

In the Name of God



University of Birjand
Faculty of Literature and the Humanities
English Department

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment for the Requirements of the Degree of Master
of Arts in English Translation at University of Birjand

**A Study of Translation of Slang in the Novel *The Catcher in
the Rye* by J. D. Salinger**

Supervisor:
Dr. Hassan Emami

Advisor:
Mr. Javad Zangouei

By:
Nasrin Zilaie

September 2013



دانشگاه بیرجند
دانشکده ادبیات و علوم انسانی
گروه زبان انگلیسی

پایان نامه جهت اخذ درجه کارشناسی ارشد در رشته مترجمی زبان انگلیسی

بررسی ترجمه زبان عامیانه در رمان *ناتور دشت* اثر جی. دی. سالیانجر

استاد راهنما:

دکتر حسن امامی

استاد مشاور:

آقای جواد زنگوئی

نگارنده:

نسرتین زیلایی

شهریور ۱۳۹۲

To My Family

Especially My Dear Mother and Sister

Acknowledgement

Foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Hassan Emami for his continuous support of my MA study and research, for his patience, motivation, enthusiasm, and for his immense knowledge. His guidance helped me during my research for writing this thesis.

Besides my supervisor, I would like to especially thank my respected advisor Mr. Javad Zangouei whose valuable suggestions shed light on my path.

My sincere thanks also go to my professors in English Department: Dr. Ali Alizadeh, Dr. Mohammad Hossein Ghoreishi, Dr. Jalil Allah Faroughi, and Dr. Mohsen Mobaraki for all I learned – moral and scientific– from them in two recent years.

Abstract

Slang is one of the most controversial lingual concepts, especially in the area of contemporary fiction, and consists of informal words and phrases that are more commonly used in speech. It is also a phenomenon related to several cultural, social and lingual variables and practical functions of language. So it is difficult to recreate slang in translation because cultural, social, linguistic, and even moral aspects should be considered. Since slang is the language of people of society, and most of literary works especially contemporary ones depict society and ordinary people and slang is evident in them, studying how to translate and the strategies to translate the slang become necessary. So in this research, slang Mohammad Najafi's translation of *The Catcher in the Rye* is studied based on Nida's Dynamic Equivalence. According to this theory, the effect of the source text on the source readers should be equivalent to the effect of target text on target readers and also it should be natural for target readers. In this research, the strategies applied by the translator to achieve Dynamic Equivalence are also studied. Based on the findings of this research, Mohammad Najafi has used most of appropriate strategies to translate slang words and phrases, has observed Dynamic Equivalence in using strategies, and while being faithful to the source text, he has recreated slag for the readers of target language naturally.

Key Words: Slang, Dynamic Equivalence, Nida, *The Catcher in the Rye*, Mohammad Najafi.

Table of Content

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Overview	2
1.2 Statement of the Problem.....	5
1.3 Significance and Novelty of the study	6
1.4 Objectives of Research.....	7
1.5 Research Questions	8
1.6 Research Hypotheses.....	9
1.7 Review of Literature on Slang Translation.....	9
1.8 Review of Literature on Dynamic Equivalence.....	12
1.9 Methodology.....	16
CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	27
2.1 OVERVIEW	22
2.2 LEXICAL COMPLEXITY	22
2.3 DYNAMIC EQUIVALENCE	33
2.3.1 The Nature of Translation	35
2.3.2 A Natural Equivalent.....	35
2.3.3 The Closet Equivalent	36
2.3.4 The Significance of Style	36
2.3.5 The Priority of Dynamic Equivalence over Formal Equivalence	38
2.3.6 Formal Correspondence	40
2.3.7 The Priority of Dynamic Equivalence over Formal Correspondence.....	42
2.3.8 Details of Theory	42
CHAPTER THREE: J.D. SALINGER AND <i>THE CATCHER IN THE RYE</i> ..	49

3.1 Overview	50
3.2 Jerome David Salinger	50
3.3 <i>The Cather in the Rye</i>	53
3.4 The Summary of the Novel.....	58
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS.....	63
4.1 Overview	64
4.2 Softening	66
4.3. Condensation	71
4.4. Literal Translation	72
4.5. Rendering Slang to Slang.....	75
4.6. Cultural Substitution.....	85
4.7. Compensation	86
4.8. Omission.....	91
4.9. Rendering Slang to Standard Translation.....	91
4.10 Expansion.....	94
4.11 Translating Non-Slang by Slang.....	96
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION.....	103
5.1. Overview	104
5.2 Discussions and Results	104
5.2.1 Softening	105
5.2.2 Condensation.....	105
5.2.3 Literal Translation	105
5.2.4 Rendering Slang to Slang.....	106
5.2.5 Cultural Substitution.....	106
5.2.6 Compensation.....	106
5.2.7 Omission.....	107
5.2.8 Expansion.....	107

5.2.9 Rendering Slang to Standard Translation.....	107
5.3 Table of the Results of Analyses.....	107
5.4 Final Conclusion.....	108
References	110

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Overview

Slang is one of the most controversial lingual concepts. Slang is a phenomenon which is related to several cultural, social, and lingual variants and practical functions of language. It consists of informal words and phrases used more in speaking. Translation of slang is difficult because cultural, social, lingual, and even moral aspects have to be considered.

People use the language and understand their own environment. Sometimes, there are some words or phrases in their language that they use in their daily life which cannot be understood by other people. There are particular terms in this type of language which are used in their own environment and are only understood by the members of the community in question. Generally, the term is well known as a nonstandard language named slang (Adams, 2009: 48). Hornby (2000) states that slang as very informal words and expression that are more common in spoken language, and are used for some particular purposes. Slang sometimes is used to distinguish the people from another. Teenagers use slang to create identity in order to be different from adults, and Afro-American people use slang to distinguish them from white people. But nowadays, all people generally use slang in every part of their daily life.

Slang is a language that speakers use to show their belonging to a group and establish solidarity and intimacy with other group members. It is often used by speakers to create their own identity, including aspects such as social status and geographical belonging, or even age, education, occupation, lifestyle and special interests. It is largely used by people of a common age and experience (like

teenagers and college students) to strengthen the bonds within their own peer group, keeping the older generation at distance (Eble, 1999: 88).

Most people explain slang as the inappropriate language or the language of streets. Swan notes: "Slang is a word, expression, or special use of language found mainly in very informal speech, especially in the usage of particular groups of people. For example *nick= prison; whitey= men*" (Swan, 1996: 22). Furthermore, Fairclough (1986) claims that the characteristics of slang words are not Standard English so that you will not find them in a Standard English Dictionary. He also adds that there is another characteristic of slang words, some slang words are detectable in any dictionary but their meanings do not match with the literal meanings because it depends on the context. For example *coke* which is literally means coral or coca cola but in a gangster movie it can be translated as cocaine.

Willis (1964) identifies six reasons why slang words are used by people: First, it can make differences. Second, it can display one's membership of a group or club. Third, it can be secretive for others. Fourth, it can enrich the stack of language. Fifth, it can establish a friendly relationship with others. Last, it can be irreverent or humorous.

The function of identification with a group and the effect of creativity are particularly evident in college and teenage slang (Mattiello, 2005: 24). Young people generally use creative innovative slang to show their belonging to a group and establish solidarity with the other group members, keeping the older generation at a

distance. Criminals generally use slang to hide secret information from people in authority, while drug addicts adopt the slang vocabulary to reinforce their group cohesion, i.e. to keep insiders together and outsiders out.

It is also used by people sharing the same occupation (like military men and computer users) to increase efficiency in communication; or by those sharing the same living condition (like prisoners and criminals) to hide secret information from people in authority. It is finally used by people sharing an attitude or a lifestyle (like drug addicts and homosexuals) to reinforce their group cohesiveness, keeping insiders together and outsiders out. Items like *ace* (excellent), *chick* (a girl), and *cool* (great, okay) can be considered specific slang words, as they are related to teenagers and college students and hardly understood by adults, and *grass* (marijuana), *rock* (cocaine), *solid* (hashish) and *caff* (a café) have different meaning in standard language.

In the world of translation studies, research into the translation of slang seems somewhat limited. The reason may be that slang is largely considered a colloquial phenomenon which reduces the genres of communication in which it can appear.

According to Fawcett, translating slang is an enormously difficult task due to the fact that not only does the translator need to know the slang, They also need to find out if the target language holds any concept that is similar to the slang term used in the ST. (Fawcett, 1997: 118).

Slang is also used in literary works. Patridge (1937) comments that the reason why non-standard language such as slang words may

be used by an author is simply to make characters speak in a more realistic way. Schjoldager (2008) states that translating slang words is not a simple task. Even though the skilled translator has understood the original of the source text, the cultural background, and the social level, the problem of translation still remains of how to reproduce the different varieties of source language and how to transfer them to another language. Thus, some strategies of translation in order to overcome these issues are required.

In order to achieve the equivalence in translating slang words and phrases, translators face several matters which not only deal with the equivalence of the form in text, but also with some problems. There will be a lot of different words, phrases, and etc. that do not have very similar meanings in target language because of varieties of language communities. One of the varieties of language community is slang. In some films or novels, the author use slang words which cannot be recognized by the reader of target language (Baker, 1992: 103).

Translation of slang is one of the most controversial translation issues because it relates to culture, society, language and even morality. There are no certain rules as how to translate slang words and expressions. Therefore, it is the translator who has to set priorities and choose the most suitable translation strategies.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

As mentioned in overview, slang is a relatively complicated phenomenon so its translation also would be difficult and

complicated. It is obvious that when dealing with slang, one of the most difficult and challenging problems is not that of understanding it but that of translating it into a different language, and culture. Mattiello indicates that most difficulties arise because this action cross-linguistically requires a lot of effort to find similar modes of expression and cross-culturally demand for parallel social sets (Mattiello, 2007: 65). R. Stolt adds that problems in slang translation arise because slang never occurs in simple or denotative meanings (Stolt, 2010: 8). L. Drozde and G. Vogule support the idea indicating that translation of slang and taboo words is a difficult task because both linguistic and ethical aspects should be observed (Drozde, Vogule, 2008: 107). However, the main task of the translator in rendering slang words and phrases is to create an equivalent text in the target language remaining invisible but at the same time being responsible for the translation (ibid: 1).

According to above explanations, we conclude that finding equivalence for slang words and phrases in translation will be a controversial and difficult matter. The common problems of non-equivalence at this level are stuck at culture-specific concepts, the source language concept is not lexicalized in the target language, the complexity of source language word, social and moral issues and etc.

1.3 Significance and Novelty of the study

Due to the fact that slang is also a language of society and a considerable number of literary works specially contemporary works portray ordinary people in whose speech slang is evident,

study of translation theories and strategies of slang seems essential and significant. The researcher of this thesis has chosen this subject because slang is something in a conversation or similar communicative situation that most people easily recognize as soon as it is uttered, but explaining and defining what slang is and how it functions is an entirely different matter. Consequently, it is interesting to research the use of slang in order to determine if there are any difficulties in transferring slang from one language to another. Study of contemporary slang has not been a common and usual subject in theses and books in Translation Studies. This research can help people who walk in the line of translating and Translation Studies by presenting guidelines for successful translation.

1.4 Objectives of the Research

The aim of the thesis is to reveal the effect of translation strategies employed by Mohammad Najafi in the translation of J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* and evaluate the success of his translation in accordance with E. A. Nida's theory of dynamic equivalence. Characteristics of slang and E. A. Nida's theory of dynamic equivalence in translation, with the main stress laid on slang translation will be discussed in this thesis.

In order to achieve the aims the following objectives have been set:

- to introduce the peculiarities of slang and discuss E. A. Nida's theory of dynamic equivalence in translation, with the main stress being laid on slang translation

- to analyze the strategies which were used in translating slang words and phrases in the novel *The Catcher in the Rye*;

- to group the examples of slang translation according to the translation strategies applied by the translator

- to evaluate the success of the Persian translation of *The Catcher in the Rye* in accordance to E. A. Nida's theory of dynamic equivalence.

1.5 Research Questions

In this study, this thesis is an attempt to answer the following questions:

1. How was translator's performance in presenting the strategies of slang translation based on Nida's dynamic equivalence theory?

2. What strategies did the translator apply in translating slang words and phrases of the novel *The Catcher in the Rye*?

3. How much did the translator of *The Catcher in the Rye* succeed in translation slang words and phrases based on used strategies?

1.6 Research Hypotheses

The present study will investigate into the following hypotheses:

1. Translator observed Nida's dynamic equivalence theory in using strategies of slang translation.
2. Translator applied softening, condensation, literal translation, rendering slang to slang, cultural substitution, compensation, omission, expansion, rendering slang to standard translation strategies in translating slang words and phrases of the novel *The Catcher in the Rye*.
3. Translator succeeded in applying translation strategies used in translating slang words and phrases of the novel *The Catcher in the Rye*.

1.7. Review of Literature on Slang Translation

Mads Holmsgaard's thesis entitled "Translating the Use of Slang" is a study of microstrategies in subtitling with a view to researching the transfer of the use of slang from source text to target text with the movie "I Love You, Man" as an empirical example. It includes a study of the function of slang. This thesis researches how slang is transferred from a source text dialogue into a target text subtitle with the American movie "I Love You, Man" as the data material, with a view to seeing whether the use of slang in the source text is maintained in the target text. The thesis starts by defining the function of slang. According to the research of Adams, Eble and Dumas & Lighter, it is determined that slang is used with special

goals: to form groups, to rebel against standard language, and to suggest informal settings. Introducing the theory of register, a scale of formality emerges in order to show different settings in which communication takes place. On the basis of the information presented, it is asserted that slang belongs on the informal register. Slang words are presented and the difference between standard language and slang is discussed. Users of slang are introduced in order to show the people attributed to it, and it is asserted that slang cannot solely be attributed to specific demographic groups. Finally, it is determined that the function of slang is to establish group relations and identity, to separate one group of people from another, to rebel against standard language through the use of terms that are not defined in standard language, to lead a conversation towards informality, to suggest 'insider-knowledge' with the people listeners and to show the speaker's attitude (Erikson: 2010).

Another thesis about translation of slang is by Eleanor Glewwe from Swarthmore College: "Translating French Slang: A Study of Four French Novels and Their English Translations". This thesis examines the translation of French slang and nonstandard French forms into English. This topic is investigated through a study of four contemporary French novels and their English translations. The present thesis uses the idea of preserving lexical complexity in slang translation from Mattiello (2007) to measure the relative successfulness of different practices for translating slang. Results of Glewwe's study show that a substantial proportion of the slang in the French novels is translated into Standard English. Consequently, the English versions exhibit lower slang density than the original

French works do. While the loss of slang register in translation appears to be inevitable in some cases, it also occurs in situations where it is demonstrably avoidable. The translators occasionally use the practice of compensation, whereby standard language is translated into slang to compensate for places where slang is translated into standard language. In the four novels examined, however, the use of compensation is not sufficient to offset the sharp reduction in slang density from French to English. From this study, it seems that English translations are consistently less slang-rich than the original French texts from which they are derived (Glewwe, 2012: 1).

"Military Jargon and Slang, Translation in Film" is a thesis on translation of slang by Tomasz Pajzderski. According to this thesis, military jargon and slang is a very specific language that requires a great deal of effort and involvement to get to know well. This thesis deals only with American military jargon and slang (especially jargon used by US Marines and infantry soldiers from the US Army) and its realization in Polish. It aims at presenting the complexity of the vernacular as well as the obstacles that a translator encounters while dealing with it. Not only does it present possible difficulties but also suggests ways of solving such problems and gives tips for translating military jargon and slang, especially in war films.

The topic of general features of military jargon and slang was addressed. Then the focus narrowed down to the jargon in war movies and their translation. The two main chapters of the thesis present an analysis of translation of some of the most popular war movies available: *American Soldiers: A Day in Iraq*, *Saving Private*