



The role of culture- specific items in translation of children's literature: A case study of Alice's adventures in wonderland

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ABSTRACT

Cultural aspects devote a degree of significant importance in translation studies to themselves. This research tries to shed light on three important notions: culture, translation and children's literature (ChL). Translating cultural items has always been a delicate matter for translation scholars; however, translating these items in ChL makes the work more sensitive. The main purpose of the researcher in this study is to focus on the strategies applied by two Persian translators, namely; Hasan Honarmandi and Zoya Pirzaad, when facing CSIs in rendition of the book "*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*". Having discovered 150 CSIs in the book and having sorted them according to Newmark's five categories for CSIs, the researcher found out that "cultural equivalent" was employed more frequently than the other translation strategies by the translators. Finally, by calculating the number of total strategies applied by the translators, the researcher identified that they were inclined toward domestication rather than foreignization in their translations of the book.

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Introduction

Translation from a source language to a target language has always faced translators with many challenges and problematic issues. Tolnai (2011) believes that there is a difference between a translation difficulty, which relates to a difficulty encountered by an individual translator, due to a certain inability, and a translation problem, which is a universal problem. He also mentions that Translation theory mentions four types of translation problems: linguistic, cultural, pragmatic and text specific problems. Among those problems, cultural challenges have always been one of the most problematic issues for translators. Culture-specific items in translation are of that utmost importance that Ginter (2002) entitles translation as an act of culture-specific communication. Lores sanz (1994) also believes that translation is communication and the purpose of translation is making both interlingual and intercultural communication possible. Therefore it seems to be an impossible task to translate without regarding cultural background of the writer and reader. Due to the above-mentioned significance of considering cultural items in translation, one of the main problems for the translator is how to deal with cultural items. The translator should decide on to take priority on cultural aspects of source language, target language or both of them. Ginter (2002) believes that this decision is crucial for the translator and asserts that " The choice of cultural strategy may result in source-culture bound translation (so called foreignization), target-culture bound translation (so called domestication) or in a 'hybrid', where the translation is a product of a compromise between two or more cultures. In this research the translation of culture-specific items is surveyed within the genre of children's literature. Although the domain of the study is devoted to one genre, working on this subject needs careful attention and notice. Anna Ginter (2002) also believes that no single strategy is applicable and enough for translating culture-specific strategies and asserts that it is extremely

difficult to find a text in which all cultural issues would be translated by means of the same strategy. However, it would be worth observing how some translators resolve the problems that arise when the elements of one culture should be transposed to the environment of another."

Adaptation and foreignization are two of the many strategies employed by translators to render culture-specific items, and this research by surveying two Persian translations of the book "*Alice's adventures in wonderland*" tries to see what strategies are applied by Persian translators when facing CSIs in children's literature.

Literature Review

Culture-specific Items in Translation

Cultural items devote significant importance in the area of translation of texts. Talking about the translation of culture-specific items is also controversial, since a single identical word or phrase may be translated in different ways by different translators. However, what is important is the best solution of a translator when facing culture_ specific items in a text for finding their appropriate meaning and a suitable equivalent for these items in the TT. Consequently, it is important for translators to be familiar with different methods and strategies in dealing with Culture-bound items.

Problems in Translating Culture-specific Items

Different nations and various languages comprise the world; these languages live in the context of different cultures manifesting different aspects of life. As far as the relation among these languages is concerned, translation becomes an indispensable necessity. Translators face many problems in translating Culture-bound items, and translation scholars suggest some methods to solve them (Hosseini Maasoum & Davtalab, 2011, p.1768). In translation of culture-specific items the translator may confront some problems. As Leppihalme (1997:2) reports, some researchers consider "extralinguistic phenomena from natural to man made. Extralinguistic problems

are often expressed as lexical. Others see culture-bound translation problems a mainly intralinguistic and pragmatic". He adds "Culturally oriented translation studies do not see the ST and TT as samples of linguistic material. The texts occur in a given situation in a given culture in the world and each has a specific function and an audience of its own" (ibid: 3).

Translation of Children's Literature

In the 1960s and 1970s the attention of the academics turned to cross-cultural influences in children's literature (Lathey, 2006) and unlike the past years in which children's literature and its translation was not regarded as an independent genre in its own, from that time on, the common belief was that children should know and be familiar with other cultures to widen their knowledge span of the world and cherish their mind by knowing about other people's customs, habits and way of lives.

At first glance, translating as well as writing for children may seem to be a straightforward matter, but due to its unique characteristics, it really is not as easy as it appears. As Thomson-Wohlgemuth(1998) states it's not just the translator who plays role in translating for children. Thomson-Wohlgemuth (ibid.1998:45) believes that the four principal players in the translation process, who influence a children's book from its conception onwards, are the author, the translator, the publisher and the Critic.

Methodology

Corpus

The corpus of our study is mainly centralized around one of the best-selling books of children's literature which is "*Alice's Adventures in wonderland*" and two Persian translations of it, the first one in 1972 by Dr. Hasan Honarmandi and another by Zoya Pirzaad in 2011. Dr. Hasan Honarmandi has got his Ph.D in comparative literature and has translated many books into Persian; his translation of this book has been edited two times in thirteen years. Zoya Pirzaad translation has already been edited five times and has been one of the best-selling translations of this book in Iran.

The reason for choosing the book "*Alice's Adventures in wonderland*" for my research is that this book is full of culture-specific items which can help us show how translators have rendered each type of those cultural items that is what we need as a raw material for a detailed study on culture-specific items. The second reason is that this book is a best seller in the genre of children's literature and many children and even adults have read it since its publication in 1865.

Procedure

At first in this research sentences in which there is a culture-specific item, from the book "*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*" are chosen, then we survey in which of the categories of Newmark's model they fall. All the sentences together with their Persian translations will be included in a table and the frequency of using each method by the translators and a comparison between methods used by each translator will be shown. Fifteen methods of Newmark for translating culture-specific items are transference, naturalization, cultural equivalent, functional equivalent, descriptive equivalent, componential analysis, synonymy, through-translation, shift, modulation, accepted standard translation, compensation, paraphrase, couplet, and finally notes.

Data Analysis

Sentences containing CSIs from the book "*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*" together with their Persian translations and their literal meanings are selected below and based on Newmark's model for translating CSIs they are surveyed closely below.

Transference

"Tranference is the process of transferring a SL word to a TL text as a translation procedure" (Newmark, 1988, p. 81).

Source text	Literal meaning	Target text
She had just begun to dream that she was walking hand in hand with Dinah .	She dreams that she is walking hand in hand with Dinah.	داشت خواب می دید دست دردست داینا قدم می زند. (پیرزاد)

In this example the proper name Dinah is kept without change in target text which is an instance of transference.

Naturalization

"This procedure succeeds transference and adapts the SL word first to the normal pronunciation, then to the normal morphology of the TL" (ibid, p. 82).

Source text	Literal meaning	Target text
The rabbit-hole went straight on like a tunnel for some way.	The hole went straight like a long tunnel. (Pirzaad)	سوراخ مثل تونلی دراز تا مسافتی مستقیم می رفت. (پیرزاد)

The word tunnel has the same meaning in the target text but a different pronunciation, it is pronounced /tu:nəl/ in Persian which is an example of naturalization.

Cultural Equivalent

This strategy is "an approximate translation where a SL cultural word is translated by a TL cultural word" (ibid, p. 83).

Source text	Literal meaning	Target text
(it had, in fact, a sort of mixed flavour of cherry-tart, custard , pineapple, roast turkey, toffee, and hot buttered toast.)	In fact it was a mixture of flavor of cherry cake, custard, pineapple, roast turkey, toffee and hot bread which is covered with butter. (Honarmandi)	در واقع مخلوطی بود از مزه ی کیک آلبالویی، فرنی ، آناناس، بوقلمون سرخ کرده، آب نبات و نان داغی که رویش کره مالیده اند. (هنرمندی)

Custard is a pudding-like usually sweetened mixture made with eggs and milk. In Persian, the most natural equivalent for this word is *فرنی* /fərnɪ/, however it cannot have the same connotative meaning. Materials which are used for making *فرنی* do not include egg and it has a combination of some other materials. So according to Newmark's statement explained above, the word *فرنی* in Persian is not an "accurate" equivalent for the English word.

Functional equivalent

Functional equivalent "applied to cultural words, 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." (ibid, p. 83).

Source text	Literal meaning	Target text
'No, I give it up ,' Alice replied: 'what's the answer?'	Alice replied: no my wits don't reach somewhere. What's the answer? (Pirzaad)	الیس پاسخ داد: نه، عقلم به جایی نمی رسد . جواب چیست؟ (پیرزاد)

"Give it up" in the source text has been translated with an expression which is more specific and it is an instance of functional equivalent.

Descriptive analysis

In this strategy the translator uses some descriptions and explanations to clarify the meaning for his audience.

Source text	Literal meaning	Target text
whether the pleasure of making a daisy-chain would be worth the trouble of getting up...	Whether making a chain of daisy flowers would be worth the trouble of getting up... (Honarmandi)	درست کردن زنجیری از گل مینا به زحمت از جا بلند شدن می ارزد یا نه... (هنرمندی)

The compound noun daisy-chain instead of being translated by a compound noun in Persian has been described in target text which is descriptive analysis.

Componential analysis

It is defined as "comparing an SL word with a TL word which has a similar meaning but is not an obvious one-to-one equivalent, by demonstrating first their common and then their differing sense components. Normally the SL word has more specific meaning than the TL word" (ibid: 114).

Source text	Literal meaning	Target text
the March Hare will be much the most interesting.	The March Hare must be one hundred times more interesting. (Honarmandi)	خرگوش فروردینی باید صد برابر جالب تر باشد. (هنرمندی)

The word Hare in English based on Longman advanced American dictionary is defined as "an animal like a rabbit, but larger and with longer ears and longer back legs, that can run very quickly" but it is translated into "rabbit" in Persian which has a similar meaning but is not an obvious one-to-one equivalent and the SL word has more specific meaning than the TL word. Therefore it can be an example of componential analysis.

Synonymy

According to Newmark, *synonymy* is defined as a "near TL equivalent to a SL word" (ibid, p. 84).

Source text	Literal meaning	Target text
'What is a Caucus -race?' said Alice.	Alice asked: "what is an elective race?" (Pirzaad)	آلیس پرسید "مسابقه انتخاباتی چی هست؟" (پیرزاد)

The word Caucus in English in Longman advanced American dictionary is defined as "a local meeting of the members of a political party to choose people to represent them at a larger meeting, or to choose a candidate in an election." which the Persian translation is the near synonym for this meaning; therefore synonymy in translation has been taken place here.

Through-translation

It is "The literal translation of common collocations, name of organizations, the components of compounds and perhaps phrases, which is also known as *calque* or *loan translation*" (ibid, p. 84).

Source text	Literal meaning	Target text
Alice thought over all she could remember about ravens and writing-desks , which wasn't much.	Alice tried to remember all she could about crow and writing-desks which wasn't much. (Honarmandi)	آلیس سعی کرد هر چه از کلاغ و میز تحریر می دانست بیاد بیاورد که چندان زیاد نبود. (هنرمندی)

Source text	Literal meaning	Target text
then she looked at the sides of the well, and noticed that they were filled with cupboards and book-shelves .	Then she looked at the sides of the well which were full of bookshelves and cupboards of dishes. (Pirzaad)	بعد به دیواره های چاه نگاه کرد که پر بود از قفسه های کتاب و گنجه های ظرف. (پیرزاد)

Writing-desks and book-shelves in the above Persian renderings have been translated by the same compound noun equivalents which the strategy of through translation or loan translation has been applied by the Persian translator here.

Shifts or transpositions

This strategy "involves a change in the grammar from SL to TL". The first type of shift occurs when there is a change from singular to plural. The second type of shift is required when an SL grammatical structure does not exist in the TL. Finally the third type of shift is the one where literal translation is grammatically possible but may not accord with the TL (ibid, p. 86).

Source text	Literal meaning	Target text
The bright eager eyes were looking up into hers.	The bright eager eyes were looking up into hers. (Honarmandi)	چشم های درخشان و مشتاق خیره به او می نگرست. (هنرمندی)

In this example the verb for eyes in English is "were" which is plural but in Persian the verb look is used in a singular form, consequently "shifts" or "transposition" strategy has been used by the translator.

Modulation

In this strategy the translators try to create the message of the SL in the TL in conformity with the current norms of the TL. In *modulation* the SL and the TL may be different in terms of perspective (ibid, p. 88).

Source text	Literal meaning	Target text
'and the moral of <i>that</i> is— Take care of the sense, and the sounds will take care of themselves.	And the moral of that is: drop after drop will be collected to get a sea of sounds. (Pirzaad)	و حکمتش این که معنی قطره قطره جمع گردد، تا دریای الفاظ شود. (پیرزاد)

In number 11, there is an idiom in the source text and its translation in Persian is done by another idiom which isn't however the exact equivalent but the message in the Persian is in conformity with current norms of the TL which is an instance of modulation in translation.

Recognized translation

It is defined as: "the official generally accepted translation of any institutional term" (ibid, p. 89).

Source text	Literal meaning	Target text
and, last of all this grand procession, came the King and Queen of hearts.	and, last came of this grand procession, the King and Queen of hearts. (Pirzaad)	و در انتهای این صف با شکوه تشریف فرمایی: شاه و ملکه دل (پیرزاد)

In playing cards, the hearts is generally accepted by Iranians as "دل" /del/ which can be an example of recognized translation by the translator here.

Compensation

"This is said to occur when loss of meaning, sound- effect, metaphor or pragmatic effect in one part of a sentence is compensated in another part, or in contiguous sentence" (ibid, p. 90).

Source text	Literal meaning	Target text
And pour the waters of the Nile On every golden scale!	And suddenly heard a commotion. From a herd of little fishes of Nile. (Honarmandi)	به گوش آمدش ناگهان قال و قیل ز یک گله از جوجه ماهی نیل (هنرمندی)

The word "Nile" in the first part has not been translated in the first part of the target text but in the second line of the Persian poem the translator has included this word, although not exactly in the same form but he has applied the strategy of compensation here.

Paraphrase

"This is an amplification or explanation of the meaning of a segment of the text" (ibid, p. 90).

Source text	Literal meaning	Target text
'It is a very good height indeed!' said the Caterpillar angrily, rearing itself upright as it spoke (it was exactly three inches high).	...Its height was exactly 7 centimeters. (Honarmandi)	خیلی هم اندازه خوببست! کرم ابریشم عصبانی این را گفت و کمر راست کرد. قدش درست سه اینچ (هفت سانتی متر) بود. (هنرمندی)

The unit of measuring length in the source text is inch but in the target text it has been changed into meter which is more common in the Persian, therefore the translator has used paraphrase in this example.

Couplets, triplet, quadruplet

This strategy occurs when the translator combines two or more than two different procedures for dealing with a single problem (ibid: 91).

Source text	Literal meaning	Target text
Alice noticed with some surprise that the pebbles were all turning into little cakes as they lay on the floor.	Alice surprisingly saw the pebbles were changing into sweets as they fall on the floor. (Pirzaad)	الیس حیرت زده دید سنگریزه ها تا می افتند کف اتاق تبدیل می شوند به شیرینی. (پیرزاد)

In the example above, at first transference strategy has been used by keeping the same proper name "Alice" in the source and target language and then synonymy has been used by changing the word "cakes" into Persian "sweet".

Notes

Notes are "additional information in a translation" (ibid, p. 91).

Source text	Literal meaning	Target text
Alice thought 'I daresay it's a French mouse, come over with William the Conqueror.'	Alice thought if I am not wrong it is a French mouse which has come to our country with William the Conqueror. [footnotes] (William the Conqueror was the King of England from 1066 to 1087) (Pirzaad)	الیس فکر کرد اگر اشتباه نکنم این یک موش فرانسوی است که همراه ویلیام فاتح به کشور ما آمده. [پاورقی]: ویلیام فاتح از سال 1066 تا 1087 پادشاه انگلستان بود. (پیرزاد)

And finally in the last sentence, the translator after translating the name "William the conquerer" into Persian gives a footnote on the bottom of the page and elaborates it more. Therefore, the strategy of "notes" has been applied in this example.

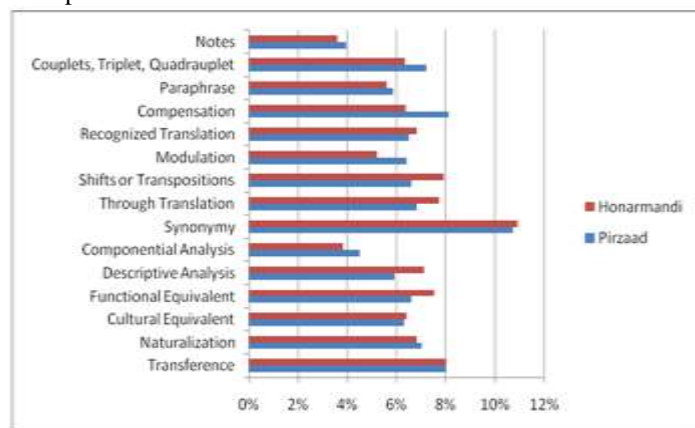


Chart 1: Percentage of strategies applied by Persian translators for rendering CSIs in "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland"

It should be noted that the strategy of borrowing occurred more than other strategies in the translations but since it was not among Newmark's strategies, it was not included in the chart.

Newmark (1988: 81) after explaining translation procedures and mentioning that contrary to translation methods which apply to the whole text, these procedures apply to sentences and small units of language, then he goes to cultural categorization and defines five categories for foreign cultural words as 1.Ecology, 2.Material culture (artefacts), 3.Social culture (work and leisure), 4.Organizations, customs, activities, procedures, concepts and finally 5.Gestures and habits.

We include here some cultural items of the book "Alice's adventures in wonderland" and categorize them according to Newmark's above-mentioned five cultural categories:

1. Ecology: Newmark (ibid: 96,97) names items in ecology as Flora, fauna, winds, plains, hills and mentions that the main

features of this group is that they are politically and commercially value free.

In the examples above the poem "And pour the waters of the Nile

On every golden scale!" which translator has rendered it by the help of the strategy of compensation, the word Nile goes under Ecology categorization of Newmark.

2. Material culture (artefacts): Food, clothes, houses and towns, and transport are four sub-category of Material culture and as Newmark mentions (ibid: 97) food is the most important among these four.

In the mentioned examples, the sentence: "Alice noticed with some surprise that the pebbles were all turning into little cakes as they lay on the floor." The word cakes which is translated using the strategy of synonymy, is in the category of Material culture and subcategory of food. And also the words cherry-tart, custard and toffee in the sentence "It had, in fact, a sort of mixed flavour of cherry-tart, custard, pineapple, roast turkey, toffee, and hot buttered toast,) are under the same category.

3. Social culture (work and leisure): In this category Newmark (ibid: 98) mentions that one has to differentiate between denotative and connotative problems of translation. He also believes that connotative words in this group are more difficult to find an exact equivalent for them than denotative ones.

In the sentence "'That's right!' shouted the Queen. 'Can you play croquet?'" which is translated into: ملکه دل فریاد زد: بسیار خوب کروکه بلدی؟

The word "croquet" which is rendered into Persian to کروکه /kru:kə/ using the strategy of naturalization, is categorized in social culture in the subcategory of leisure.

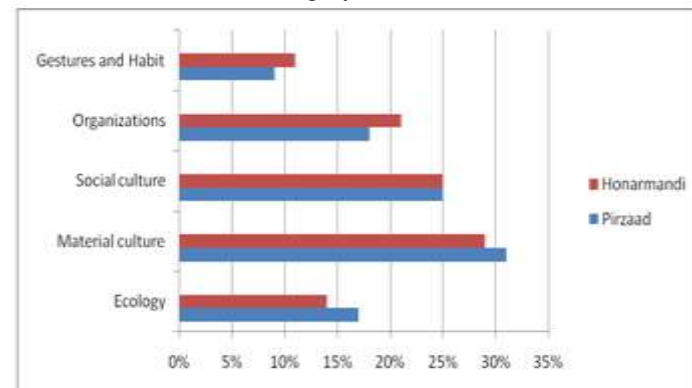


Chart 2: Percentage of CSIs based on cultural category of Newmark in "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland"

4. Organizations, customs, activities, procedures, concepts: in the sentence: 'It is a very good height indeed!' said the Caterpillar angrily, rearing itself upright as it spoke (it was exactly three inches high) which is translated as"

"خیلی هم اندازه خوبیست." کرم ابریشم عصبانی این را گفت و کمر راست کرد. قدش درست سه اینچ (هفت سانتی متر) بود.

In this sentence, the translator, by using the strategy of paraphrase and changing the unit of measuring length from inch into meter, has rendered the cultural item and this culture-specific item which is a concept falls into fourth category of Newmark.

5. Gestures and habit: As Newmark (ibid, p.108) believes, for gestures and habits there is a distinction between description and function which can be made where necessary in ambiguous cases. Giving an example, in the sentence " 'May it please your Majesty,' said Two, in a very humble tone, going down on one knee as he spoke, 'we were trying—' which is rendered into:

دو زانو زد و در نهایت خضوع گفت "عرض شود خدمت علیا حضرت که ما داشتیم سعی می کردیم"

The phrase "going down on one knee" goes under " Gestures and habit" cultural category of Newmark.

Conclusion

Cultural items in their broader sense which mainly refer to the way of life, attitudes, thinking and importantly customs and habits of people play a major role in translation studies and have changed into one of the central issues in translatology.

Despite their importance, culture-specific items are one of the problematic and difficult issues in translation. Many scholars have proposed theories and models for rendering CSIs, among them, Peter Newmark(1988) and his model in this field is one of the most influential.

We in this study, based on Newmark's model tried to shed light on different strategies of translation of CSIs in the genre of children's literature. To achieve this goal, a close survey about CSIs in the book "*Alice's Adventures in wonderland*" was conducted. CSIs in that book and their Persian translations were studied to see what strategy among fifteen strategies of Newmark for translation of CSIs was applied by the translator. The results demonstrated that synonymy and transference were used more frequently than others although in some cases the translator had to use more than one strategy which is called couplet by Newmark and sometimes none of these strategies were useful for the translator and he resorted to applying omission, deletion and other strategies. We also categorized the CSIs in the book based on five cultural categories of Newmark and this analysis revealed that the second category of Newmark which is material culture had the most frequent occurrence among others.

Finally the researcher suggests further studies about CSIs for other books in the genre of children's literature due to newness of studies in this field and novelty of studies in the field of cultural debates.

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