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## Research Paper

### A Study of Persian Translation of Cultural Elements in Waltari's *The Egyptian*

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#### Abstract

This study sought to investigate translation strategies in translation of culture-specific items (CSIs) in Persian translation of 'The Egyptian' novel by Mika Waltari. To this end, it benefited from corpus-based comparative content analysis design within a qualitative approach. The corpus of this study consisted of 150 pages of the novel 'The Egyptian' by Mika Waltari along with their Persian translations by Zabihollah Mansouri, which were selected through simple random sampling. Data analysis included parallel comparison of the source text and its translation in terms of the occurrence of different types of translation strategies used in the translations. Furthermore, statistical procedures which were conducted consisted of calculation of frequency and percentage of different translation strategies (to identify the most and least frequent strategies) and chi-square test (to see if there is a significant difference between the frequencies of different strategies used by the translator). The results of data analysis showed that the translator has used the following translation strategies: Calque, equivalence, adaptation, literal translation, modulation and omission. Moreover, it was found that the most frequent strategy was calque. Furthermore, the lowest frequency belonged to modulation and omission. In addition, a significant difference was revealed between the frequencies of different translation strategies. The findings have some implications for translation students, translation teachers, and translators.

**Keywords:** *Culture, Culture-specific items (CSIs), translation strategies*



## Introduction

Since CSIs are exclusive to the specific languages wherein, they occur, their translation is considered as challenging and even difficult for translators when translating between different languages (Saber, 2015). Similarly, as put by Natalia (2014), as one of the common translation problems translators experience, one can refer to translation of cultural words or culture-specific concepts when the culture-specific concept used in the source text is unknown or unfamiliar in the target text culture. Moreover, translation of the CSIs constitutes a main part of translation of novels wherein different cultures are presented. Therefore, it can be said that translating the CSIs is inevitable for translators of novels. However, it cannot be denied that translating these items between different languages is problematic and challenging for many translators. This necessitates the use of different strategies for translating culturally specific items in different kinds of texts. What complicates the matters more is that equivalents of most of CSIs cannot be found in bilingual dictionaries; therefore, as a common strategy, when confronting with the CSIs, many translators intentionally delete them or use deletion strategy (Hosseini Maasoum & Davtalab, 2011, as cited in Saber, 2015). This can lead to generation of translations which do not completely and correctly convey the meaning of the ST.

Additionally, reviewing the existing literature, it is revealed that while some studies have addressed translation strategies used in translation of CSIs in different works, missing in the literature is a study on translation strategies used in translation of CSIs in Persian translation of 'The Egyptian' by Mika Waltari based on Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995) taxonomy. This is while 'The Egyptian' is a popular and interesting novel Persian translation of it is worth investigating. These motivated the researcher to investigate the issue. So, the following research questions were addressed.

Q1. What translation strategies have been used in translation of CSIs in Persian translation of 'The Egyptian' by Mika Waltari based on Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995) taxonomy?

Q2. What translation strategy has been used with the highest frequency in translation of CSIs in Persian translation of 'The Egyptian' by Mika Waltari based on Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995) taxonomy?

## Literature Review

Globalization phenomenon has increasingly made the position of translation more prominent than before. That is, translation has found its own way as an important field which is worth investigating, and this makes the status of translation studies more significant (Ehsani & Zohrabi, 2014). Besides, literary texts are considered as a type of specific genre that can have broad audience who are diverse regarding education, employment, family background, gender, etc. This implies the need to do more studies on translation of this genre. Every language is characterized by its own ways of presenting events according to its own culture-bound etymology, origin, words, proverbs, slangs and idiomatic expressions; this is what makes translation of CSIs difficult and demanding for translators (Newmark, 1988, as cited in Abed & Vahid Dastjerdi, 2018). The same argument was proposed by Fahim and Mazaheri (2013) in stating that since translation is considered as a means of communication between different nations with different languages, it plays a significant role in transferring culture from one language into another, therefore translators should be also concerned with inter-cultural transference and go far beyond inter-lingual transfer. However, they noted that translators can use

different methods and procedures for the purpose of intercultural transfer and this issue has recently become increasingly interesting to many translation scholars.

In a study by Arvela (2013), translations of cultural aspects of ethnic food in some published articles were analyzed. This study benefited from a corpus-based design to achieve its aims. According to the results of data analysis, literal translation and paraphrase were the most-frequently-used strategies used in the translations.

In a study by Habtoor and Al-Qahtani (2018), the intercultural transfer in translating culture-specific items in Narnia Chronicles series from English into Arabic was explored. It was found that contrary to the fact that all the three books have been translated by the same translator, there is no consistency in the used translation strategies. It was also indicated that the translator used both domestication and foreignization translation strategies in translating Narnia Chronicles series.

Shehab Abood (2018) investigated English to Arabic translation of Shakespeare's Hamlet in terms of the transference of culture specific references. To this aim, he used Venuti's (1995) model of domestication and foreignization. As revealed by the results of data analysis, the following translation strategies has been used by the translator in translating culture specific references: literal translation, calque, functional equivalence, globalization, cultural substitution, and deletion.

Abed and Vahid Dastjerdi (2018) sought to identify culture-specific elements in the English to Persian translation of Matilda to see to what extent the translator has kept fidelity in translating such elements using Lefevere's domain of discourse and Newmark's (1988) taxonomy. In achieving this, the researcher used a mixed method design. The findings showed that the translator has changed universe/domain of discourse in several cases, mostly when using domestication strategy.

In a study by Yousefi (2017), Persian to English translation (by Rehatsek) of the cultural specific items in Gulistan of Saadi was explored. To this aim, Newmark's taxonomy of translation strategies was employed. It was revealed that Rehatsek has benefited from Transference, Functional Equivalent, Through-translation, Synonymy, Descriptive Equivalent, Componential Analysis, Modulation, Cultural Equivalent and Naturalization for translation of cultural specific items. Moreover, it was shown that Transference strategy was the most frequently used strategy.

In a study by Daghighi and Hashemian (2016), translation of cultural items was investigated in English translation of Jalal Al-Ahmad's *By the Pen* by Ghanoonparvar (1988) based on Newmark's model. To this aim, first, the researcher analyzed the source and target texts based on Newmark's model to identify translation strategies used in translations. Next, frequency of different strategies was calculated. Results showed that functional equivalent was the most frequently used strategy, and modulation and paraphrase were the least frequently used ones.

Sabzalipour and Pishkar (2015) conducted a study on the English into Persian translation of cultural terms in *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* based on Fernandes (2006) and Farahzad's (1995) model of translating strategies. The results of the study showed that the most frequent strategy used has been transliteration strategy. Besides, it was shown that all of Fernandes's (2006) strategies have been applied by the translator except transcription, transposition and conventionality.

Fahim and Mazaheri (2013) attempted to compare strategies used in translating culture-specific items in four masterpieces of English literature including 'Wuthering Heights', 'The Scarlet Letter', 'Pride and Prejudice' and 'Gone with the Wind' before

the Islamic Revolution of Iran and after the Revolution. Theoretical framework of the study was Aixelá's model. According to the results, in both periods, conservative approach has been prevalent in translations. Furthermore, the researchers found that while in the period before the Revolution, translators has had more conservative tendencies, more substitution tendencies have been observed among translators after the Revolution.

Newton-Bruzza (2011) analyzed the word Niger as a cultural marker in translations of the novel 'Mark Twain's Adventures of Huckleberry Finn'. According to the results, although the translators have used different kinds of strategies in the translation of this cultural marker, no significant differences were found in the strategies used by the translators.

In Makinen's (2010) study, translation strategies used in dealing with cultural terms in the Finnish and German translations of personal names in the three first Harry Potter books was explored. This study was mainly concerned with translation of different names as the cultural markers. According to the results, adaptation was the most-frequently-used strategy in the translations.

Ardelean (2009, as cited in Saberi, 2015) investigated the techniques used by the translators in translation of cultural elements. It was identified that paraphrase and adaptation strategies were the most prevalent strategies employed by translators. The result of this was deviation from the main meaning of the source text.

This study is worth taking for several reasons. Firstly, this study can develop translation students and translators' knowledge base of translation strategies. Secondly, it can bridge an existing gap in the literature because so far, to the best knowledge of the researcher, translation strategies used in translation of CSIs in Persian translation of 'The Egyptian' by Mika Waltari based on Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995) taxonomy have not been investigated. Thirdly, results of this study inform translators of the translation strategies used in Persian translation of a popular novel namely, 'The Egyptian' by Mika Waltari. Fourthly, this study can generate new research areas for future researchers. Fifthly, this study makes translation students more familiar with Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995) strategies, and gives them useful information about cultural adaptations which will be useful for them in dealing with difficulties confronted in translations of cultural elements.

### Method

The corpus used in this study consisted of 150 pages of the novel 'The Egyptian' by Mika Waltari along with its Persian translation by Zabihollah Mansouri. These pages were randomly selected from the English novel. It is worth noting that in this study, parallel corpus was used to compare original English source texts and its Persian translation, meaning that the extracted sentences of the novel 'The Egyptian' by Mika Waltari was compared with its Persian translation by Zabihollah Mansouri. To achieve its stated objectives, this study benefited from corpus-based comparative content analysis design within a qualitative approach. As the name speaks for itself, generally, in this design, the content of the texts is qualitatively analyzed for the recurring patterns and themes to be identified. In this study, the content of the source and target texts was analyzed to identify translation strategies used in translation of the CSIs.



Data collection of this study started with finding the novel 'The Egyptian' by Mika Waltari along with their Persian translations by Zabihollah Mansouri. Then, 150 pages of the novel were randomly selected. Next, the culturally specific items used in these pages were identified. Following that, the researcher found the Persian equivalents of the identified items in the Persian translation of the novel by Zabihollah Mansouri. Then, the researcher and an experienced translator qualitatively analyzed the content of the English culturally specific items and their Persian translations. In the process of this qualitative investigation, they identified different types of translation strategies used in the Persian translation of the novel based on Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995) Taxonomy. Finally, the frequency and percentage of each strategy used in the translation were calculated. Data analysis included parallel comparison of the source text and its translation in terms of the occurrence of different types of translation strategies used in the translation based on Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995) Taxonomy. Furthermore, statistical procedures which were conducted consisted of calculation of frequency and percentage of translation strategies (to identify the most and least frequent strategies) and chi-square test (to see if there is a significant difference between the frequencies of different strategies used by the translator).

### Results

Content analysis of the data revealed that the following strategies were used in the Persian translations of the English texts: Literal translation, calque, equivalence, adaptation, modulation, and omission. Although the explanations of the strategies were provided in the second chapter in the theoretical framework section, it is not misplaced to re-state them here.

**Literal Translation:** "It is or word for word translation and relies on the direct transfer of a text from SL into a grammatical and meaningful text in TL" (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1995, p. 33).

**Calque:** "It is a special kind of borrowing whereby a language borrows an expression form of another, but then translates literally each of its elements" (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1995, p. 32).

**Equivalence:** "It produces an equivalent text in the target language by using completely different stylistic and structural methods" (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1995, p. 38).

**Adaptation:** "It is used when the type of situation referred to by the SL message does not function in the TL culture" (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1995, p. 63).

**Modulation:** "It is a variation of the form of the message, obtained by a change in the point of view" (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1995, p. 36).

**Omission:** It involves omission of some part of ST in order to make an adaptation in the translation.

Here, each strategy used by the translator is exemplified for better understanding of readers.

**Table 1**

*Example 1 (Calque)*

ST	TT	Strategy
The royal consort	همسر سـ . تـ بان	Calque
<b>Taia</b> had until then hoped	ز... .. بهـ کـ پـ سـ . مـ دوار بود	

vainly for a son

The word *Taia* has been translated to *تايا* by the translator using Calque (as a foreignization strategy) which is a special kind of borrowing whereby a language borrows an expression form of another, but then translates literally each of its elements.

**Table 2**

*Example 2 (literal translation)*

ST	TT	Strategy
merchants and craftsmen-built there to their own gods	بازرگانان و صنعتگران معبد را برای خدایان خود در نجا ساخت	literal translation

The word *temples* have been directly transferred from SL into TL by the translator. In other words, temples have been translated literally to *معبد* using literal translation as a foreignization strategy.

**Table 3**

*Example 3 (literal translation)*

ST	TT	Strategy
my childish soul began to fear the wine jar	روح کودکانه من از شراب شروع به ترسیدن کرد	literal translation

The word *wine* has been translated to *شراب* by the translator. This is a case of literal translation.

**Table 4**

*Example 4 (adaptation)*

ST	TT	Strategy
their heads were dizzy with all the beer they had drunk.	سرشان از همه نوشیده نبودند گیج شده بود.	adaptation

The word *beer* has been translated to *نوشیدنی* by the translator in an attempt to adapt it to the Persian culture. In other words, the translator has used adaptation as a domestication strategy to make the word function well in the Persian culture.

**Table 5**

*Example 5 (modulation)*

ST	TT	Strategy
Never shall I forget the smell of the Cretan stables	هرگز زوی اصطبل کریت را فراموش نمی کنم	modulation

In translating the word *Cretan*, the translator has employed a word (کریت) that is different in the source and target languages without altering meaning to convey the same idea. In other words, the translator has used modulation strategy in this example.

**Table 6***Example 6 (omission)*

ST	TT	Strategy
the priests of Ammon hold that a name is an omen	کاهان - امام قدند که اسم یک نشانه اسد	omission

The word *Ammon* has been omitted in the translation. Intentional or unintentional deletion of an element of the source text is categorized as a case of omission strategy.

**Table 7***Example 7 (modulation)*

ST	TT	Strategy
I came near to death before ever I reached Gaza.	من قن را رسریدن به غزا به مرگ نزدیک شدم.	modulation

The word *Gaza* has been translated into *غزا* in the above example. Although it conveys the meaning of the source text, but is considered as a modulation since the exact translation of the word is *غزه*.

**Table 8***Example 8 (literal translation)*

ST	TT	Strategy
Senmut, whom I called my father, was physician to the poor of Thebes	، کسی که او را به نالا پدوم مری خوا دی در شرهه ط بی طبیب فقرا بود	literal translation

The word *wine* has been translated to *شراب* by the translator. This is a case of literal translation.

**Table 9***Example 9 (literal translation)*

ST	TT	Strategy
Here the girls danced naked, and the boys also, for so treacherous was the sport that the smallest garment would have hindered their	در ایچ دخران .. ند، و پسران نیز، زیرا چنان خیات تمیز زود که کوچترین لبس ساد از حرکت تنها می شد و زندگی ینها را به خطر می انداخت	literal translation





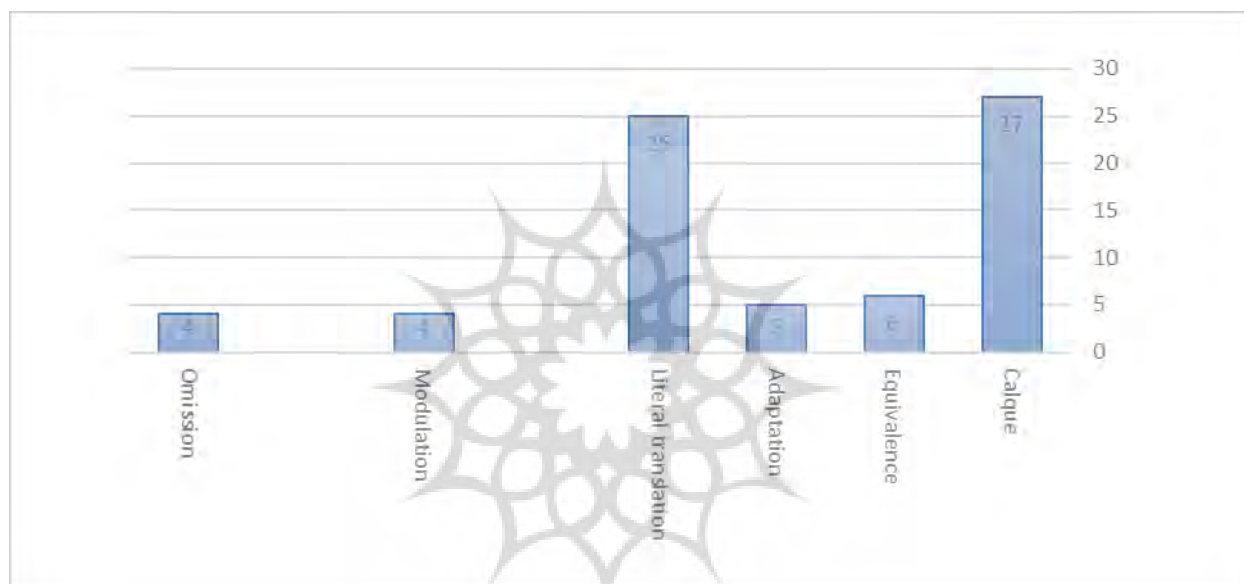


calque, 6 cases of equivalence, 5 cases of adaptation, 25 cases of literal translation, 4 cases of modulation, and 4 cases of omission strategies were used by the translator in translation of CSIs. These strategies constituted 38.02%, 8.45%, 7.04%, 35.21%, 5.63%, and 5.63% of strategies used, respectively.

As seen above, among the six types of the strategies identified in the translations, the most frequent strategy used by the translator was calque, with the frequency of 27 and the percentage of 38.02%. And the least frequent strategies used were modulation and omission, with the frequency of 4 and the percentage of 5.63%. Figure.1 shows the frequency of different types of translation strategies used in the corpus of the study.

**Figure 1**

*Frequency of Different Types of Translation Strategies*



To see whether there is a significant difference between the frequencies of translation strategies used in Persian translation of 'The Egyptian' by Mika Waltari based on Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995) taxonomy, a chi-square test was run which led to the following results:

**Table 16**

*The Results of Chi-square Test*

	strategies
Pearson Chi-Square	181.11
Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	.029

Table 16 shows that the chi-square test for goodness of fit is significant ( $\chi^2=181.11$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Therefore, it can be said that there is a significant difference between

the frequencies of translation strategies used in Persian translation of 'The Egyptian' by Mika Waltari based on Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995) taxonomy.

### Discussion

The collected data was analyzed to explore translation strategies used in Persian translation of 'The Egyptian' by Mika Waltari based on Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995) taxonomy. The results of data analysis showed that the following translation strategies have been used by the translator: Calque, equivalence, adaptation, literal translation, modulation, and omission.

Moreover, calque strategy was identified as the most frequent strategy used by the translator, with the frequency of 27 and the percentage of 38.02%. In addition, modulation and omission strategies were recognized as the least frequent strategy with the frequency of 4 and the percentage of 5.63%.

Last but not least, a significant difference was found between the frequencies of translation strategies used in Persian translation of 'The Egyptian' by Mika Waltari based on Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995) taxonomy.

Similar to the present study, Shehab Abood (2018) investigated translation of Shakespeare's Hamlet in terms of the transference of culture specific references based on Venuti's (1995) model and showed the use of following strategies in translating culture specific references: literal translation, calque, modulation, and deletion. Another study whose results are in line with the present study is the one by Al Salmi (2018) wherein translation strategies used in English translation of culture-specific items in Season of Migration to the North by Salih were examined based on Newmark's (1988) model and Venuti's (1995) model and it was revealed that literal translation and modulation were used in rendering CSIs.

The findings of Yousefi's (2017) study, examining Persian to English translation of the cultural specific items in Gulistan of Saadi, according to which, the translator has benefited from equivalence and modulation strategies are also similar to the results of the present study.

Also, consistent with this study, Arvela (2013) investigated translations of cultural aspects of ethnic food in some published articles and found that literal translation and calque were used in translation of cultural aspects. Similarly, Jianghua (2006) analyzed translation strategies in two English translated versions of Hong Lou Meng novel and found that the translator has benefited from literal translation and deletion in dealing with the cultural items.

Another study whose results are consistent with those of the present study is the one by Sabzalipour and Pishkar (2015) wherein translation of cultural elements in Persian translation of Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince was explored and it was reported that the translator has used different strategies in translating the cultural terms.

The findings of the present study also support Elnaili's (2016) results according to which various translation strategies were used in parallel in four English translations of The Arabian Nights. Also, the findings of the present study are in line with Habtoor and Al-Qahtani's (2018) results in the sense that they also found that the translator used different translation strategies in translating Narnia Chronicles series.

The finding that the translator has employed different translation strategies can be justified by saying that translating the CSIs is a complex task and to cope with the

complexities inherent in translation of such items, they should have used different strategies.

That the most frequent strategy used by the translator was calque can be justified by arguing that due to cultural differences and since there is no exact equivalence for some English cultural items in the Persian culture, the translator was obliged to borrow an expression form of the source language and then translate literally each of its elements.

As a justification for the finding that there was a significant difference between the frequencies of the translation strategies used by the translator, it can be said that because CSIs refer to those elements showing geographical features, artifacts, clothes, measuring systems, political, religious and artistic beliefs, proper names, etc., naturally, to translate them, different strategies should be used.

### Conclusion

The results of data analysis related to the first research question *What translation strategies have been used in translation of CSIs in Persian translation of 'the Egyptian' by Mika Waltari based on Yinay and Darbelnet's 1995 taxonomy?* showed that Mansouri has used the following translation strategies: Calque, equivalence, adaptation, literal translation, modulation and omission. Moreover, regarding the second research question *What translation strategy has been used with the highest frequency in translation of CSIs in Persian translation of 'the Egyptian' by Mika Waltari based on Yinay and Darbelnet's 1995 taxonomy?*, it was found that the most frequent strategy was calque. Furthermore, concerning the third research question *What translation strategy has been used with the lowest frequency in translation of CSIs in Persian translation of 'the Egyptian' by Mika Waltari based on Yinay and Darbelnet's (1995) taxonomy?*, the lowest frequency belonged to modulation and omission. In addition, on the fourth research question *Is there a significant difference between the frequencies of translation strategies used in Persian translation of 'the Egyptian' by Mika Waltari based on Yinay and Darbelnet's (1995) taxonomy?*, a significant difference was revealed between the frequencies of different translation strategies.

According to the obtained results, it is concluded that the translator has used different strategies in translating the CSIs. That is, complexity of translating the CSIs has caused the translator to use different strategies when translating the CSIs from English to Persian. Given that translating the CSIs between different languages is problematic and challenging for many translators and requires the use of different strategies, this finding was not unexpected.

As put by Natalia (2014), as one of the common translation problems translators experience, one can refer to translation of cultural words or culture-specific concepts when the culture-specific concept used in the ST is unknown or unfamiliar in the TT culture. In spite of the mentioned complexity, because communication systems play a key role in translation process, culture is closely tied with translation and quality of translation, therefore, when translating between different languages, translators cannot neglect the cultural differences existing between the Source text (ST) and Target text (TT) (Seif Sheshnavi & Deedari, 2014). Referring to the argument that translation involves not only transferring the linguistic elements from one language into another,

but also it is intermingled with the cultural systems of both ST and TT (Seif Sheshnavi & Deedari, 2014), importance of this matter is increasingly added.

What complicates the matters more is that equivalents of most of the CSIs cannot be found in bilingual dictionaries; therefore, as a common strategy, when confronting with unfamiliar CSIs, many translators intentionally delete them or use deletion strategy (Hosseini Maasoum & Davtalah, 2011, as cited in Saberi, 2015). This can lead to generation of translations which do not completely and correctly convey the meaning of the ST.

All these refer to the importance of taking the cultural differences into account in translating between different languages. Otherwise, the produced text cannot fully convey the meaning of the source text to the readers. This is while one of the main missions of almost any translator is to convey the original meaning of the source text in the target text. The findings have some implications for different groups of stakeholders. Here, some of these implications are provided. One implication of the results is that translators and translation students become aware of the strategies used in English to Persian translations of the CSIs. Furthermore, university teachers in the field of translation can take insight about the common strategies used in the translations of the CSIs and teach them in their classes. Another implication is that teachers of translation courses should teach different translation strategies to translation students as prospective translators so that they do not just limit their use of strategies to some strategies.

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