

**Application of Cultural Filter in Idiomatic Translation:
Case of English Translation of Moradi Kermani's *Carpet-Weaving
Factory Children***

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Received:21 July 2015 Accepted:25 May 2016

Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

The present paper aims to provide a critical analysis of how cultural filter has been applied in Chris Lear's and Soheila Sahabi's (2000) English translation of Houshang Moradi Kermani's *Bacheha-ye Qalibafkhaneh* [Carpet-Weaving Factory Children] (1980/2011) with a particular view to the short story "Razou, Asadou and Khajijeh". The paper focuses more specifically on the rendering of "idioms" as a typical example of culture-specificity in translation.

Houshang Moradi Kermani's *Bacheha-ye Qalibafkhaneh* [Carpet-Weaving Factory Children] seems to be the best candidate for testing translation criticism models due to the variety of discourse registers employed in it and the cultural diversity of the Iranian rural and traditional environments reflected in the book as well as frequent uses of elements derived from pre-modern Iranian religious and traditional norms. Moradi Kermani is among a limited number of Iranian writers whose works have internationally been received and welcomed. He was first introduced to the global literary world through the English translation of *Bacheha-ye Qalibafkhaneh* and ever since, he managed to receive a large variety of international awards for different works including the above-mentioned book. Therefore, it will be an appropriate question to ask whether or not the involved translators have relatively managed to recreate in the target text, the contextual, native and cultural characteristics of *Bacheha-ye Qalibafkhaneh*, and more specifically, the short story "Razou, Asadou, Khajijeh". If yes, *how*; if not, *why*. The paper, however, confines itself to the translation of only one particular type of cultural-specificity, namely, idioms, since the style employed by the author has been highly "idiomatic" in nature.

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2. Methodology

Khanjan's Critical Translation Analysis (CTA) Model (2012, 2013), which draws, on its own right, on Michael Halliday's Systemic-Functional Linguistics (SFL) (1994, 2004), has been adopted as the research analytical framework. CTA addresses both endogenous (intra-textual) and exogenous (social and extra-textual) parameters involved in translation and, in so doing, it takes heed, at the same time, of both the product and the process of translation. Given the two CTA underlying assumptions of "translation as re-contextualization" and "translating as filtering", the present paper aims to show how appropriate have been the translators' applications of cultural filter to target contextual requirements.

3. Discussion

An episode by episode analysis of the source and target texts in question indicates that Lear and Sahabi have resorted to some four general strategies in rendering the source idiomatic expressions, including: 1) omission, 2) cultural filtering through equivalent finding, 3) cultural filtering through equivalent making, and 4) literal transference of the source idioms to the target system. The first strategy has been employed in cases where the translators have not been able to adopt the second or the third strategies; the second strategy has been used in cases where there have been natural (or bidirectional) target equivalent counterparts available to the translators; the third strategy, however, has been employed in the absence of such natural equivalents where the translators have been obliged to replace the semantic and pragmatic aspects of the source idioms by some descriptive (directional) equivalents; and finally, the last strategy used by the translators has been the transference of the idioms in which a literal translation of the source idiom has been provided wherever the translators have thought that a literal reproduction of idioms with less semantic opacity could possibly result in a more or less similar function.

A statistic description of the results obtained shows that in some 50 percent of cases (i.e., 49.29%), the strategy of equivalent making has been used whereas equivalent finding (with 30.36%), omission (with 10.71%) and transference (with 9.64%) have respectively ranked lower. This finding is consistent with the findings already reported by Baker (1992), Zeinali (2011), and Alavi and Zeinali (2014) among the most relevant research works.

A brief comparison of the source and target texts under discussion will immediately show that the target text is significantly longer than the source. This finding that is consistent with one of the well-known translation universals indicating that translation tends to be longer than the original (see, for example, Pym, 2014) may probably be attributed to the higher frequency of the strategy of equivalent making dealing with some (typically longer) descriptions of the semantic/pragmatic content of the idioms. The implication of such a finding is that it can be assumed that cultural equivalent finding may contribute to the briefness of translation whereas equivalent making may result in the length of the text.

Another point worth mentioning is that idioms move on a relative continuum from “totally culture-specific” to “totally universal” cases in terms of their conceptual building constituents. Our findings show that the more culture-specific an idiom is, the less opaque it will be where the translator will accordingly be less likely to adopt an equivalent finding strategy.

4. Conclusion

All in all, the paper findings indicate that “making descriptive (or directional) equivalents” and “finding cultural (i.e., natural or bidirectional) equivalents”, with the highest frequencies of occurrence among the translation strategies adopted by the translators, have generally led to some relative functional equivalence relations. When confronted with radically culture-specific idioms, however, the translators have mostly ignored the idioms in question all together and have, accordingly, resulted in a relative loss of domestic rural culture intended by the author.

But, in spite of neutralization of such rural and traditional aspects of the source, it seems to us, in general, that the translation of idioms in the short story “Razou, Asadou, Khajijeh” has relatively been successful where, in most cases, the translators have managed to make at least some appropriate “second optimal choices”. That is possibly why the English translation of *Bacheha-ye Qalibafkhaneh*, could finally provide the ground for Moradi Kermani to win the Hans Christian Andersen Award which is the highest international recognition given to an author and an illustrator of children's books.

Keywords: Critical Translation Analysis (CTA), Cultural filter, Translation of idioms, Houshang Moradi Kermani, Carpet-Weaving Factory Children.

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