

Original Article: A Comparative Study in Relation to the Strategies Used in Translating Irony in Ernest Hemingway's Short Stories



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ABSTRACT

Translating irony has always been challenging as it relates to each nation culture and language background. So, to fulfill this job, special strategies are needed to guide the translators to find suitable equivalences for the first language ironies to be translated to the second language. In this research strategies for translating verbal and situational ironies in written texts are investigated. To narrow down the job, four short stories by Ernest Hemingway were chosen as the English written texts, namely; *The Killers*, *Hills like White Elephants*, *Fifty Grand*, *The Snows of Kilimanjaro*. For each story two Persian versions were considered: *The Killers* translated by Ahmad Golshiri and Reza Gheysariyyeh, *Hills like White Elephants* translated by Ahmad Golshiri and Araz Barseghian, *Fifty Grand* translated by Bahman Sholehvar and Sirous Tahbaz and *The Snows of Kilimanjaro* translated by Mohammadreza Khoubsafat and Shojaeddin Shafa. The model of translation strategies proposed by Mona Baker (1992) is considered as the framework. The result of the total frequency count of the strategies adopted in translating the ironies by the translators show that the most common strategies which are used by these translators to translate English verbal and situational ironies into Persian are using cultural equivalences and using general or neutral equivalences for English words and phrases

Introduction

Translation process has always been challenging and debatable. Poets, philosophers and literary men had different ideas about translations. This idea generally came from their own experiences [1]. There have been debates over the concept of translation for many years. Linguists and experts like Nida (1982) believe that translation is

something beyond finding equivalences of source language in the target language. Although there are two types of translation (written and oral which is referred to as interpretation), it seems that the main focus has usually been on written one as it is documented, permanent and eternal.

The term translation itself has several meanings: it can refer to the general subject field, the product (the text that has been translated) or the process (the

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act of producing the translation, otherwise known as translating). The process of translation between two different written languages involves the translator changing an original written text (the source text) in the original verbal language (the source language) into a written text (the target text) in a different verbal language (the target language) [2]. According to what George Steiner [3] says, translation can be literal, free or faithful and Dryden [4] says that all translation can be put in three categories: Meta phrase, paraphrase and imitation. Whatever translation is, it should be able to transfer the source language's both concept and style into the target language. It means in translation process the exact definition and form of the source text should be taken into consideration. However, definition is much more important and outsmarts the form [5-6].

One of the most important factors in translation is the culture of the target language. Cultural knowledge and cultural difference have always been a major focus of translator training and translation theory for as long as either has been in existence. The main concern has traditionally been with words and phrases that are so heavily and exclusively grounded in one culture that they are almost impossible to be translated into the terms of another. Long debates have been held over when to paraphrase, when to use the nearest local equivalent, when to coin a new word by translating literally, and when to transcribe [7].

Among the cultural differences colloquial differences are very bold. Everybody knows that different proverbs, jargons, expressions and idioms are used according to nationalities which are culture-based and related to the historical background. Here again we face "irony" which is very common in both written and oral forms of each language and contains a huge part of our conversations and written texts.

Translating the ironic parts of texts, movies, ads, etc. is really challenging. As the jokes of various nations are not the same, concordance of the ironic parts in source and target language is really sophisticated, especially when these ironies are conceptual.

In this study the researcher has tried to investigate the common strategies adopted by Iranian translators to translate ironies in short stories from English into Persian. The model of

translation strategies which is presented by Baker (1992) is taken into consideration as a framework for investigating the ironies translation strategies.

Review of the Related Literature

Colebrook (2005) believes despite its widely complexity, irony has a frequent and common definition: saying what is contrary to what is meant, a definition that is usually attributed to the first-century Roman orator Quintilian who was already looking back to Socrates and Ancient Greek literature. But this definition is so simple that it covers everything from simple figures of speech to entire historical epochs. Irony can mean as little as saying, 'Another day in paradise', when the weather is appalling. It can also refer to the huge problems of postmodernity; our very historical context is ironic because today nothing really means what it says. We live in a world of quotation, pastiche, simulation and cynicism: a general and all-encompassing irony. Irony, then, by the very simplicity of its definition becomes curiously undefinable.

In the comic plays of Aristophanes (257 – 180 BC) [8] *eironeia* referred to lying rather than complex dissimulation. When *eironeia*, not much later than Aristophanes, came to refer to a dissimulation that was not deceitful but clearly recognizable, and intended to be recognized, irony intersected with the political problem of human meaning. The problem of irony is at one with the problem of politics: how do we know what others really mean, and on what basis can we secure the sincerity and authenticity of speech? The word *eironeia* was first used to refer to artful double meaning in the Socratic dialogues of Plato, where the word is used both as pejorative – in the sense of lying – and affirmatively, to refer to Socrates' capacity to conceal what he really means. It was this practice of concealment that opened the Western political/ philosophical tradition, for it is through the art of playing with meaning that the interlocutors of a dialogue are compelled to question the fundamental concepts of our language.

Plato's Socrates has, from Quintilian to the present, been identified with the practice of irony. Socrates often spoke as though he were ignorant or respectful, precisely when he wished to expose his interlocutor's ignorance. He would ask someone for the definition of friendship or justice and then allow

the confident and ready definitions of everyday speech to be exposed in all their contradictory incompleteness. By demanding a definition from those who presented themselves as masters of wisdom, Socrates showed how some terms were less self-evident and definitive than everyday meaning would seem to suggest. (Colebrook, 2005, p. 2)

According to the new historicist criticism that was dominant in the 1980s, contexts are not passive backgrounds to the texts we read; contexts are created by texts, with each text also presenting the instabilities and insecurities of context. A text is never just what it says; it also displays the production and force of different ways of speaking [9-11].

Methodology

To meet the objectives of the study, the researcher considered a model of translation presented by Baker (1992). This model consists of equivalence at word level, equivalence above word level, grammatical equivalence, textual equivalence and pragmatic equivalence. As the focus of the research is on “irony”, just equivalence at word level and above word level are used.

According to Baker (1992) common problems which exist for non-equivalence are: Culture-specific concepts. The source-language word may express a concept which is known in the target culture but simply not lexicalized. The source-language word is semantically complex. The source and target languages make different distinctions in meaning. The target language lacks a superordinate. The target language lacks a specific term (hyponym). Differences in physical or interpersonal perspective. Differences in expressive meaning. Differences in form. Differences in frequency and purpose of using specific forms. The use of loan words in the source text [10]. To conquer these problems professional translators have used strategies which are as follows:

- Translation by a more general word (superordinate). Translation by a more neutral/less expressive word. Translation by cultural substitution.
- Translation using a loan word or loan word plus explanation. Translation by paraphrase using a

related word. Translation by paraphrase using unrelated words. Translation by omission. Translation by illustration [11].

In the area of “equivalence above word level” the main focus is on idioms, proverbs, expressions, etc. as they are the most important elements in this area. There are difficulties in translating idioms:

- An idiom or fixed expression may have no equivalent in the target language. An idiom or fixed expression may have a similar counterpart in the target language, but its context of use may be different. An idiom may be used in the source text in both its literal and idiomatic senses at the same time. The very convention of using idioms in written discourse, the contexts in which they can be used, and their frequency of use may be different in the source and target languages [12].

Baker suggests strategies for translating idioms:

- Using an idiom of similar meaning and form. Using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form. Translation by paraphrase. Translation by omission [13].

Totally the model which is used in this study can be summarized to five strategies:

1. Using a more general/neutral word or phrase/idiom.
2. Using a cultural substitution for words/similar meaning with different form for idioms.
3. Using a loan word or phrase.
4. Explaining the word in a phrase/translating the idiom.
5. Omitting the word, phrase or idiom.

Procedure

To conduct the present study the researcher first studied the English stories and detected the verbal and situational and ironies in them. Secondly, to validate the job, four university professors who are experts in English literature studied the stories and the ironies identified by the researcher and certified their correctness as being ironies in these stories. These experts were Prof. Saeed Saeedpour, Prof. Nahid Jalali, Prof. Negar Sharif (all from Islamic Azad University Central Tehran) and Prof. Sarvenaz Khatib (from Allameh Tabatabaee University). Thirdly, the researcher studied the Persian versions of the stories and compared them with each other and the English ones. Then, she found the strategies used by each translator for translating the ironies according to Baker’s model.

Finally, she presented the most common strategies which were used by these translators.

Design

The present study was a corpus-based research which focused on four of the Hemingway's short stories and their Persian translated versions. It investigated the common strategies, according to the model proposed by Baker (1992) used by Iranian translators to translate verbal and situational ironies in these short stories into Persian.

Results and Discussion

In this research, the researcher has tried to find common strategies which are used by different translators to find Persian equivalences for ironies in selected Hemingway's short stories. The researcher presents the ironies of the short stories and the related Persian versions, identifying the strategies adopted for translating them into Persian by different translators. In this research it is found out that using a cultural substitution for words has been the most common strategy and explaining the words in phrases has been the least popular strategy used by these translators. It can be said that these Iranian translators prefer to use the words which are known for Iranian readers in their translations. A plausible reason for this choice may be that they find this strategy appropriate in rendering the ironic meaning of the SL ironies in a culturally understandable manner. The main advantage of using this strategy is that it gives the reader a concept with which s/he can identify, something familiar and appealing. On an individual level, the translator's decision to use this strategy will largely depend on (a) how much licence is given to him/her by those who commission the translation and (b) the purpose of the translation. On a more general level, the decision will also reflect, to some extent, the norms of translation prevailing in a given community. Linguistic communities vary in the extent to which they tolerate strategies that involve significant departure from the propositional meaning of the text [14] On the other hand, explaining the words which do not have equivalents in Persian is not common at all, maybe again because it devalues the translation and makes it vague and complicated to understand for the audience. These translators did not use S3 much as

well. The reason can be using a loan word is not popular among Iranians and translators prefer to resist them in their works.

Corpora

To fulfill the purpose of the research the researcher chose four short stories by Ernest Hemingway and two Persian translations for each of the stories. The stories and the translations are as follows:

1. The Killers
2. Hills like White Elephants
3. Fifty Grand
4. The Snows of Kilimanjaro

Analysis of Data

The researcher chose four short stories of Ernest Hemingway listed below:

1. The Killers
2. Hills like White Elephants
3. Fifty Grand
4. The Snows of Kilimanjaro

Strategies

The researcher refers to the first translator as T1 and the second translator as T2. As mentioned in the strategies which are used by translators according to Baker (1992) totally consist of:

1. Using a more general/neutral word or phrase/idiom.
2. Using a cultural substitution for words/similar meaning with different form for idioms.
3. Using a loan word or phrase.
4. Explaining the word in a phrase/translating the idiom.

Omitting the word, phrase or idiom

The following table shows the collected ironies from the four short stories together with their Persian translations. These examples are chosen as verbal and situational ironies. The only point that has to be mentioned here is that these sentences may not seem ironic at first glance but as all of the consultants mentioned earlier agreed, they should be considered in the context and within the context they become ironic. So, these ironies are investigated based on their meanings in these short stories.

Table 1. Verbal and Situational Ironies

No.	English Ironies	Type of Irony	Persian Translations	Strategies Used by T1	Strategies Used by T2	Explanation
1	This is a hot town.	verbal	چه شهر لجن درمالی. عجب شهر گندیه.	2	2	Both translators have chosen S2 for this sentence, because they have chosen cultural equivalents for the sentence.
2	You're a pretty bright boy, aren't you?	verbal	پسر خیلی زبلی هستی. بچه زبلی هستی.	2, 5	2, 5	Both translators have chosen S2 because they have chosen equivalent for "bright boy" and both have used S5, because none of them have translated "aren't you?"
3	-Another bright boy, Ain't he a bright boy, Max? -The town's full of bright boys.	verbal	-یه پسر زبل دیگه ، این پسر زبل نیست ، مکس؟ -این شهر تا بخوای پسر زبل داره. -یه بچه زبل دیگه. درست میگم ، ماکس؟ -این شهر پر از بچه های زبله.	2, 2, 1	2, 1, 2	T1 has used S2 to translate the first and the second sentences and S1 for the last sentence because the translation is more general than the real meaning. T2 has used S2 to translate the first sentence, S1 to translate the second sentence, because it has a general form, not the real translation of the sentence and S2 for the last sentence because he has translated the sentence in a cultural way.
4	Just a bright boy.	verbal	کی میگه تو زبل نیستی! نگفتم چه زبله.	1	1	Both translators have used S1 to translate the whole sentence to a general form.
5	Oh, he's a thinker!	verbal	آره ، بلند نظره. مخش خوب کار میکنه.	1	1	Both translators have used S1 for the whole sentence.
6	You ought to go to the movies more. The movies are fine for a bright boy like you.	verbal	باید بیشتر بری سینما. سینما برای پسر زبلی مثل تو خیلی چیزها داره. باید بیشتر بری. سینما جون میده برای بچه زبل های مٹ تو.	2, 1	2, 5, 1	T1 has used S2 for the first sentence because he has translated it the way it is. Then, he used S1 for the second sentence, because it is more general than the original sentence. T2 has used S2 and S5 for the first sentence, because he has omitted "to the movies" in the translation. He used S1 for the second sentence.
7	You'd make some girl a nice wife, bright boy.	verbal	هر دختری زیر دست تو یه زن حسابی میشه ، پسر زبل. خوشا به حال زنت بچه زبل.	2	1	T1 has used S2 for this sentence, because he has chosen a Persian equivalent for it. T2 has used S1, because he has used a brief and general translation.
8	Little boys always know what they want to do.	verbal	حتی بچه کوچولوها هم این چیزها رو میدونن. این جوونک ها همیشه هر کاری رو که دلشون بخواد میکنن.	1	2	T1 has used S1, because the translation is different from the original sentence. T2 has used S2, because the translation is cultural.
9	[- George thought I better come and tell you about it.]	situational	(- جورج گفت پیام اینجا و خبرو به شما برسونم.) - من نمیتونم جلو اون ها رو بگیرم.	1, 1, 2	2, 2, 2	T1 has used general translations for the first and the second sentences and has translated the third sentence as it is.

	- There isn't anything I can do about it. - I'll tell you what they were like. - I don't want to know what they were like.		- می خوام براتون بگم چه قیافه ای داشتن؟ - نمی خوام بدونم چه قیافه ای داشتن. (- جورج فکر کرد بهتره پیام و همه شو براتون تعریف کنم.) - از من کاری ساخته نیست. - من براتون میگم چه ریختی بودند. - نمیخوام بدونم چه ریختی بودند. (-من هیچ وقت تپه سفید ندیده م.) -چشم دیدن نداری.				T2 has translated all three sentences as they are.
10	[-I've never seen one.] -No, you wouldn't have.	verbal	(تا حالا فیل ندیدم.) نه ، معلومه که ندیدی.	1	2		T1 has used S1 in this part. T2 has used S2 because the Persian version of the sentence is a simple translation or in other words a simple explanation.
11	Everything tastes of liquorice. Especially all the things you've waited so long for, like absinthe.	verbal	همه چیز طعم شیرین بیان میده. به خصوص چیزهایی که آدم مدتهای زیادی چشم به راهشون باشه. مثل افسنتین. همه چیز مزه لیکور میده. مخصوصا هر چیزی که براش انتظار زیادی بکشی ، مثل افسینت.	2, 2	2, 3		T1 has used S2 to translate the whole sentence and to translate "liquorice" and "absinthe" into Persian. He chose Persian equivalents for them. T2 has used S2 for the whole sentence and S3 to translate "liquorice" and "absinthe" to Persian. Actually he has used the same words in the translated text.
12	That's all we do, isn't it look at things and try new drinks?	verbal	همه ما این کارو میکنیم. به چیزها نگاه میکنیم ، مشروب تازه امتحان میکنیم ، غیر از اینه؟ این تنها کاریه که ما میکنیم ، مگه نه که به دور و ور خودمون نگاه می کنیم و مشروب های جدید رو امتحان می کنیم؟ که گفتی بعد همه شون خوشیخت شدن؟ بعدهش هم همشون کلی راضی بودن.	2	2, 1		T1 has used S2 for the whole sentence. T2 has used S2 for the first and third sentences and S1 for the second sentence because he has put new words in this sentence which are not in the main sentence.
13	Afterward they were all so happy.	verbal	(-اما برای من مطرحه.) -خوب ، باشه. اما برای خودم مطرح نیست و دست به این کار میزنم تا کارها رو به راه بشه. (-خوب من نگرانم.) -اوه آره. ولی من نگران خودم نیستم. و این کارو میکنم و بعدش همه چیز رو به راه میشه.	2	2		Both translators have used S2.
14	[-Well, I care about you.] -Oh, yes. But I don't care about me. And I'll do it and then everything will be fine.	verbal	(-و میدونم که مثل آب خوردنه.)	2	2		Both translators have used S2.
15	[-And I know it's perfectly simple.]	verbal		2	2		

	-Yes, you know it's perfectly simple.		بله ، گفتنش مثل آب خوردنه. (-و میدونم که خیلی هم کار ساده ایه.) -آره تو میدونی کار خیلی ساده ایه.			Both have used S2 because the translations have the same meaning with different forms in Persian.
16	I feel fine. There's nothing wrong with me. I feel fine.	verbal	حالم خوبه. چیزیم نیست. حالم خوبه. حالم خوبه. هیچیم نیست. حالم خوبه.	2, 2, 2	2, 2, 2	Both have used S2 and have translated the sentence the way it is.
17	[- Whoever saw you buy a drink?] - And you give away a lot of things free too, don't you?	verbal	(- کی تا حالا دیدتتون که یه گیلای مشروب بخرین؟) - خیلی چیزارو آدم باید نشنیده بگیره ، نیست؟ (- کی تا حالا شما رو دیده که یه لیوان مشروب بخرین.) - آدم خیلی چیزارم باید نشنیده بگیره ، نیس؟ (-آدم خوبیه سلجر.) - یه خدا اگه باشه. به خدا اگه هیچوقت آدم خوبی بوده. (-آدم خوبیه سلجر.) -به خدا اگه باشه. به خدا که هیچوقت بچه خوبی نبوده.	1	1	T1 and T2 have used an equivalent for this sentence which is general or neutral.
18	[-He's a good fellow, Soldier.] -The hell he is. The hell he's ever been a good fellow.	verbal	(-آدم خوبیه سلجر.) - یه خدا اگه باشه. به خدا اگه هیچوقت آدم خوبی بوده. (-آدم خوبیه سلجر.) -به خدا اگه باشه. به خدا که هیچوقت بچه خوبی نبوده.	2, 2	2, 2	Both translators have used S2 because both have translated and the sentences in cultural ways.
19	They're what you call wise boys.	verbal	آدمای خوبین. از اونایی ان که شما بهشون میگین بچه های زرنگ.	1	2	T1 has used a general translation for this sentence. T2 has translated the sentence.
20	You're the doctor.	verbal	تو خودت دکتری. دکترم که هستی.	2	2	Both have translated the sentence in different forms.
21	Hello, popularity.	verbal	سلام مردم پسند. سلام مردم پسند.	2	2	Both have used S2.

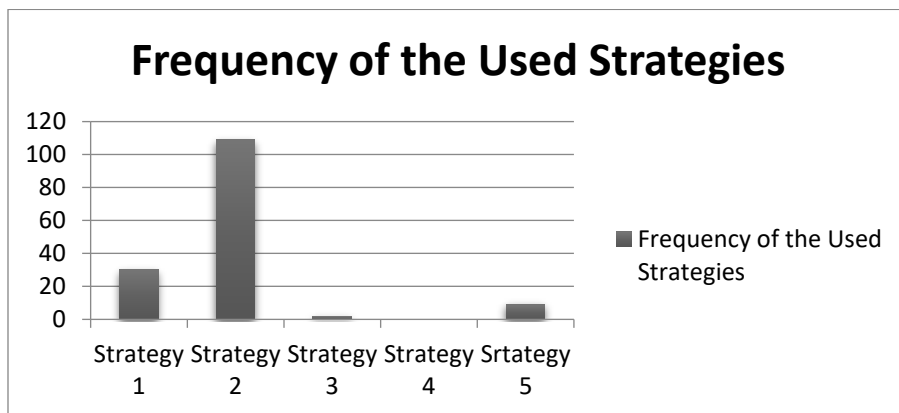


Figure 1. Frequency of the Used Strategies

It shows that:

- S1 is used 20% of the cases in these examples.
- S2 is used 73% of the cases in these examples.
- S3 is used 1% of the cases in these examples.
- S4 is used 0% of the cases in these examples.
- S5 is used 6% of the cases in these examples.

Conclusion

As it was presented in the previous part, the most used strategy is strategy 2 (Using a cultural substitution for words/similar meaning with different form for idioms). It shows that Iranian translators use words and phrases which are common in Iranian culture and Persian language. Strategy 1 (Using a more general/neutral word or phrase/idiom), Strategy 5 (Omitting the word, phrase or idiom), and Strategy 3 (Using a loan word or phrase) were mostly used respectively in next levels. Strategy 4 (Explaining the word in a phrase/translating the idiom) was not used at all.

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