In the Name of God

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M.A. Thesis

A Study of the Translation Strategies Applied for Translation of Culture-bound Terms in the Three Persian Renderings of
Death of a Salesman

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September 2010

پایان نامه کارشناسی ارشد رشته مترجمی زبان انگلیسی

خانم فروغ صیادی

تحت عنوان

بررسی راهکارهای ترجمه واژه‌های فرهنگ محور در سه ترجمه فارسی نمایشنامه
"مرگ یک فروشنده"

در تاریخ ۱۳۸۹/۶/۲۷ توسط هیأت داوران زیر بررسی و با درجه بسیارخوب به تصویب نهایی رسید.

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امضای مدیر گروه

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Helen Oliyaee Nia, for her valuable advice in all stages of this research. Further, I wish to express my gratitude to my advisor, Dr. Hossein Vahid Dastjerdi for his insightful reading of my thesis. I would also like to thank Dr. Hossein Pirnajmuddin for his kind encouragement and assistance for carrying out this thesis. Finally, my heartfelt thanks should be dedicated to my family, specially my mother, whose encouragement and patience made the completion of this thesis possible.

Forough Sayyadi

September, 2010

With Lots of Respect Dedicated to

My Father and My Mother

Abstract

The present study is an attempt to investigate the applied strategies for translating culture-bound terms in the three Persian renderings of *Death of a Salesman.* When the literary translators encounter untranslatable words or lexical gaps, they use strategies to fill up the gaps. Thus, the recognition of the applied strategies is very important for translators. In this study, *Death of a Salesman* and its three Persian translations were compared with each other. All the culture-bound terms and expressions were identified after comparing the three renderings and the applied strategies were found. The models proposed by Vinay & Darbelent (2001) and Mona Baker (1992) for recognizing strategies were chosen. The findings of the study revealed that there are different strategies used for the transference of cultural terms. It also showed that 'equivalence' strategy turned out to be the most frequent one and the most proper way of translating culture-bound terms, with a frequency application of around 20.65%. Moreover, regarding the date of publications of translations, the findings revealed that in the past 'borrowing' and 'modulation' strategies were used more often than the present time. Also, in older translations rare or obsolete words were used more frequently. Therefore, this study could be applied to translator training and affects the quality of translation.

Keywords: Culture-bound terms, translatability, untranslatability, cultural untranslatability, translation strategy.

Table of Contents

Title	Page

Chapter Three: Methodology

Chapter Four: Data Analysis and Results

Title	Page

List of Tables

Title   **Page**

d

List of Figures

List of Abbreviations

CSCs: Culture Specific Concepts

CSIs: Culture Specific Items

SL: Source Language

ST: Source Text

TL: Target Language

TT: Target Text

Chapter One
Introduction

1.1. Overview

This chapter begins with the definition of translation considering the culture. Then, the statement of the problem followed by the research questions and the significance of the study will be included. Finally, the keywords will be defined.

1.2. Introduction

"Translation is a two-way process: from one culture to the others; and from other cultures into one's culture. In other words, there is a give and take process" (Miremadi, 1993:23). The world non-linguistic factors constantly affect human beings and they in turn, react to those stimuli through both physical and verbal sentiments. In order human beings to react to these stimuli, they need referential words to denote objects and concepts. If concepts are not identical, then they cannot substitute each other in even two dialects of the same language. No two cultures see an identical object in the same way; thus they are actually certain words in every language that correspond imperfectly to the words of other languages.

One of the most difficult problems a translator confronts is how to find lexical equivalents for objects and events which are alien in the receptor language. The translator has to consider both the languages and the cultures, because sometimes due to the differences of cultures and even of geography, of customs, of beliefs and of worldviews, s/he may not find lexical equivalents in the target language (Larson, 1984:163).

Different languages employ words or expressions which represent concepts that cannot be found in other speech communities. Even if close equivalents are found, they can rarely reveal and convey the messages. When the concept to be translated refers to something which is not known in the receptor culture, then the translator's task becomes more difficult. This phenomenon is called lexical gap or semantic void. Lexical gap is of two types.

1. In some cultures, people distinguish among different aspects of a concept for instance, the Arabs use different words to identify different

kinds of camels but people in other regions do not need such distinctions and they use one generic word for all these different aspects.

2. In some societies, a certain concept may not have an equivalent. For example, people in some parts of the world have not seen snow and hence do not have any word to convey the concept.

1.3. Statement of the Problem

When there is cultural focus, there is translation problem due to the cultural gap or distance between the SL and TL. Regarding the translation problems, M.Snell-hornby says:

> The problems do not depend on the source text (ST) itself, but on the significance of the translated text for its regards as members of a certain culture, or of a sub-group within the constellation of knowledge, judgment, perception they have developed from it. (Snell-Hornby, 1988:42)

Every translator is faced with the problem of finding adequate equivalents for the language specific words; therefore, s/he searches for strategies to cope with those problems and aims at finding a way to express the important component of the cultural bounds. For practical purposes, translation can be defined as finding a synonymous expression in another language. Therefore, the task of a translator is to get a message from the given form of words in one language and then to re-express the content of the message in a different form of words belonging to another language.

This study searched for cultural specific concepts (CSCs) and the strategies used by each translator. This research approached translation phenomenon regarding lapse of time interval in translation and culture-bound terms and expressions and cultural point of view.

1.4. Research Questions

1- What strategies have the translators used in filling the lexical gaps in the three Persian translations of *Death of a Salesman*?

2- Has the semantic transference of culture-bound terms and expressions been achieved in the three Persian translations of *Death of a Salesman*?

3- Does lapse of time have any effects on the choice of strategies in the three translations of *Death of a Salesman*?

1.5. Significance of the study

Apparently translation is not seen as a problematic form of cross-cultural communication, perhaps because the professional translator already knows how to get along with foreign culture, but novice translators should be aware of cultural differences and their significance for translation. This study intends to investigate how translators deal with lexical gap or semantic void in literary translation. Although similar studies have been performed regarding translation of individual works, more extensive studies on various texts and their cultural aspects will reveal the difficulties and the appropriate strategies which can be opted for handling such difficulties; thus, numerous translators who do translate literary texts, but who are not experienced or mature enough in this respect, may benefit from the findings of this study. Moreover, in this study one of the main research questions is the impact of the often ignored factor of lapse of time on the translations of the work under study.

1.6. Definition of Key terms

Culture-specific items: "Concepts in any language that are unique to that language or to the culture associated with that language" (Schwars,

2003:14).

Translatability: "The capacity for some kind of meaning to be transferred from one language to another without undergoing radical changes" (Anthony Pym and Hoost Turki, 1984).

Linguistic untranslatability: "It occurs when there is no lexical or syntactical item suitable in the TL for a SL item" (Catford, 1965:32).

Cultural untranslatability: "It is due to the absence in the TL culture of a relevant situational feature for the source text" (Catford, 1965:32).

Translation strategy: "A potentially conscious procedure for solving a problem faced in translating a text or any segment of it" (Loescher, 1991:81).

Chapter Two
Literature Review

2.1. Language and Culture

A language perfectly interprets the lifestyle or activity practiced in every unique culture. In the broad sense, language is the symbolic representation of a people and comprises their cultural background as well as their ways of living and thinking. Language and its cultural influence are exemplified in the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which states that language is a guide to a social reality. This hypothesis implies that language is not simply a means of reporting experience but it is a way of defining (Steiner, 1998:91).

What is culture? Culture is a term that specialists in cultural studies try to avoid. The reason for such caution is that culture can mean almost anything. But according to social scientists, culture consists of shared ideas and concepts (beliefs, values, norms, and goals) and material possessions of a society that are passed on from one generation to the next. They maintain that it includes the whole way of life of the members of a society: how they

dress, their habits and customs, family of life, their pattern of work, religious ceremonies, leisure pursuits and so forth. In other words, culture refers to the entire way of life of a society. What is more, "culture is like an iceberg with a big part of its real substance hidden in the sea. Culture hides much more than it reveals."[1]

There are three levels of culture that are part of learned behavior patterns and perceptions:

Cultural traditions: the body of cultural traditions that distinguish a specific society.

Sub-cultural traits: common identity, food traditions, dialects or language, and other cultural traits that come from a common ancestral background and experience.

Cultural-universals: learned behavior patterns shared by all humanity collectively, no matter where people live in the world.

A very important aspect of participating in a culture is being able to speak its language; thus, language is a major requirement for understanding or sharing in the life of a culture. Indeed, there is no culture or society in the world which has not developed a kind of language in which to communicate. For some social scientists is part of a culture and plays a very important role in it. They consider it the keystone of culture. But others, such as Newmark, do not regard language as a component or feature of culture. He states (1988:95) "If it were so, translation would be

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[1]http://www.erudit.org/revue/meta/1999/v44/n4/003808ar.html