The Naturalness in Translation of Idioms and Proverbs: The Case of a Persian Translation of Pinocchio

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ABSTRACT

Despite the extensive research on translation and challenges on translation of figurative language, in particular idioms and proverbs, little is achieved to solve the challenges. The corpus of the study was an English translation of the novel Pinocchio and its Persian translation. The name of the novel is 'The Adventures of Pinocchio'. The aim of this case study was to explore the strategies which were applied for translating idioms and proverbs in the corpus of the study from English to Persian and identify the most frequently used strategies. Therefore, the corpora were examined and a total of 200 idioms and nine proverbs were explored. The data were analyzed to find the most frequent strategies and to see whether the translation of idioms and proverbs was idiomatic and natural. The findings reveals that translation by paraphrasing at 86% and replacing proverb with an equivalent local proverb at 66.66% were applied in translation of idioms and proverbs respectively. It also shows that the translator translated the idioms and proverbs in an idiomatic and natural way.

Keywords: Culture Specific Items, Idiom, Naturalness, Proverb

Introduction

Language is a social phenomenon and each language has its own culture. To some extent, language and culture improve at the same time in a society. So, sometimes there are some cultural items that are improved in a language but they do not exist in another. This is the sophisticated phase of a language for rendering the culture specific items.

Idioms and proverbs are embedded in the culture of a language. Their roots are in culture, customs, history, religion, local conditions, cultural background, and even geography of a nation. Sometimes native speakers of a language get across their messages through using idioms and proverbs in their sayings. Like this, the speaker may utter idioms and proverbs as short sentences which have a profound meaning. Thus, you cannot understand idioms and proverbs correctly without the help of the cultural knowledge of the language.

According to Baker (1992: 63-65) idioms, fixed expressions and proverbs "are frozen patterns of language which allow little or no variation in form and, in the case of idioms, they often carry meanings which cannot be deduced from their individual components Unlike idioms, however, fixed expressions and proverbs often have fairly transparent meanings. The meaning of a proverb can easily be deduced from the meanings of the words which constitute it".

Considering the above, translation of culture specific items such as idioms and proverbs is a

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real challenge. The idioms and proverbs are embedded in the culture of a language. One may not be able to comprehend the cultural items, in particular, idioms and proverbs without knowing the history behind them. Most of the translators encounter troubles during the translation of idioms and proverbs in a ST as they are not familiar with them. Besides that, they even cannot recognize them in the ST. So, they may translate the exiting idioms and proverbs literally which makes their translation inaccurate and unnatural. Even in some cases, they can recognize the idioms and proverbs in the text, but as they do not know the strategies for translation of idioms and proverbs, they prefer to omit them in their translations.

The translator's job is to extract the figurative meaning of idioms and proverbs and to find a parallel expression in the target language. Fortunately, both English and Persian are expressive and rich languages in idioms and proverbs and contain a lot of witty and wise turns of phrases for translators to substitute in their translations.

Idioms and proverbs make the translation come alive and sound more natural as their expressions are meaningful to people in terms of their own lives and behaviors. Khomeijani Farahani (2005) believes that one way of checking the degree of the naturalness of the translated text is examining the translation of idiomatic expressions.

Generally, it is very important that a translator first recognizes the idioms and proverbs in the SL, then, finds the best strategies in the process of translating idioms and proverbs.After that one should do her/his best to translate them, naturally. To achieve these goals, it is necessary to attempt more to teach idioms and proverbs in universities to translation students. This way, the students will get familiar with these expressions and can recognize them in the texts move easily. In addition, doing comparative research on idioms and proverbs can be useful in exploring and identifying the idioms and proverbs translation strategies in the novels.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of the present study is based on strategies which were proposed by Baker (1992) for translating idioms:
- Using an idiom of similar meaning and form
- Using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form
- Paraphrasing, where the expression is often reduced to sense and translation loss occurs
- Omission, if the idiom has no close match and paraphrase is either difficult or results in clumsy style

Regarding translation of proverbs, it is based on Beekman and Callow's (1974) suggestion as follows:
- The words following the proverbs could be introduced as the meaning of the proverb;
- It can be replaced with an equivalent local proverb; and
- Its non-figurative meaning could be stated straightforwardly.

Regarding Naturalness, the study is based on Nida's belief. Naturalness is a key requirement for Nida (1975). He defines the goal of dynamic equivalence as looking for the closest natural equivalent to the source-language message."The receptor–oriented approach considers adaptations of grammar, of lexicon, and of cultural references to be essential in order to achieve naturalness.The TL text should not show interference from the SL, and the 'foreignness' of the ST setting is minimized" (as cited in Munday, 2001).

As Larson (1984) states, idiomatic translations use the natural forms of the receptor language, both in the grammatical structures and in the choice of lexical items. A real idiomatic translation does not seem to be a translation. It is like an original text in the receptor language. Therefore, a good translator does her/his best to translate idiomatically. The aim of an idiomatic translation is to achieve the nearest natural equivalent in the target language to match the ideas of the original text.

Methodology

This study is a corpus-based research and descriptive-comparative one which aims to highlight strategies of translating idioms and proverbs from English to Persian in a novel. Holmes (1972/1988, as cited in Munday, 2001) in his map of translation studies defined descriptive translation studies (DTS) and believed that DTS has three possible branches: product-oriented DTS, process-oriented DTS, and function-oriented DTS. This research is a product-oriented study which is based on an analysis of a corpus to explore existing translation strategies and proce-

dures in TT and compares them with the original ones to see what strategies the translator used to translate idioms and proverbs and whether they were translated idiomatically or literally.

Corpus of the Study

The researcher selected one English translation of the novel 'The Adventures of Pinocchio' and its Persian translation as the corpus of the study. 'The adventures of Pinocchio' is a novel written by Collodi (Pseudonym of Carlo Lorenzini) in 1988. The book was translated from Italian into English by E. Harden. This novel was translated from English to Persian by Rastegar in1994.

Procedure

For collected data, the researchers highlighted the idioms and proverbs in the original texts. Then, the Persian translation of each English idiom and proverb was found from the corpus. In order to compare the English idioms and proverbs with the Persian ones, they were put into two separate tables. Then, the researchers looked for the applied strategies for the translation of idioms and proverbs.

The researchers classified the Persian translations of idioms and proverbs respectively. Then, the frequency and percentage of occurrences of instances within a specific translation strategy were measured. Moreover, the researcher found

out whether the idioms and proverbs were translated idiomatically on the basis of Larson's theory by analyzing the text. The grammatical constructions and the choice of lexical items of the translated text were examined to see whether the natural forms of the Persian language was observed. Consequently, the translated text was read to determine how natural the grammatical constructions of the sentences and the choice of lexicons were and whether the translator used foreign words of ST or minimized them in his translation.

Translation Strategy of Idioms and Proverbs

200 different idioms were found in the corpus. 12 idioms, in other words, 6%, belonged to the first strategy, that is, using an idiom of similar meaning and form, 80 idioms or 40% belonged to the second strategy, that is, using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form, 86 idioms or 43% belonged to the third strategy, that is, translation by paraphrasing and 22 idioms or 11% belonged to the fourth strategy, that is, translation by omission. The following Table and Figure show the total number of occurrences of the applied strategies and their percentages. As it is noticed, the most frequent strategy is the third one which is translation by paraphrasing, (Table 1 and Figure 1)

Table 1: Idioms Translation Strategies

| Strategies	Frequency	Percentage	Examples
Using an idiom of similar meaning and form	12	6	Will you do me a favor یک لطفی به من می کنی
Using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form	80	40.00	Once upon a time یکی بود یکی نبود
Translation by paraphrasing	86	43.00	fell head over heels backward حول شد و دست و پایش را گم کرد
Translation by omission	22	11	you did me a good turn
Total	200	100	
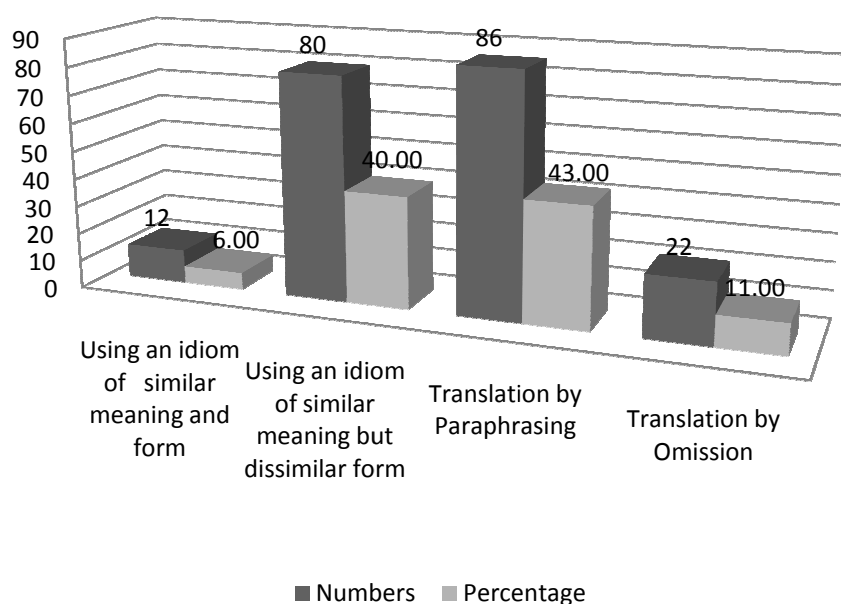
Figure 1: Idioms Translation Strategies

As for the proverbs, 9 proverbs were found in the corpus. Among them, 1 proverb or 11.11% belonged to the first strategy, that is, the words following the proverb could be introduced as the meaning of the proverb, 6 proverbs or 66.66% belonged to the second strategy, that is, it can be replaced with an equivalent local proverb, and 2 proverbs, 22.22%, belonged to the third strategy, that is, its non-figurative meaning could be stated straightforwardly. The following Table and Figure show the total number of occurrence of the applied strategies for translating proverbs and their percentages. As it is observed, the most frequent strategy is the second one which is replacing with an equivalent local proverb, (Table 2 and Figure 2).

Table 2:Proverb Translation Strategies

| Strategies	Frequency	Percentage	Examples
The words following the proverb could be introduced as the meaning of the proverb.	1	11.11	They gave each other a sound thrashing. کارزار دوم، خونین تر از کارزار اول، آغاز گشت
It can be replaced with an equivalent local proverb.	6	66.66	Bad wheat always makes poor bread. هر که نان از عمل خویش ! خورد، منت از حاتم طایی نبرد'
Its non-figurative meaning could be stated straightforwardly	2	22.22	Hunger is the best sauce. آشپزی بهتر از گرسنگی پیدا نمی شود
Total	9	100	
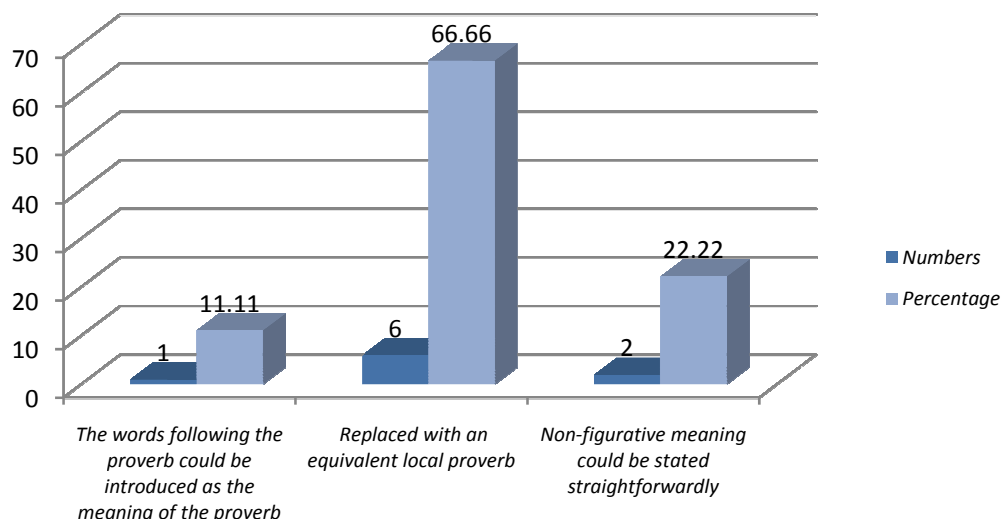
Figure2: Proverb Translation Strategies

Idiomatic Translation of Idioms and Proverbs

The translator of the corpus attempted not only to translate the idioms and proverbs but also the whole text idiomatically. He used the natural forms of the Persian language both in the grammatical constructions and in the choice of lexical items thoroughly. He even applied the Persian currency, measure and figures in his translation instead of the existing ones in the SL. For example پنج شاهی، پنج اشرفی، دو مثقال، گلباجی، شمر، کاکا سیاه و پهلوان کچل which made the translation not to seem as translation. It looked like an original one.

Naturalness of the Translation of Idioms and Proverbs

As discussed in the above section, the translator translated the whole text idiomatically. So, it shows that the translation is also natural since one of the factors for idiomatic translation was natural translation of the text.The idioms and proverbs were translated naturally as well.

The translator considered the receptor–oriented approach thoroughly in his translation. It does not seem to be a translation. The translator used a lot of casual words, colloquialisms, and collocations or idioms.

He even applied a lot of Persian idioms and proverbs which do not exist in the original text, or are used in place of simple sentences of the TT. For instance خر و بیارو دردسر بارکن، بیا و تماشا کن، چه خاکی به سرم بریزم، سلانه سلانه می رفت، نه راه پس دارد و نه راه پیش، بی برو برگرد، چشمتان روز بد نبینه، دور از جان، درب و داغان، شق و رق، شر و شور، مات و

مبهوت، دستش بگرفت و پا به پا برد تا شیوه راه رفتن آموخت، جل الخالق He adapted the translated text with Persian grammar and lexicon. He also used cultural references in his translation to achieve naturalness. Like منارجنبان،شمر، حضرت فیل، گل باجی، کاکا سیاه which are Persian cultural references and figures.

The translated text did not show any interference from the SL. He minimized the foreignness of the ST setting. As mentioned above, he even used the Persian currency and measures to avoid using the foreign words like پنج شاهی، هزار اشرفی، پنج اشرفی، فرسخ، دو مثقال. Considering the above mentioned issues, once the whole translation is natural, the researchers determined that translation equivalence of the idioms and proverbs are natural as well.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to analyze the translation of idioms collected from the corpus 'The Adventures of Pinocchio' (1988). The analysis has shown that the translator in translating idioms applied four strategies in the translation of idioms. 1. He used idioms of similar meanings and forms. 2. He used idioms of similar meanings but dissimilar forms. 3. He translated idioms by paraphrasing, and. 4. He translated idioms by omission. The results revealed that the translator translated idioms using the third strategy, more than other strategies. That is out of the 200 samples collected, 86 or 43.00% examples belonged to this strategy. He used the second strategy for 80 ex-

amples or 40.00% of the cases and translated them based on this strategy Thirdly, he applied the fourth strategy for 22 or 11% of cases, i.e. they were omitted and fourthly, he used the fifth strategy for 12 examples or 6% which were exactly translated by using idioms of similar meaning and form.

For the translation of proverbs, the translator used three strategies 1. The words following the proverb could be introduced as the meaning of the proverb; 2. It could be replaced with an equivalent local proverb, and; 3. Its non-figurative meaning could be stated straightforwardly. Out of the 9 examples collected, 1 or 11.11% was translated based on the first strategy, 6 or 66.66% examples were translated based on the second strategy and 2 example or 22.22% were translated based on the third strategy.

It can be concluded that, the ideal strategy for translating an idiom for the translator was the third strategy that is Translation by paraphrasing. For translating proverbs, he used the second strategy which is replacement of the proverb with an equivalent local proverb.

In addition to these strategies, it was found that the translator translated the idioms and proverbs based on the context and without paying attention to the meaning of the idioms in order to just preserve the naturalness.

The above mentioned strategy helped the translator to produce more natural translation of idioms and proverbs. Adoption of this strategy could preserve the naturalness of the text, and showed that not only is the translation of idioms and proverbs idiomatic but also the whole text is idiomatic.

The analysis of the translation of idioms in the corpus has shown that translating idioms from the novel required a lot of knowledge about idioms. On the whole, the use of different strategies in translation of idioms in literary translation illustrates the diverse ways of treatment of this interesting, peculiar and difficult part of language. This means that applying the best strategies for the translation of idioms and proverbs needs careful consideration. Moreover, idioms express the uniqueness of the language and culture in which they are originated. Therefore, translators need deep knowledge of the source and target languages and cultures.

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