Translation of Slangs in Idiolects: The Case of J. D. Salinger’s “The Catcher in the Rye”

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Abstract—This study tries to research how slang words and phrases are translated in idiolects based on Venuti’s model that might be one of the challenging issues in translation. To do so, two translated versions of “The Catcher in the Rye” by Mohammad Najafi (2010) and Ahmad Najafi (2010) are scrutinized. Due to Venuti’s model, the results of the study clearly indicate that slang words and expressions cannot be translated word by word because they are culture-specific and should be translated in such a way to be acceptable to the target readers.

Index Terms—idiolects, invisibility, slang, cultural translation

I. INTRODUCTION

Translation is a process by which a chain of signifiers constituting SL text is replaced by a chain of signifiers in the TL text which are the translator’s choices (Venuti, 1995; Derrida, 1982). Meaning is an effect of relations and differences among signifiers along a potentially endless chain that never presents an original unity (Derrida, 1982). Hence, both the ST and the TT are considered derivative, because they contain linguistic and cultural materials that neither the writer nor the translator has generated (Venuti, 1995; Derrida, 1979). Venuti (1995) focuses on cultural differences and defines translation as a forcible replacement for the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text with a text that is intelligible to the target reader (see also, Nida, 1964, Toury, 1978, Newmark, 1988, Baker 1992, Shuttleworth & Cowie, 1997). He (1995) discusses the ‘invisibility’ of the translator with two types of translating strategies: domestication and foreignization, two terms coined by Venuti that are concerned with choosing the text to translate and the method of translation. According to Venuti (1995), domestication refers to an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to the TL cultural values that produces a transparent and fluent translation that minimizes the strangeness of the foreign text for target language readers, while foreignization is an ethnodeviant pressure on some cultural values to register the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text that produce a target text which breaks the conventions by retaining the foreign nature of the original (Shuttleworth & Cowie 1997).

Purpose & Significance of the Study

As mentioned earlier, translating slang is a most arguable area in language and in order to deal with the problems that arise in the process of translation, translators use various strategies. Examination and classification of the strategies is very useful and helpful for the translator. “The Catcher in the Rye” a novel by J. D. Salinger, published in 1951 was selected for the aim of this study and the problems of translating slang in idioclects were investigated in order to show the extent to which slangs are preserved in translation using domestication and foreignization strategies. “The Catcher in the Rye” is not only a literary work but also an example of teenage slang in the 1950s. Although studies have been conducted on the translation of slang in this novel, none of them have investigated translation of slang according to Venuti's model. The researcher hopes that this study will provide further explanation on translation especially on the strategies proposed by Venuti (1995) and making readers aware that translation will never be the same as the original. This is simply so because the original text contains values which might be different from those in the target language.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Landers (2001) considers literary translation as a unique among all other forms of translation such as technical, scientific, legal, and so forth. Only literary translation lets one share consistently in the creative process and the translator experiences the aesthetic joys of working with great literature, of recreating in a new language a work that would otherwise remain beyond reach (Landers, 2001& Newmark, 1988). The immediate interest here is in the notable delight that literary translation offers. Landers (2004) finds that literary translation is associated with unending choices and the literary translator must make a choice so that at the result of these choices, translation comes into existence. He
asserts that because the aim of literary translation is publication, the dedicated literary translator should aim at sharing the final result with TL readers. It must reflect all the literary features of the source text (Riffaterre, 1992; Gutt, 1991, Newmark, 1988). It is one of the central requirements of literary translation to afford a firm interpretation about both meaning and effect. Hence, literary translators are usually much more involved in finding out a corresponding mood, tone, voice, and effect than in literal translation and this is another reason behind the distinctiveness of literary translation since it does not only transmit the original meaning but also the form and effect; also, literal translation of a literary work does not reproduce the effect of the original (Savory, 1957; Gutt, 1991, Jackson, 2003; Tytler, 1774).

A translated text should be the site where a different culture emerges, too (Venuti, 1995 and Robinson, 1997). One of the most difficult problems in translating is found in the differences between SL culture and TL culture (Larson, 1998). When cultures are similar, there is less difficulty in translating because both languages may have terms that are more or less equivalent for various aspects of the culture. When the cultures are very different, finding equivalent lexical items is often very difficult (Larson, 1998, Robinson, 1997). Translators, who are aware of cultural differences and their significance for translation, can do translation better. Therefore, it is very important to know that without a considerable level of cultural knowledge, literary texts cannot be satisfactorily translated (Robinson, 1997).

Slang

Slang is not a new phenomenon; in 19th century it became a part of life of the modern cities and a part of modern society in general (Asher, 1994). It was the era between 1940s and 1950s, when young people started displaying great differences in their manner of dress, hairstyles and speech from the previous generations; this developed into Britain as Teenage Revolution or Movement, then this concept spread across America and to other neighboring countries to show youth as individuals should be recognized as a subculture with their own rights and rules (Hudson, 1983). Some studies have been carried out on the use of slang (Partridge, 1935; Dundes & Schonhorn, 1963; de Klerk, 1991; Hummon, 1994; Eble, 1996). Eble (1996) stresses on novelty of slang and state that slang words apparently exist for a shorter time because they are either replaced by another term or provide a synonym for a word already existing in slang or they can disappear and appear again corresponding to the current fashion style (Eble, 1996). Speakers may use slang to show their belonging to a group and establish solidarity or intimacy with the other group members (Mattiello, 2005; Eble, 1996; Swan, 2002; Goodfellow, 2006; Mesthrie & Tabouret-Keller, 2001; De Klerk, 1995). Furthermore, Fairclough (1984) claims that some slang words are detected in any dictionary but their meanings do not match with the literal meanings because they depend on the place where they exist in a sentence.

III. THIS STUDY

This study is a descriptive library research in the form of a case study based on using slangs in idiolects both in English and Persian.

A. Materials

The data upon which the study is based were derived from "The Catcher in the Rye" by J. D. Salinger with two Persian translations, one by Mohammad Najafi (1984/2010) and the other by Ahmad Karimi (2002/2010).

B. Procedure

After reading the original text and its two translations, 40 problematic idiolect items were randomly selected and analyzed. Then, the strategies used by the translators to render the items into Persian were determined based on Venuti’s (1995) theory of translation. Abolhassan Najafi’s Farhang Farshi e Amianeh was considered as criterion for Persian slang.

IV. RESULTS

It was mentioned before that the aim of this study was analyzing English culture-specific items in idioclects of two Persian translations of "The Catcher in the Rye" in order to see which strategy has been used when translating. To this end, 40 samples from "The Catcher in the Rye" were provided in both English and Persian as follow (see Appendix A).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Translation Procedure</th>
<th>Translation Strategies Used for Each Item</th>
<th>Percentage of Translation Strategies Used for Each Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1st Translator</td>
<td>2nd Translator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domesticated</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreignized</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutralized</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Untranslated</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domesticated-Foreignized</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As it is shown in Table (1) and Figure (1), we can clearly understand that the first translator translated 27 (67.5%) items out of 40 as domesticated, no items foreignized, 9 items (22.5%) as neutralized, 3 items (7.5%) as untranslated and 1 item (2.5%) as domesticated-foreignized. However, for the second translator, 30 items (75%) are translated as domesticated, 1 item (2.5%) as foreignized, 2 items (5%) as neutralized, 6 items (15%) as untranslated and 1 item (2.5%) as domesticated-foreignized.

V. DISCUSSION

This comparative study shows the number and proportions of translated slang items for translation. Regarding the preserving slang items in translating idiolect, it seems that based on the Venuti’s model and using the results of table (4.3), Najafi’s outperforms in preserving slang items (2.5%) compared Karmi’s (0%).

The results show that domestication is the dominant translation strategy in both translations, although the Najafi’s is more domesticated than the Karimi’s. In other words, the Najafi’s translation is more invisible than Karmi’s that also shows the transparency or naturalness of the Najafi’s; this helps the target readers to understand and accept the translated texts and enjoy reading them; that is because people of a given culture look at things from their own perspective. Although this is sometimes achieved by sacrificing the cultural and stylistic features of the ST. Foreignization strategy reproduces the essence of the ST for the target readers who are not familiar with the ST culture. Nevertheless, it has its limitations in practice, too. Foreignization may cause some comprehension problems, of course when two cultures are very different; for example, the target readers cannot enjoy reading the translated works and the message fails to communicate. It exhibits a certain degree of exoticism, bringing into the target text the cultural foreignness and strangeness of the source culture. Also, it may lead to an awkward and unnatural translation. However, if two languages are related, foreignized translation can often be understood since the general grammatical form may be similar.

Therefore, although Venuti strongly advocates foreignization, it seems that he does not consider different target readers and only regards the elites as his readers and ignores the level and the acceptability of the readers in foreignized translation. In order to achieve fluency and to cater for the taste of readers, it is better to adopt a strategy of domestication especially in translation of culture-specific terms such as slang items.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

This study shows that translation is a kind of cross-cultural communication activity, especially in the case of literary translation. The results of this study show that slang cannot be translated as word for word or by using the foreignizing method as Venuti proposes. Because it would not be appropriate in the context of situation, and would make no sense. Therefore, the translators should be both linguistically and culturally competent when dealing with problems caused by cultural differences. They should try their best to make their translations acceptable to the target readers at the prerequisite of respecting the original. In addition, when using foreignization strategy in translation of slang as a culture-specific item, a short definition or paraphrase of the term, which is either added within the text or in the form of a footnote should be given. The strategy of translating a slang item with a normal, non-slang word or expression can be appropriate when there is no corresponding target language slang which conveys the meaning of the original. Thus, translating slang needs a deep lexical and cultural knowledge of the SL and TL; it means that the translator needs to be up to date with the rapid development of slang vocabulary by recognizing the cultural attitudes of the slang speakers of all cultures. Moreover, identifying slangs and determining the most appropriate equivalent is not an easy task because of the highly dynamic nature of slang.
The general conclusion of the study is that, slang words and expressions are translatable, but depending on a special situation, each demands a particular strategy. Since the majority of the slangs in one language do not usually have corresponding items in another language, there does not seem to be one ‘best’ strategy. In other words, we cannot overstress one translation strategy and ignore the other. Domestication and foreignization are a unity of opposites and can be applied concurrently so that the source text can be transferred to the target reader well and promote the culture communication.

VII. IMPLICATIONS

In this study, the focus has been on determining the use of slang and the transfer of the use of slang from one language to another. The results of the research have been analyzed and the conclusions have been drawn. They are expected to be useful for further investigations of translation methods as well as to enhance new quality understanding of translation studies as a whole. The translation of slang is a difficult task for translators since it is closely knit with the culture and society of the SL. The two strategies discussed in the translation of slang help much to perform the action of translation; however, the translator should achieve such translation which is linguistically correct and acceptable to the reader of the target language, because language and culture are closely related and both aspects must be considered for translation. Moreover, it should be kept in mind that when the text is culture-bound, there will necessarily be some loss. Therefore, with regard to the nature of the text and the similarities between the ideal ST and TT reader, one of important aspects in translation is to determine how much missing background information should be provided by the translator using translation strategies. Therefore, for preserving specific cultural references some additional information should be brought to the TT. This implies that foreignization should not be used since it this is not justified when considering the expectations of the ideal TT reader.

Appendix A: ST Slang Items and Their TT Equivalents Based on the Translation of the Two Translators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>SL text</th>
<th>Karimi's Translation</th>
<th>TS</th>
<th>Najafi's Translation</th>
<th>TS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>That knocked him out. He started chuckling like a madman.</td>
<td>از آن حرف خونش ام ام شن بیوته ها ها خورم (13)</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>خونش از آن حرف های خانه کدام (15)</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Grand. There’s a word I really hate. It’s a phony. I could poke every time I hear it.</td>
<td>&quot;حساسی&quot; کلمه ای که واقعاً از آن نمی دانم. اصلاً حفظت ندارم. هر چه که آن را می شنوم، بهم هم خورم. (17)</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>هر چه که آن را می شنوم، بهم هم نخورم. (14)</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Grand. There’s a word I really hate. It’s a phony. I could poke every time I hear it.</td>
<td>&quot;حساسی&quot; کلمه ای که واقعاً از آن نمی دانم. اصلاً حفظت ندارم. هر چه که آن را می شنوم، بهم هم خورم. (17)</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>هر چه که آن را می شنوم، بهم هم نخورم. (14)</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I told him I was a real moron, and all that stuff. Ya lost them, ya knew.</td>
<td>گذم که من واقعاً یک کذش است از آن افراد. یا می خورم، یا می شنوم. (21)</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>فکرش هی کشدم کَ کتبه هی خیلی لثیل (16)</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The funny thing is, though, I was sort of thinking of something else while I shot the bull.</td>
<td>نامزه ای جانت که من می گفت، این که داشت نسیم. نانف خانه که درک پذیر. (22)</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>یکم بند نگی را که کُب بهم نخورم (17)</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I saw it in the window of this sports store when we got out of the subway, just after I noticed I’d lost all the goddess falls.</td>
<td>من از خانه ها که من می گفت، این که داشت نسیم. نانف خانه که درک پذیر. (22)</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>از آن را روزی در سوختن که من دیدم که از آن گرفتم. (21)</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I thought it was going to stink, but it wasn’t. It was a very good book.</td>
<td>اوت فکر قیم که من کتاب مرفه و هرچدی ایست امی این طور نبود. کتاب بسیار خوبی. (30)</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>کتابی که زمزم که ولی. بز دیوی. (16)</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>That story just about killed me. What I like best is a book that’s at least funny once in a while.</td>
<td>نامزه ای جانت که من می گفت، این که داشت نسیم. نانف خانه که درک پذیر. (22)</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>داستانه خنی به پیچیسپ به پیچید وحش (22)</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>He was also sort of a nasty guy. I wasn’t too crazy about him, to tell you the truth.</td>
<td>اوت فکر قیم که من کتاب مرفه و هرچدی ایست امی این طور نبود. کتاب بسیار خوبی. (30)</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>از آن را روزی در سوختن که من دیدم که از آن گرفتم. (21)</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>He hated Stradlater’s guts and he never came in the room if Stradlater was around.</td>
<td>اوت فکر قیم که من کتاب مرفه و هرچدی ایست امی این طور نبود. کتاب بسیار خوبی. (30)</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>از آن را روزی در سوختن که من دیدم که از آن گرفتم. (21)</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>He just wanted me to quit reading and enjoying myself. He didn’t give a damn about the fencing.</td>
<td>اوت فکر قیم که من کتاب مرفه و هرچدی ایست امی این طور نبود. کتاب بسیار خوبی. (30)</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>از آن را روزی در سوختن که من دیدم که از آن گرفتم. (21)</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>I sneaked a look to see what he was fiddling around with on my chiffonier.</td>
<td>اوت فکر قیم که من کتاب مرفه و هرچدی ایست امی این طور نبود. کتاب بسیار خوبی. (30)</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>از آن را روزی در سوختن که من دیدم که از آن گرفتم. (21)</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I was only horsing around, naturally. That stuff gives me a bang sometimes.

It made a big clunk, and it hurt like hell. It damn near killed old Ackley, though.

I call people "a prince" quite often when I'm horsing around. It keeps me from getting bored or something.

Ackley, it was different. Ackley was a very nosy bastard.

You couldn't rile him too easily. He was too conceited.

I kept thinking about Jane, and about Stradlater having a date with her and—

All of a sudden, Ackley barged back in again, through the damn shower curtain, as usual. For once in my stupid life, I was really glad to see him.

It was supposed to be something holy, for God's sake, when he sat down at the piano.

You shouldn't see his fingers while he—just his old face. Big deal.

I was sorry as hell I'd kidded her. Some people you shouldn't kid, even if they deserve it.

It made a big clunk, and it hurt like hell. It damn near killed old Ackley, though.

It was supposed to be something holy, for God's sake, when he sat down at the piano.

I was sorry as hell I'd kidded her. Some people you shouldn't kid, even if they deserve it.

He was a pretty good guy. Quite amusing and all.

I was sorry as hell I'd kidded her. Some people you shouldn't kid, even if they deserve it.

I was sorry as hell I'd kidded her. Some people you shouldn't kid, even if they deserve it.

He was a pretty good guy. Quite amusing and all.

My memory's a lot worse than it used to be. I don't remember exactly how much I had, but I was pretty loaded.

We were playing "Just One of Those Things" and even then they couldn't ruin it entirely. It's a swell song.

I was sorry as hell I'd kidded her. Some people you shouldn't kid, even if they deserve it.

I was sorry as hell I'd kidded her. Some people you shouldn't kid, even if they deserve it.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>The funny part was, though, we were the worst skaters on the whole goddam rink. I mean the worst. And there were some lulus, too.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Boy, did she hit the ceiling when I said that. I know I shouldn't've said it, and I probably wouldn't've ordinarily, but she was depressing the hell out of me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>She can be very snotty sometimes. She can be quite snotty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>It was a helluva lot easier getting out of the house than it was getting in, for some reason.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Then the old lady that was around a hundred years old and I shot the breeze for a while...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**REFERENCES**


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