Culture Repertoire and its Translation Strategies: A Case Study of *My Uncle Napoleon* Translated into English

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Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

This study investigates the relationship between culture and translation. The concept of Culture Repertoire advocated by Even-Zohar was used as the framework of the study, and the English translation of the Persian novel *My Uncle Napoleon* was selected as the case study. This novel as the corpus under investigation contains over 230,000 words in 462 pages. Given the focus and attention the book has received, it is an appropriate case for investigating the Iranian culture as it is obviously rich with symbols representing the local culture. The theoretical framework elaborates on the root and the origin of Culture Repertoire by drawing on the Jacobsen's linguistic model. In addition, the concept of Culture Repertoire as a part of Even-Zohar' cultural conception is delineated with examples and clarifying explanations.

2. Methodology

This descriptive study is an attempt to address two questions. First, it explores the categories of Iranian culture repertoremes and secondly the attitude of the Iranian translators towards them. To explore the fixed expressions in Persian language, a number of specialized websites in Persian poetry, *the Holy Quran*, and a number of major religious-literary texts were reviewed. In addition to these sources, some software programs for literary and religious texts were also benefitted. To obtain the translated English phrases, the Coca Corpus, which is the largest available English corpus was used in addition to Webster's Big Dictionary. But to collect the data from the original text and the translated one, taking notes was benefited. Due to the qualitative nature of the study, purposive sampling technique was used for forming the sample and later grounded theory procedures were employed to analyze the data. That is, the culture repertoremes in the source text along with their translations were extracted, and then using grounded theory, the

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Iranian cultural repertoire diagram was plotted. More specifically, each repertoreme, depending on the type, got a label and the given labels were in the same category, and the resulting chart thus was formed from the bottom up. For example, the label 'religious proper names' including items like *Imam Reza* and the label 'historic proper names' including items such as *Muhammad Ali Shah* were placed under the general subsidiary label 'proper names'.

3. Discussion

The achieved diagram comprises two main branches of material and semiotic repertoremes at the highest level which is consistent with the Even-Zohar's conceptualization. Material items included repertoremes from which the materials are formed such as certain types of food in different cultures, or conventional clothing items such as the repertoreme *Charghad* in the Iranian culture. Semiotic repertoremes consist of items which hearing, reading, expressing, or using them strike an idea in the mind of the people of a particular culture whereas the people of other cultures are not reminded of anything. For example, a location-related proper name label such as *Ahwaz* has special connotations and indications with itself for the Iranian people—the concepts of the south, heat, war, etc. But for someone who was born and raised in London, for example, *Ahwaz* does not stimulate anything in particular because that person draws on a different cultural repertoire. In the branch of semiotic repertoremes, all fixed expressions, innuendos, proverbs and collocations which are frequently used in Persian colloquial conversations, are accounted as Iranian culture repertoremes. Examples in Persian language could include the collocation *spoon and fork,* the equivalents of which in English is *knife and fork*. Such collocations in each of these languages have been created, formed and fixed based on the eating traditions in those cultures. Thus, fixed expressions in languages are considered as culture repertoremes. In the Poly-system theory advocated by Even-Zohar, human social life consists of different systems that overlap. Naturally in the cultural system, some components are found from the religious and literary systems.

4. Conclusion

After the achieved classification, the data were analyzed by reviewing the English translation of these Persian repertoremes. The translator of the novel had used the strategies of *addition, transcription, familiarization, exclusion, expansion* and *neutralization.* The descriptive information including frequency and percentage of the repertoremes, groups and their translation strategies are calculated and presented. Moreover, the strategy groups are compared and contrasted. The overall strategy is also illustrated in a diagram for further clarity. The findings reveal that the translator's most frequently used strategies in terms of the Persian culture repertoremes are *neutralization* and *familiarization* strategy, respectively.

Keywords: Culture; Repertoire; Repertoreme; Even-Zohar; My uncle Napoleon.

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