informal are considered. This implies that the translators mostly used these strategies when translating the text. As for euphemism, or formal and informal words, it could be said in the Iranian culture, the translators are not much allowed to use and translate the slangs or very informal/casual words (as in idioms) into Persian simply because the culture (or in some instances the dominant power) made them employ such strategies to make their translations more euphemistic avoiding to utilize casual, informal, and non-acceptable words.

After relational values, the translators all employed experiential values in the three different eras. It needs to be mentioned that rewording, omission, over-wording, synonymy, hyponymy, and antonym are categorized as experiential values. Fairclough(1989) asserts that a formal feature with experiential value is a trace of and a cue to the way in which the text producer’s experience of the natural or social world. Experiential value deals with contents and knowledge and beliefs. At last, it is observed that the lowest category belongs to expressive values which were similarly used by all the three translators with a very low frequency. Fairclough (1989) maintains that a formal feature with expressive value is a trace of and a cue to the producer’s evaluation of the bit of the reality it relates to. Expressive value is to do with subjects and social identities.
Figure 4-3: Different values used by the first translator

Figure 4-4: Different values used by the second translator
5. Conclusion

The table demonstrates that in all three translations, the translators used relational values significantly more than the other two types. According to the data of this study, it is revealed that in the pre-revolution culture, this translator did not use the slangs or very informal/casual words (as in idioms) into Persian simply because the culture made them employ such strategies to make their translations more euphemistic avoiding to utilize casual, informal, and non-acceptable words. After relational value, it is experiential value; At last, the lowest category belongs to expressive values.

The results of this enquiry also, show that in Iran, by having considered the frequency of the strategies being used by each translator over diverse eras studied in the present research, it is concluded that the first translator (belonging to the pre-revolutionary era) had higher tendency in using culture-specific items (CSI) of the source text. An evidence to support this claim is the type of strategies he used. For example, the translator of the pre-revolutionary era infrequently used omission while he employed negative expressions to reflect what exactly happened in the story as *The Cather in the Rye* is per se such dark and negative story narrating the boy’s complexity, etc. Contrariwise, the translators in the post-revolutionary eras (second and third) tended to be interested in using culture-specific items (CSI) of the target text of their specific eras. These translators used a lot of omission strategies as well as euphemism and positive expression of the words. As it is ultimately observed, the translators manifested less faithfulness to the source text as the time passes.

5.1 Applications and Implications
One possible implication of the findings here is for translators training courses as well as literary translation courses at the universities. Literary translation is one of major courses that the students have to pass and the vibrant nature of this field will become more attractive for the students when they are aware of the most common strategies being in the contemporary era comparing them to the previous eras. This will most probably encourage them to begin translating such books with further awareness of the strategies being introduced here as the most common ones in each unique era. Also For literary translators it provides some insights into cultural factors in order to choose the appropriate translation strategies.

5.2 Suggestions for Further Research
Considering the model recommended by Fairclough, the present study dealt with Vocabulary which was related to idiomatic expressions. Yet, Fairclough’s model (1989) proposed other levels such as Grammar and Textual Structure; therefore, it is recommended to explore studies at those two levels.

References

London: Routledge.
Nopper,A.(2010).Thetranslationofyouthlanguage:AcomparisonofDutchtranslationofthecatcherinthe


