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# 7<sup>th</sup> National Conference on Interdisciplinary Research in Management & Humanistic Science

21 November 2023 - Tehran

هفتمین همایش ملی تحقیقات میان رشته‌ای در مدیریت و علوم انسانی

محل برگزاری: تهران

۳۰ آبان ۱۴۰۲



## Translation of Culture-specific Items from English into Persian: the Case of "Les Miserables" Persian Musical Performance

**Aysa Arjmandpour**

University of Allameh Tabataba'i, Tehran

Email: aysa.arjomand@yahoo.com

### Abstract

The novel 'Les Miserables' (Hugo, Les Miserables, 1862) is one of the most universally translated works, and there are a number of adaptations in several languages. One recent adaptation is the Persian musical play performed in Iran. In this performance, culture-specific items are translated differently since visual and aural elements are added on the stage. The aim of the study is to investigate translation strategies to indicate what translation solutions are possible when the medium changes and also to observe its effects on the audience. After watching the ninety-minute recorded play in VOD format, culture-specific items were selected purposively corresponding to those in the novel. Subsequently, they were analyzed based on Newmark's model (1988). In the present descriptive work, the findings indicate that the most frequent translation strategies applied are 'Literal Translation' and 'Adaptation' in the second place. Further, the research reflects that despite a number of censorship, several sections of the book are summarized. Also, some scenes are deleted from the recorded play in comparison to the original performance. Therefore, there is no exact one-to-one correspondence. After conducting the research, it became evident that one reason for the omissions is the publishing regulations administered in Iran for VOD formats of the plays. These results suggest that the translator of the play has tried to familiarize the audience with the French culture through foreignization with the help of visual and aural instruments. Since the audience are represented with pictures and songs, it's easier to locate themselves in the era of French Revolution and French customs.

**Keywords:** translation strategy – culture-specific item – adaptation – censorship – foreignization

### Introduction

Audio-medial texts are recognized by Reiss (2000) as the fourth type of texts. These texts are written to be heard rather than read. Hence, non-linguistic elements are used along with linguistic ones in this group of texts. They more rely on graphic, acoustic, and visual kinds of expression to impress the



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audience. Theatrical plays are one instance of this type of texts which are mostly adaptations of masterpieces around the world. In order to make a larger audience familiar with these works, they are translated into different languages. Many researchers have referred to them or described them variously in English as "adaptation", "rewriting", "version", "transplanting", "naturalizing", "integrating foreign works", "large-scale amendments", "recreation", and "transposition". This proliferation of terminology suggests that scholars and researchers have been working in isolation, and there is not a specific term to encompass all the terms above. While it could be supposed that all the terms broadly refer more or less to the same translation reality or phenomenon, it could equally be argued that they have different semantic shades thereby suggesting various degrees of manipulation of the source text to meet the expectations of the target language audience as well as the requirements of the target culture. Therefore, by analyzing strategies used in translating an adaptation, it becomes evident which term is the most appropriate one and which one is actually applied by the translators. An example of the masterpieces translated many times up to this day is the novel 'Les Miserables' (Hugo, Les Miserables, 1985). Recently, it has been translated from English into Persian in the shape of a musical play performed in Iran. There are differences in translation strategies applied to make this literary piece of text musical including translation of the dialogues, speech style, discourse markers, and so forth. Since visual and aural elements are presented during the play, there supposed to be a change in the focus of translation. One prominent feature of the text and the play is the culture-specific items of the French Revolution and the French culture. These items are translated differently since the imagination of the audience is about to take shape on the stage with the aid of extra-linguistic factors. In contrast, readers of the novel develop a more subjective understanding in comparison to the audience of the performance on the stage. Translations of a novel and a play, especially a musical one, are different in many ways. If the translation strategies applied do not vary, the audience cannot be deeply connected to the work of art. One other important point to be mentioned is that plays are often translations of already translated novels, which readers have read and are already familiar with the plot, especially the well-known novels throughout the world including 'Les Miserables' (1985). Without analyzing the linguistic and non-linguistic elements of the play, it cannot be understood whether the audience could identify with the performance or not. Consequently, it is necessary to investigate whether the techniques and devices used are going to be as effective as the novel or not. In other words, translation strategies are to be examined to see what differences exist between translations of these two types of text.

As one of the genres in literature, drama has always attracted the audience to make them more familiar with literary works. "Drama, in general, is any work meant to be performed on a stage by actors. A more particular meaning is a serious play; not necessarily tragedy" (Cuddon, 2013, p. 216). Cuddon (2013) states that a form of drama and a method of presentation, which developed in Germany in the 1920s, is the epic theater. Since then the term "epic theatre" has been most closely associated with Bertolt Brecht (1898–1956). Epic theatre was a break with established dramatic styles. In Brecht's words, the "essential point of epic theatre is that it appeals less to the spectator's feelings than to his reason" (as cited in Cuddon, 2013, p. 241). It denotes a form of narrative/chronicle play which is didactic, which is not restricted by the unity of time and which presents a series of episodes in a simple and direct way: a kind of linear narration. Notable features are the use of a Chorus (q.v.), a narrator, slide projection, film, placards and music. An epic drama makes use of epic devices mainly a narrator or teller figure. It is epic in the sense that there is a visible and/or audible narrator figure whose presence creates a distinct level of communication. (Jahn, 2021, p. 6) One other form of drama is the musical drama. Putting the music along with the words, Dahlhaus states that



The text, the poem, is—just like the music—understood by Wagner (1848) as a means of the drama, not as its essence. When, therefore, we speak of ‘musical dramaturgy’—dramaturgy that makes use of musical means—we should refer only to the function of music in the creation of a drama. Music does not alight from somewhere outside upon a drama that already has an independent existence, but rather the music alone creates the drama, which is that drama of a special kind. (as cited in Berger, 2008, p. 3)

Singing, on the other hand, is a medium of that self-expression allowing the character to vent his presently experienced affect without connecting it to the past or future. It reveals what happens not between the individual characters but within this individual character who remains unreflective, that is, imprisoned in the present, and passive, that is, interested not in acting, but in passionate self-expression. Music, by contrast, is tied to the place in which it occurs and relates to the moment in which it belongs. Singing is the essence of operatic music, expressing as it does the present moment, and the musical present manifested in it is simultaneously the scenic present. Melodic expression, unlike verbal expression, does not reach beyond the present moment but exists entirely in the given situation; it isolates that situation and lifts it out of its context, so that what has gone before recedes into oblivion with no thought given to the consequences which will follow the particular moment. (Berger, 2008, p. 4)

Because of the reason that people from different countries seek to familiarize themselves with the drama works throughout the world, a number of adaptations are made available from language to language, and culture to culture. A question raised by many scholars is that what exactly do we mean by translation or adaptation for the stage? There are several reasons for adaptation, namely the adaptor identifies with the story and wants to create his/her own version of it so that the audience can understand the text better than reading the original version. Although adaptation has been practiced since the days of silent movies, it has not been universally accepted. Commentators believe that drama is too wordy to be adapted for the screen. But in recent year, there have been progresses regarding cinematic techniques in staging to turn a novel into stage plays or movies. On the other hand, stage plays are filmed for television using the original dialogue, sets, and cast. The main difference then would be the absence of the audience. By applying non-linguistic elements such as adequate lightning, camera, shots, etc. the spectators can have the same experience as the play audience. Also, adjustments are to be made in order to place the dialogue into the form required by the target medium. (p. 169)

Zuber (1984) distinguishes three categories for play translation as followed:

In translation genus the translator understands the language he is translating from. Within this genus lie three species; one, the literal translation. This has little relevance to the stage. The second species is the direct translation; an attempt to translate the original as if it had been written in the translator's language and yet the structure of the play is not altered, or the meaning of the words. Direct translation is the most difficult of all and the translator has to constantly decide between recording the words of the original or giving their meaning. An easier way out is the third species, the free translation where, under the demiurgic impulses of knowing what the author is trying to say, one provides the meaning rather than recording the original words. Often, in this species, content is distorted, new emphasis is applied to the text, and the translated text has a vague but undeniable connection with the original. (Zuber, 1984, p. 14)

After the introduction of these categories, some translators assumed that there supposed to be some translation theories underlying the translation of the plays. However, there are more aspects to a play than just a mere rendering of the text. First of all, it must be performable, and also non-linguistic factors are to be added to the translated text depending on the culture of the target language. Wellwarth (1981), insisting on the importance of the style, stated that "No audience will give its full attention to a play whose dialogue is stilted." (as cited by Zatlín, 2005, p.2) Years later, Zuber mentioned that "The translated play, unlike the novel or poem, must be speakable. If anything destroys an audience's interest



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in a play it is dialogue that sounds translated." (1984, p. 15) Susan Bassnett (1985) declares that "The distinction between a 'version' of an SL text and an 'adaptation' of that text seems to me to be a complete rendering. For example, if we consider the term "adaptation," it would be necessary to know specifically what is being adapted. Is it the action, space, time, culture-bound expression, style, etc. that is being adapted or does the process involve all of these aspects taken together? Do all these aspects call for the same strategies and procedures? And then, how are these strategies and procedures different from those used to effect translation proper?" (as cited by Che Suh, 2002, p.52)

Theatre semiotics has also contributed significantly to this debate. Elam (1980) asserts the repercussions of semiotics in all domains by stating that: of all recent developments in what used to be confidently called the humanities no event has registered a more radical and widespread impact than the growth of semiotics. Investigating through semiotics allows the translator to better choose the appropriate method of translation, but also to situate them within the sign systems of the target language. In this way, not only the linguistic elements, but also the non-linguistic elements are transformed to the audience. Hence, the importance of the signs are manifested and indicated in the translated text. Subsequently, the translator can conduct a systematic comprehensive analysis of the text at both macro and micro levels to be able to translate as many extra-linguistic and meta-textual elements as possible. By doing the analysis, spatial-temporal setting, communicative situation, relationships between characters, and general attitudes become evident. (Che Suh, 2002, pp. 51-57)

Regarding the above-mentioned definition, there is debate about the theoretical framework of translation of an adapted piece of work. It is not still clear whether to maintain the foreign features of the target language and culture, or to be faithful to the source language. This polarized orientation may not set the scene for intermediate translations between the two extremes.

Another point to be highlighted here is that the translations of plays are derived from institutional and organizational forces rather than the active decision-making of the translator him/herself. For instance, Susan Bassnett (1991) declares that "translators are commissioned to produce what are termed 'literal' translations and the text is then handed over to a well-known playwright with an established reputation so that larger audiences will be attracted into the theatre." (as cited by Che Suh, 2002, p.56) Therefore, it becomes clear that choice of linguistic and non-linguistic elements are not made by the translator, but by the translation initiator as an example.

There exist many cultural references in the translation of dramas from one language to the other. In many translated works, one prominent element is the culture-specific items. Some culture-specific items reflect the cultural setting in which they occur. If the cultural settings of the source and target languages are significantly different, there will be instances when the source text will contain items which convey what to the target reader would be unfamiliar associations of ideas. Such culture-specific items express ideas previously unexpressed in the target language. Like culture-specific collocations, they point to concepts which are not easily accessible to the target reader. (Baker, 2018, p. 66) "Translation of culture-specific collocations involves a partial increase in information. This is unavoidable inasmuch as unfamiliar associations of ideas cannot simply be introduced in a target text without giving the reader some hint as to how to interpret them" (Baker, 2018, p. 67). It is advised for theatrical translators to watch and listen to their own translation like the audience. During the rehearsals, especially, they can understand the problems and inconsistencies of the text including rhythms, stress, pauses, and so forth. In general, there is a radical change towards translation in the post Chomsky era. After comparative linguistics introduced a framework for translation theory, the trend is to take dynamic responses into consideration. Since there are differences in style and theater conventions from nation to nation, the translator is supposed to take all these considerations into account. (Zatlin, 2005, pp. 2-6)

Zuber (1984) defines the term "transposition" as a special kind of translation which means "transposing" or "transferring" the dramatic text on to the stage when translating a play. It is different from translating poetry or prose since plays are written to beactable and speakable rather readable. As a result, non-verbal and cultural factors as well as staging problems must be paid attention to. Zuber (1980) demonstrates that "the meaning of a play can be distorted and misinterpreted if the translator fails to



appropriately transpose the whole network of symbolic signs into the target culture: visual and acoustic as well as linguistic signs." So the translator must try to transfer all the visual and acoustic signs. The transformation can be achieved through maintaining the original signs, or through a combining sign which signifies the same idea. On the other hand, the translator can produce a reading edition accompanied by notes in order to fully and clearly explain the meaning and ambiguities of the signs. In this way, the harder task is on the shoulders of the producer, actors, and readers to transpose these signs. Here, the translator acts as a mediator who has full awareness of the original text and can actively participate in transferring the text on to the stage. (Zuber, 1984, pp. 8, 9)

Translating the culture-specific items has always been a debatable field throughout the history of translation.

The central problem of translating has always been whether to translate literally or freely. The argument has been going on since at least the first century BC. Up to the beginning of the nineteenth century, many writers favored some kind of free translation: the spirit, not the letter; the sense not the words; the message rather than the form: the matter not the manner. Then at the turn of the nineteenth century, when the study of cultural anthropology suggested that the linguistic barriers were insuperable and that language was entirely the product of culture, the view that translation was impossible gained some currency, and with it that, if attempted at all, it must be as literal as possible. This view culminated in the statements of the extreme literalists' Walter Benjamin and Vladimir Nabokov. The argument was theoretical: the purpose of the translation, the nature of the readership, the type of text, was not discussed. Too often, writer, translator and reader were implicitly identified with each other. (Newmark, 1988, p. 45)

Newmark (1988) has suggested eight translation strategies applicable for translating culture-specific items:

1. Word-for-word Translation: The SL word-order is preserved and the words translated singly by their most common meanings, out of context.
2. Literal Translation: The SL grammatical constructions are converted to their nearest TL equivalents but the lexical words are again translated singly, out of context.
3. Faithful translation: A faithful Translation attempts to reproduce the precise contextual meaning of the original within the constraints of the TL grammatical structures.
4. Semantic translation: Semantic translation differs from 'faithful translation' only in as far as it must take more account of the aesthetic value (that is, the beautiful and natural sounds of the SL text).
5. Adaptation: This is the 'freest' form of translation. It is used mainly for plays (comedies and poetry; the themes, characters, plots are usually preserved, the SL culture converted to the TL culture and the text rewritten.
6. Free translation: Free translation reproduces the matter without the manner, or the content without the form of the original.
7. Idiomatic translation: Idiomatic translation reproduces the 'message' of the original but tends to distort nuances of meaning by preferring colloquialisms and idioms where these do not exist in the original.
8. Communicative Translation: Communicative translation attempts to render the exact contextual meaning of the original in such a way that both content and language are readily acceptable and comprehensible to the readership. (Newmark, 1988, pp. 45-47)

Other techniques proposed by Newmark are as followed:

1. Transference: the process of transferring a SL word to a TL text as a translation procedure.
2. Naturalization: This procedure adapts the SL word first to the normal pronunciation, then to the normal morphology (word-forms) of the TL.



3. Functional Equivalent: It requires the use of a culture-free word, sometimes with a new specific term; it therefore neutralizes or generalizes the SL word; and sometimes adds a particular thus.

4. Descriptive Equivalent

5. Synonymy: This procedure is used for a SL word where there is no clear one-to-one equivalent, and the word is not important in the text. (Newmark, 1988, pp. 81-84)

An analysis of culture-specific items in the Persian Translation of "Dubliners" suggested that among all strategies, the translator, has used general words and borrowing more than other strategies to cope with the lexical gap. These strategies were applied by the translator to make his translation more authentic and tangible. Although in some cases one or more strategies are suggested for each domain, it does not mean that a translator should choose only a certain method or strategy of translation. (Hosseini & Davtalab, 2011)

Persson's (2015) made evident in his research that the frequency of each translation procedure depends on the type of CSI, and the chosen translation method. It was argued that transfer is the most commonly used procedure, and for the category of CSI, neutralization is the most commonly used. Another research investigating frequent translation strategies in subtitles, illustrates how Iranian translators translate metaphorical expressions using Newmark's seven proposed strategies. The finding reveal that Iranian subtitlers try to create an understandable translation in the target language using the established strategies. Based on the statistical analysis, Newmark's first strategy is the most frequent one, rendering by creating the same image in the TL. (Jalali, 2015)

۶ Amininadji (2016) conducted a research on translation strategies in Bahram Beyzai's play "Marionettes". Based on the results, "ecology" was the most applied strategy, after material and social culture. Also, he mentions that domestication prevails foreignization since the translation strategy used reflects the social and cultural trend in the society. Indeed, domestication is preferred as it helps target text readers to understand the text easily. However, there is a tendency for the target-text reader to welcome unfamiliar culture-specific items as globalization leads people to interact one another. In the analysis of translation strategies applied in translating culture-specific items in Martin Lindstrom's "Brand Sense", it was concluded that the genre of the book under analysis has determined that the prevailing translation strategies to render CSIs were literal translation, localization, preservation, and addition. There was no mention of omission examples. Although the translation of common expressions required employing a great variety of strategies, the translator's inconsistency and the lack of editing has resulted in a deteriorated quality of the translation. The before-mentioned inconsistencies were observed in almost all groups of culture-specific items found in the book. (Blazyte & Liubiniene, 2016)

The obtained results through conducting the research "Translation of Culture-specific Items from English into Persian in Translation of Othello" revealed that the translator used different translation strategies based on Newmark's model (1988) and Venuti's theory (1955). The most applied strategy by the translator was cultural equivalent, while reduction was shown low in percentage. Among procedures proposed by Venuti, domestication strategy was used more than foreignization. Therefore, it can be argued that the translator used cultural equivalent to make his translation more readable for target readers. Moreover, the researcher concluded that the use of combination of Newmark's model and Venuti's theory were appropriate models for translating this masterpiece. (Alipour & Hadian, 2017)

In a study, in which the novel titled "Baba Evi" by Orhan Kemal was analyzed based on Newmark's model, culture specific items were reported to pose challenges in translation across cultures. The critical strategy turned out to be the "absolute universalization". It is not considered a domestication strategy since the new sign in the target text is free from all cultural associations, eliminating the CSI



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value of that sign in the target text. As a result of this synthesis, it was found that most culture-specific items were translated through foreignization rather than domestication. And some were translated using none of the strategies proposed. Hence, literary translators should be prepared for the pitfalls created by culture specific items in literary texts, and they should be well aware of translation strategies for culture specific items, which could guide them through the whole act of translation. (Kuleli, 2020)

A study drawn on Newmark's model to investigate two Persian translations of the culture-specific items in Roald Dahl's "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory", concluded that the two Iranian translators used almost all of Newmark's translation. Among the strategies, "cultural equivalence" was the most frequently used strategy, whereas "reduction and expansion" was the least frequently used one. Since "cultural equivalent" seems to be the most effective strategy, the translators have tried to simplify the target text and make it relatable to general readers. (Karimnia & Gheshlagh, 2020)

In another study, Rouhi & Niami (2021) detected two hundred twenty-two culture-specific items in the corpus of "Gulistan". The data analysis indicated that "synonymy" was the most frequently employed strategy by the native and the non-native translators. Also, the researcher found that transference had been used more frequently by the latter in comparison to the native translator. As a result, if the readers do not have sufficient knowledge of the source culture, there is a risk that the content of the text will not be fully understood.

In the study of Lithuanian-dubbed animated films, it was illustrated how Iranian translators translate metaphorical expressions using Newmark's seven proposed strategies by using authentic examples from two source texts (two well-known Persian films). The results showed that Iranian subtitlers try to create an understandable translation in the target language, a translation where the audience generally grasps the original message in the films.

One of the issues Iranian translators must overcome is the cultural differences since translation mistakes occur through misconceptions or blindness to cultural differences. Hence, another finding was that Iranian translators do try to use established strategies so as to create a translation with fewer mistakes. Based on the statistical analysis done on the data, Newmark's first proposed strategy is the most frequently used by Iranian translators. Indeed, this strategy aims to transfer the same image to the target text while taking the register, the frequency and the status of the original expression into account. The results of this investigation also demonstrate that translators of the selected films tend to apply foreignization more extensively than domestication. Culture-specific items were preserved in the translation maintaining the authenticity of the films and, at the same time, allowing the TC viewers gain new and expand their existing cultural awareness through the culture-specific items. (Pagrandyte & Astrauskiene, 2021)

In the analysis of translating Islamic texts, it became known that Newmark's translation procedures were effective to make the translation sound more natural to the target reader. Newmark's strategies are not limited to the cultural features of the language, but it also covers the linguistic specifications. Finally, it may be concluded that Newmark's translation strategies are necessary for the translation of an Islamic text between two different language systems and cultures. However, the translator must be competent in using translation strategies to provide an accurate translation. The findings suggests that the use of the cultural equivalent strategy was the most frequently applied strategy, followed by descriptive equivalent, transference, functional equivalent, componential analysis, synonymy, modulation, and notes. (Rahman, 2023)

Identifying cultural perspectives in Parvin E'tesami's poetry revealed that in the majority of cases, translation strategy of "couplets" was applied. The second most frequent translation strategy was "modulation". The analyses indicated that the translator applied a literal translation besides different



strategies to convey the intended meanings and preserve the style of the original poems conveying the thought and information of the Persian poems. (Eskandari, Behnam, AbolfazlRamazani, & Monsefi, 2023)

According to the translation of culture-specific items in the selected verses of Al-Baqarah, AL-Imran, An-Nisa chapters, cultural equivalent was dominantly used by all three translators, which shows they would like to establish a sense of cultural affinity to the text for the readership. While this indicates how the translators attempted to render culture, in the case of sacred texts with a wide range of readership, the translation of culture should be done with references to intertextuality that among others include exegesis and interpretations. (Roodashty, Mozaheb, & Ghajarieh, 2023)

As far as known, few studies have been conducted in this regard, especially in the field of stage adaptations. With the objective of finding the most applied translation strategy based on Newmark's model and its implications and limitations, research questions are as followed:

1. What translation strategies are applied to make the prose "Les Miserables" a rhythmic text from English into Persian?
2. What translation strategies are used in translating culture-specific items of the novel "Les Miserables" from English into Persian?
3. Which translation strategies contribute more to the adaptation of a theatrical play from a novel?
4. What are the differences between translating culture-specific items in the novel and the musical play?
5. In what ways do the translation strategies applied for the novel and the play differ considering the visual and aural elements?

## Method

### Theoretical Framework

The present study carries out an analysis and description of translation strategies applied by the translator in the musical play "Les Miserables" from English into Persian, which is adapted from the novel written by Victor Hugo (1985). These strategies are employed in the translation of culture-specific items based on Newmark's model (1988). Through investigation, it can be determined which strategy is the most frequently used and the tendency of the translator towards domestication or foreignization. The theoretical framework of this research is based on what Newmark expressed in his book "A Textbook of Translation" about the translation of culture-specific items. In this descriptive and product-oriented study, "Les Miserables" along with its Persian adaption were selected as the corpus of the study. The Persian play was performed on Royal Hall stage in Tehran in November and October, 2018. However, in this paper the recorded performance is analyzed, which was published months later in VOD format on streaming platforms including FILIMO and NAMAVA.

The current comparative study includes the following:

1. Hugo, V. (1985). *Les Miserables*. (Wilbour, Trans.) New York: Carleton.

۲. پارسایی، ح. (۱۳۹۷، آبان و آذر). *بی‌نویان*. رویال هال، اسپیناس پالاس، تهران.





## Summary of "Les Miserables"

Les Misérables is a French historical novel by Victor Hugo, first published in 1862, that is considered one of the greatest novels of the 19th century. Les Misérables has been popularized through numerous adaptations for film, television and the stage. Examining the nature of law and grace, the novel elaborates upon the history of France, the architecture and urban design of Paris, politics, moral philosophy, antimonarchism, justice, religion, and the types and nature of romantic and familial love.

Jean Valjean is a prison convict. After serving 19 years for the small act of stealing a loaf of bread, he's given his ticket of leave. Dreaming of a new life, all hopes are immediately dashed when his chain gang status follows him around. Stealing silver from a bishop doesn't help, but when the bishop lies to police to protect Valjean, his future truly starts. While Valjean's on the run, Inspector Javert does all he can to track him down. But, with Valjean now dedicating his life to looking after Cosette, a prostitute's daughter, they finally escape to Paris, thus out of Javert's presence forevermore. That's until the pair find themselves on the Parisian barricades. Love triangles, deaths and new relationships form throughout Les Miserables, where different classes come together to protect one another.

## Data Collection Procedure

9 After watching the whole recorded ninety-minute Persian play, all the culture-specific items were identified corresponding to English segments in the novel. The items were selected based on Newmark's model (1988) proposed for translation strategies. The strategies are as followed:

1. Word-for-Word Translation
2. Literal Translation
3. Faithful Translation
4. Semantic Translation
5. Adaptation
6. Free Translation
7. Idiomatic Translation
8. Communicative Translation

Subsequently, the selected items were grouped respectively in three tables, each one representing the items in one thirty-minute part of the recorded play. Later, they were analyzed to determine which translation strategy has been applied.

The sampling method used is purposive sampling and all the thirty-eight culture-specific items were selected non-randomly from the beginning of the show till the end.

## Data Analysis

After watching the whole recored ninety-minute Persian music performance, a total of thirty-eight culture-specific items were tabulated. Next, these items were analyzed based on Newmark's model (1988), and the translation strategy used for each item including word-for word, literal, faithful, semantic, free, idiomatic, communicative translation and adaptation was specified in Tables 1, 2, and 3 divided in three thirty-minute parts of the performance.



## Culture-specific Items of 'Les Miserables' and the Translation Strategies Applied (Running Time: 1' – 30')

|    | Source CSI   | Translated CSI  | Translation Strategy |
|----|--|---|----------------------|
| 1  | This <b>cook-shop</b> was kept by some people named Thenardier, husband and wife.  | [Translated by Performance]   | Adaptation           |
| 2  | 'Is there, then, no one who wishes to earn twenty <b>louis</b> and save the life of this poor old man?'  | کسی می‌تونه این پیرمرد رو نجات بده، ده <b>فرانک</b> می‌دهم.         | Communicative T      |
| 3  | It is here, in my <b>carpet-bag</b> .  | ---   | No Suggestion        |
| 4  | You played the <b>mouse-trap</b> nicely.   | <b>هر جا رو ببینی</b><br><b>هستم من حاضر</b>                        | Free Translation     |
| 5  | Nevertheless, people continued to say that no one ever got into the room, and that it was a <b>hermit's cave</b> .   | ۱. <b>جا نیست</b><br>۲. برای زندونی جماعت، نه <b>جا دارم</b> نه غذا | Idiomatic T          |
| 6  | <b>Thenardier's Inn</b>  | [Translated by Performance]   | Adaptation           |
| 7  | A large but ugly room, with an alcove and a bed at the; two tables; upon one of them a triumphant mountain of bouquets, mingled with the hats of men and women; at the other the four couples seated round a merry confusion of platters, dishes, glasses, and bottles; jugs of <b>beer</b> mingled with flasks of wine; very little order on the table, some disorder beneath it. | بطری <b>شراب</b>  | Faithful Translation |
| 8  | It was from this paradise that <b>Monseigneur</b> Welcome had passed to the other. (A form of address used of or to a French-speaking archbishop, or bishop.)  | ---   | No Suggestion        |
| 9  | This person, grave with a gravity which was almost menacing, was one of those men who, even when only seen by a rapid glimpse, arrest the spectator's attention. His name was <b>Javert</b> , and he belonged to the police.   | [Translated by Performance]   | Adaptation           |
| 10 | 'Let us put him to the <b>wine</b> test,' said Thenardier.   | اینجا هست <b>شراب</b> و نان<br>تا جان بگیری از آن                   | Faithful Translation |
| 11 | Bienvenu, <b>poor, humble, retiring</b> , was not accounted among the big mitres.  | [Translated by Performance]   | Adaptation           |
| 12 | He took the <b>candlestick</b> in his right hand.  | تو مهمون اسقف بودی<br><b>نقره‌هاش</b> رو دزدیدی                     | Communicative T      |
| 13 | This is not my house; it is the house of <b>Jesus Christ</b> .   | آنچه در دست داری<br>هدیه‌ای است از سوی <b>عیسی</b>                  | Communicative T      |
| 14 | One day he arrived at <b>Senez</b> , which is an ancient episcopal city.   | [Translated by Performance]   | Adaptation           |

Table 1

## Culture-specific Items of 'Les Miserables' and the Translation Strategies Applied (Running Time: 1' – 30')



|    |   |  |                     |
|----|---|--|---------------------|
| 15 | Now it was the <b>church-bell</b> which spoke, now it was the gardener's bell.  | [Translated by Performance]                                    | Adaptation          |
| 16 | ' <b>Monsieur</b> , I will conduct you to your room.'   | شما تشریف ببرید <b>موسیو</b> !                                 | Literal Translation |
| 17 | But through a desire to sit down too soon, one may arrest the very march of the human race. This has often been the fault of the <b>bourgeoisie</b> .   | خطاکار اصلی، همون <b>بورژوا</b> بوده، باید اون رو دستگیر کنید. | Literal Translation |
| 18 | 'I have failed in my <b>duty</b> ; I ought to be punished; I must be turned out.'   | من به <b>یونفورمی</b> که پوشیدم، بی‌احترامی کردم آقای شهردار.  | Communicative T     |
| 19 | 'How beautiful you are! You are adorable, <b>Mademoiselle</b> .'  | زود باش برو، <b>مادمازل</b> قشنگم.                             | Literal Translation |
| 20 | He was on the <b>battle-field of Waterloo</b> .   | [Translated by Performance]                                    | Adaptation          |
| 21 | 'There are wines poorer even than these. <b>The grapes</b> must be gathered while green.'   | کاش یکم <b>بادومزمینی</b> داشتیم.                              | Communicative T     |
| 22 | Monsieur Thenardier, inn-keeper at Montfermeil, was made to talk in the <b>wine-shop</b> .  | لطفاً موسیو به این طرف به سمت بهترین <b>کافه</b> شهر           | Communicative T     |
| 23 | 'A <b>gentleman</b> of property, like yourself.'  | عمرأ ندیدی مردی مثل من <b>جنتلمن</b>                           | Literal Translation |
| 24 | Gibelotte set a bottle of <b>wine</b> on the table.   | بطری <b>شراب</b> پر می‌شه با آب                                | Literal Translation |
| 25 | The traveller recalled the graceful and immemorial custom in accordance with which children place their shoes in the chimney on <b>Christmas eve</b> .  | [Translated by Performance]                                    | Adaptation          |
| 26 | smell of <b>tobacco</b>   | <b>غذای کافه</b> چه بویی داره!                                 | Communicative T     |
| 27 | She said to herself that one must be a queen, or at least a <b>princess</b> , to have a 'thing' like that.  | آرزو داشتیم به <b>پرنسس</b> بشم.                               | Literal Translation |
| 28 | At the very moment when the English had captured from the French the <b>flag</b> of the 105th of the line, the French had killed the English <b>general</b> , Picton, with a bullet through the head. | [Translated by Performance]                                    | Adaptation          |
| 29 |   | <b>ژنرال</b> راماک مرده.                                       | Literal Translation |
| 30 | If you don't find <b>papa</b> and mamma, young 'uns, come back here this evening.   | اومدم <b>پاپا</b>  | Literal Translation |

Table 2

**Culture-specific Items of 'Les Miserables' and the Translation Strategies Applied (Running Time: 60' – 90')**

|    |  |                             |            |
|----|--|-----------------------------|------------|
| 31 | All at once, a man on horseback, clad in black, made his appearance in the middle of the group with a <b>red flag</b> and a red liberty-cap. | [Translated by Performance] | Adaptation |
|----|--|-----------------------------|------------|



|    |  |   |                      |
|----|--|---|----------------------|
| 32 | She put her face as near that of <b>Marius</b> as possible. She added with a strange expression: 'Listen, I do not wish to play you a trick. I have a letter in my pocket for you.'  | ماریوس، این نامه از طرف کوزته.  | Literal Translation  |
| 33 | Jean Valjean continued: 'I do not think that I shall escape from this place. But if, by chance, I do, I live, under the name of Fauchelevent, in the Rue de <b>l'Homme Arme</b> , No. 7.'                                      | ولی اگه زنده موندم، میتونی من رو خیابون <b>لوارمه</b> ، شماره پنج پیدا کنی. | Literal Translation  |
| 34 | At length he released <b>Jean Valjean</b> , straightened himself stiffly up without bending, grasped his bludgeon again firmly, and, as though in a dream, he murmured rather than uttered.                                    | فرار می‌کنم حالا<br>از دنیای <b>ژان‌والژان</b>                              | Literal Translation  |
| 35 | The accounts of Louis XI. allot to the bailiff of the palace 'twenty sous, Tournois, for three coaches of <b>mascarades</b> in the cross-roads.  | [Translated by Performance]   | Adaptation           |
| 36 | It was he who saved my life! Let us not lose a minute! Put on your <b>shawl</b> .'   | کوزت با من بیا.   | No Suggestion        |
| 37 | 'Thy father! <b>Colette</b> , thy father more than ever. Colette, he went to the barricade to save me. We are going to bring him back, to take him with us, whether he is willing or not, he shall never leave us again.       | چون تصمیم گرفتن برای مدتی از من و <b>کوزت</b> فاصله بگیرن.                  | Literal Translation  |
| 38 | Alarming details were hawked about, fatal news was disseminated,— that they were masters of the Bank;—that there were six hundred of them in the <b>Cloister</b> of Saint-Merry alone, entrenched and embattled in the church. | توی <b>صومعه‌ی</b> بزرگ شهره.   | Faithful Translation |

Table 3

According to Tables 1, 2, and 3, the most frequent translation strategy applied for translating culture-specific items (both English and French items) was 'Literal Translation' (31.6%). It can be probably due to the fact that the translator has intended to introduce French addressing terms to the Iranian audience. On the other hand, the general approach of the translator might be 'foreignization' in order to keep cultural items as much as possible and to create the same atmosphere as in the original novel. The second most frequent translation strategy was 'Adaptation' (28.9%). Since the written text has been transformed into a performance, most culture-specific items are translated through adaptation which means the dialogues, clothing, signs, sounds, and the general atmosphere is not translated word by word, but rather are shown through visual and acoustic components including instance numbers 1, 6, 9, 11, 14, 15, 20, 25, 28, 31, and 35. For example, there were several references to the word 'cook-shop' which was not translated but the whole decoration of a French café was set on the scene, or instead of describing the character of 'Javert', the French police uniform and facial expressions of the actor were represented to the audience. Even, 'Adaptation' was perhaps a contributing element to some extent for those culture-specific items translated using other kinds of translation strategies including instance



numbers 12 and 21, since the elements existing on the stage and the pictures screen-played were shown to the audience during the whole performance.

One important point to be mentioned is that the sentences and dialogues of the book are translated to Persian musical theater in the shape of poems and lyrics, but the original text is not musical itself; it is a prose. Hence, the written text is translated into the oral rhythmic words, and third-person subjects in the book are turned into one-person subjects in the play so as to preserve the rhyme of the songs as in instance numbers 4, 10, 12, 13, 22, and 34.

It should also be noted that in comparison of the recorded performance with the original version on the stage, several scenes were deleted or censored, suggesting the notion of censorship in VOD formats. Therefore, there was no exact one-to-one correspondence in the comparative analysis.

## Result

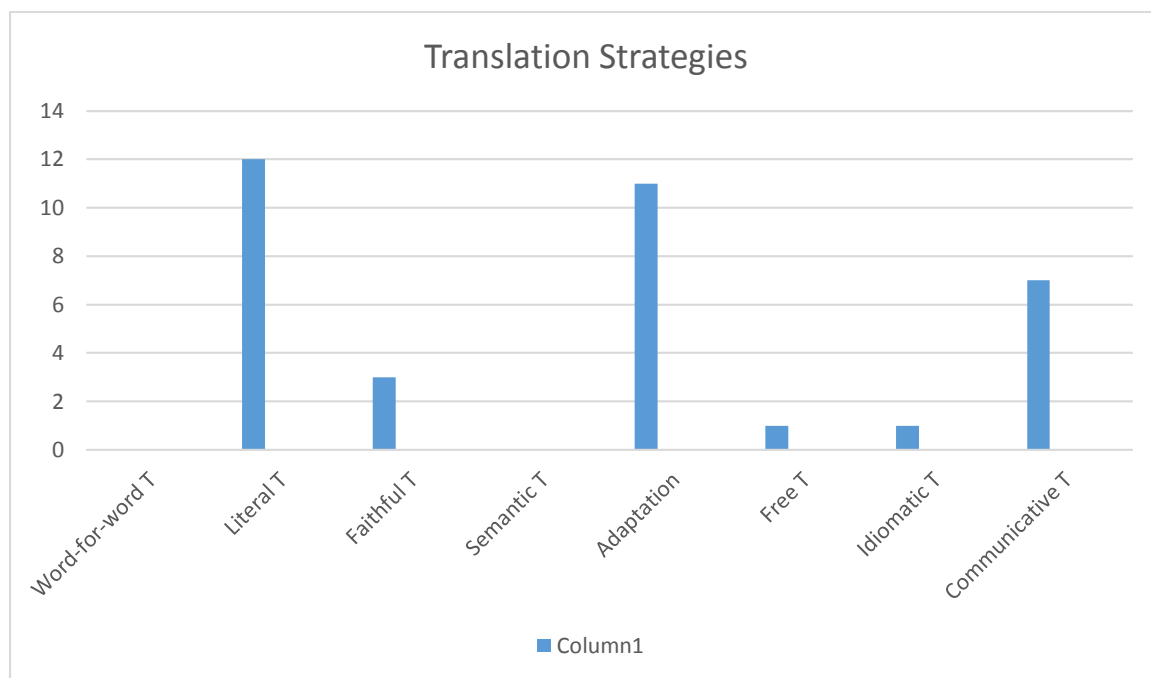


Figure 1

In this section, the result is being discussed. After watching the recorded Persian musical theater 'Les Miserables', the culture-specific items were analyzed based on Newmark's model (1988). These items were translated using eight translation strategies as indicated in Figure 1.

۱۳



|   | Translation Strategy             | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|----------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| 1 | <b>Word-for-word</b>             | 0         | 0          |
| 2 | <b>Literal Translation</b>       | 12        | 31.6%      |
| 3 | <b>Faithful Translation</b>      | 3         | 7.9%       |
| 4 | <b>Semantic Translation</b>      | 0         | 0          |
| 5 | <b>Adaptation</b>                | 11        | 28.9%      |
| 6 | <b>Free Translation</b>          | 1         | 2.6%       |
| 7 | <b>Idiomatic Translation</b>     | 1         | 2.6%       |
| 8 | <b>Communicative Translation</b> | 7         | 18.5%      |

Table 4

۱۴ After specifying and analyzing culture-specific items in the translation of the English novel 'Les Miserables' (1985) transformed into the Persian musical theater, the most frequent translation strategy applied was 'Literal Translation' (31.6%) based on Newmark's model (1988). This can be probable because of the fact that the translator has aimed at introducing French terms to the audience, especially when the characters address one another. The second common translation strategy used was 'Adaptation' (28.9%). Since the written text has been translated into the oral musical performance, some words were deleted from the dialogues and were represented to the spectators through visual and aural elements. In this way, the audience can perhaps find a chance to get themselves familiarized with the French culture including their clothing, the atmosphere of the Great French Revolution, ritual ceremonies, and so forth.

Some other words were also deleted from the performance. One reason for the omission of these words and using alternative equivalences might be that the translator intended to preserve the rhyme in the musical poems. Thus, the exact word cannot be translated, but another word which can be matched in terms of rhyming dialogues would be uttered. Also, it can be said that preserving the French culture in the translation and not trying to localize the text, to which the Iranian audience is more familiar with, is the style of the translator. If the text was handed to another translator, there would be the possibility of having a totally localized text similar to epic Iranian novels. Another reason can be due to the duration of the performance. The original novel has more than two thousand pages, but the running time of the performance is only one hour and a half which is even less in the recorded version. As a result, not all the sections of the book are presented in the performance, neither the segments being translated are fully correspondent to the original text. One important point to be noted here is that the recorded performance published in Iranian streaming VOD services such as NAMAVA and Filimo is shorter in duration than the actual performance played on the Royal Hall Stage. These omissions might be due to the publishing regulations administered in Iran for VOD formats of the plays leading to censorship. These two factors, running-time and censorship, may cause ambiguities for the audience since the scenes are not in a logical sequence, and the recorded performance is rather a summarized version of the original play. This can be the reason why the director of the musical performance has decided to put much effort on the visual and acoustic instruments including illustrating images of streets of Paris, the cathedral, and the fortress on the screen play. Also, background sounds such as the church-bell played



by the orchestra makes the audience much closer to the French atmosphere, especially during the Great French Revolution scenes. With all the points mentioned above, it can be deduced that the translation could preserve the cultural references in general. There were also three culture-specific items used in the performance (instance number 3 and 8 in Table 1 and number 36 in Table 3) which were not exactly existed in the English novel (1985). There was not any translation strategy suggested by Newmark for this kind of omissions; therefore, these items were labeled 'No Suggestion'.

## Conclusion

The present study investigated the translation strategies applied for translating culture-specific items in the English novel "Les Miserables" (1985) translated into a Persian musical performance. Based on the model I chose for data analysis which is Newmark's model (1988), it was found that the most applied strategy in the translation of the musical drama was 'Literal Translation' (31.6%) which indicates that the translator may wanted to preserve the same effect as of the original text to influence the target reader. Also, 'Adaptation' (28.9%) was a contributing factor in all the translated segments such as the clothing, visual and auditory features presented on the stage.

On the other hand, there was a limited access to the recorded performance due to copy right issues, and the recorded play provided to the mass audience is different from the actual performance in terms of time duration. The reason is that the recorded play has been censored after multiple revisions; as a result, it imposes some limitations on the study.

As the final point, the model chosen for the present research (Newmark's Model) may not be completely sufficient for examining all the translation strategies since Newmark has not suggested any method for omitting a culture-specific item, and there is not a wide range of strategies provided so as to categorize all types of translations. Further research on other models can be conducted so as to see which model encompasses all the possible translation strategies and better explains the approach of the translator.

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با امکان صدور گواهی نامه بین المللی



# 7<sup>th</sup> National Conference on Interdisciplinary Research in Management & Humanistic Science

21 November 2023 - Tehran

هفتمین همایش ملی تحقیقات میان رشته‌ای در مدیریت و علوم انسانی

محل برگزاری: تهران

۳۰ آبان ۱۴۰۲



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