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# Strategies of Translating Cultural Terms from English into Kurdish

A Research Project Submitted to the department of English of College  
of Education at Salahaddin University – Erbil in partial of the  
requirements for the degree of B.A in English Language

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**2023 – 2024**

## Acknowledgement

This research paper is made possible through the help and support of many people, including: parents, teachers, family, friends, and all participants.

We would like to thank **Dr. Bandar Abdul-Qahhar Muhammed** for his guidance, support and encouragement. We would also like to offer our thanks to dean of college of education and the head of English department.

Finally, we would like to thanks all the people who helped us during the writing of the research and also special thanks for our family who are supporting us like hero because everyone needs a house to live in but a supportive family is what builds a home.

## **Abstract**

Cultural terms are challenging for translators because they are specific to culture or nation. Hence, as a translator you have to find the most suitable technique to ensure the transference of the meaning.

Newmark (1988) defines translation as “rendering the meaning of a text into another language in a way that the author intends the text.” In a translation, the source and the target texts have to be equivalent which means they both have to have the same meaning and effect. The aim of the graduation paper is to suggest some techniques for translating cultural terms.

The paper is divided into three sections. Section one is introduction in which we identify the problem, aim, significance and methodology. Section two is theoretical background in which we talk about translation and its types and problems. Section three is practical in which we analyze translation of cultural terms from Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* into Kurdish.

The main finding is that there are two types of cultural term: specific and universal. Universal terms are easy to translate. Sometimes we have to add a footnote or a bracket to explain the meaning of the specific cultural terms.

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## **SECTION ONE**

### **Introduction**

#### **1.1 Research Problem**

Translation is usually between two languages and languages are different from each other. One of the language specific areas are cultural terms. Hence, it is challenging to find accurate translations for cultural terms.

#### **1.2 Research Aims**

One of the aims of the graduation paper is to identify the techniques that translators can use to translate cultural terms from language into another.

#### **1.3 significance of Study**

This paper is important for teachers and students to find equivalence for cultural terms which is one of the effective ways of improving language skills. It is also significant for translator to have a lot of techniques at their repertoire so as to use the most effective technique when they face a cultural term to translate.

## **1.4 Research questions**

Throughout the study, the following questions are aimed to be answered:

1. Why is the translation of cultural terms problematic?
2. what is the best way/ strategy to translate cultural terms?

## **1.4 Methodology**

First, the theoretical background of the paper identifies a gap in literature of translation. Newmarks model of translating metaphors (Newmark, 1988) is used to assess the applicability of the model on translating terms from English into Kurdish. The samples of the study are from a translation of Shakespeare Romeo and Juliet.

## **SECTION TWO**

### **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

#### **2.0 Introduction:**

In this section, the theoretical background of translating cultural terms are discussed which including definitions of translation, types and problems of translation and translatability of cultural terms. There are many people who claim that cultural terms are difficult to be translated. The aim is to go towards a system for translating cultural terms.

#### **2.1 Definition of Translation**

In general, translation means transferring the message from Source Language (SL) into the Target Language (TL) without changing the idea or meaning of the source language. When people speak of the form of a language, they are referring to the actual words, phrases, clauses sentences, paragraphs, which are spoken or written. Those forms are referred to as the surface structure of a language.

Larson (1998, p.3) states that translation is “transferring the meaning of the source language into the receptor language”. It means that a process of transferring the source language into the target language must be done without changing the idea or

meaning of the source language. From his statement, one can conclude that translating is not easy, because every language has their own grammatical structure and may be different with another language. In translating, there are many processes that must be known such as, studying and analyzing the source language, and reconstructing the meaning.

Translation is an act of rendering sense or meaning of a word, an expression etc, from one language to another language. Duff (1987), writes translation is "Crossing the Border" from one language to another. Translation is the process of conveying message across linguistic and cultural barriers. The process of rendering a text in one language into another language to maintain the linguistic and pragmatic equivalence is translation. It is the dynamic and indefinite phenomenon of transferring the concepts of language. Newmark (1988) defines translation as "rendering the meaning of a text into another language in a way that the author intends the text."

In brief, translation is the process of reproducing a textual material in the target language that is equivalent to the source text. Both texts should have equal meaning and effect on the readers.

## **2.2 Types of Translation**

As a translator, the translator cannot translate carelessly, the translator must know and master which type of translation should be used. There are various types of translation require different ways of handling. It is very rare to find a translator who is able to mastering all types of translation and produce high quality work.

According to Larson (1998: 17), there are two kinds of translation, form-based is translation that follows the form and grammatical structure of the source text that is



known as literal translation. While meaning-based translation or 10 idiomatic translation is a translation that focuses on giving the same meaning from the source language to target language apart of the sentence form.

Newmark (1988:46-47), he offers a classification of translation types that includes semantic and communicative translation. Semantic translation, attempts to render, as closely as the semantic and syntactic structures of the second language allow, the exact contextual meaning. The second type, communicative translation, attempts to produce on its readers an effect as close as possible to that obtained on the readers of the original.

### **2.3 Problems in Translation**

Translation Since it is a process of constant search for the transfer of a message from the Source Language (SL) into the Target Language (TL), translation is often accompanied by many problems and difficulties that may be a result of the differences in both languages or differences in the cultures represented by them.

#### 1. lexical problem

The word has more than one meaning we can solve that problem by reading the context. Almost every word has more than one language but the context will n=make it clear which one is meant.

For example (run) has different meanings in the following sentences:

He is running in the park.

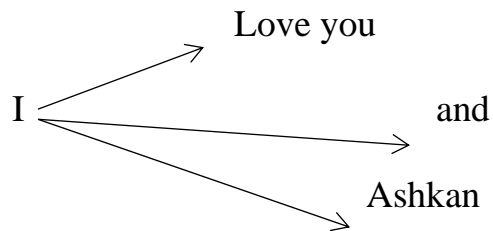
He is running a company.

He is running for office.

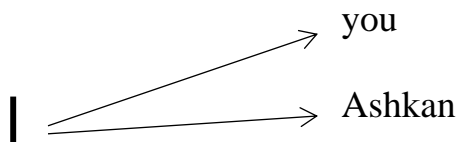
## 2. Structural problem The sentence has more than one interpretation

For example: I love you more than Ashkan

First interpretation



Second interpretation



## 3. Textual problem

Which means we have stylistic differences

For example: on December 7th

We change place of 7th

## 4. cultural problems

Which means we have cultural differences between languages can be solved by transliteration which means

For example: (Dolma) words first transliteration using the same letter in target language.

-nephew son sister or brother.

It's depend of the context.

## **2.4 Techniques /Procedures in Translation**

Every language belongs to a specific culture and this has impact on translation. Newmark (1988, p.94) defines culture as “the way of life and its manifestations that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression”

Translation is a versatile means of communication in transferring knowledge, truth, cultural ideas and so on. It is the process of the rendering of the meaning of text into another language. Crystal (1990), defines the terms 'translation' as a neutral, term used for all the task where the meaning of one expression in one language (the 'sources ' language) is turned into the meaning of another (the target languages), weather the medium is spoken written or singed". By this definition we can say that the term translation is a bilingual activity, it is the product of rendering or transferring the meaning or message in one language into another. The process of rendering the message into another or meaning may also be from one dialect or register to another dialect or register. Specially two languages are involved in translation i.e. sources languages (SL) and target language (TL). English Literature and Language Review 10 There are number of techniques or procedures of translation cultural term. Various scholars have suggested various techniques of translating cultural terms. There is no single procedure which is absolutely helpful to produce perfect translation without any gap in TL from SL. In the translation

procedures, these are mostly used techniques. They are describing in the following paragraphs:

2.3.1. Literal Translation: It is a translating techniques (approach) in which the translator following the syntax and semantics of the SL very closely showing greater faithfulness toward it. It is the form based or the SL translation approach in which SL form dominates the TL form. SL (KURDISH) TL (English) Transportation According to Vachon-Spilaka, literal translation is the basic procedure in translation from which translation begins. Normally, it is important for its transparency in TL and its faithfulness to SL. In literal translation, the translator can neither omit a word or a line nor add to them.

2.3.2. Borrowing is the process of transferring an SL word to the TL. When can not translate a TL word\phrase, it usually takes possession of its. Borrowing is probably the most frequency adopted procedure for the translation of international term such as unites elements, sciences and technology. Terms are borrowed from the SL and translated in the TL with or without any noticeable morphophonemic change. Once an expression enters into the domain of TL, it started being used in almost all context and collections as in SL situation. It includes translation of SL word into TL script. According to Newmark (1981), normally, names of people, places and country, names of news paper, names of institution and companies, street names, indentation, brand names, etc are transferred. In the process in translation the translator the word to show the respect for the SL culture.

2.3.3. Calque Calque is a translation procedure in which each unit is translator into the equivalent unit in other languages, i.e. TL. The morphem, word, phrase or even a sort sentences are the unit in translation but not idiomatic expressive because it makes on sense.

2.3.4. Addition It is a translation technique in which which some word are added in the TL text or SL expression are structually expanded. In the technique, the translator gives additional information of the cultural terms of the STL by suitable addition from the cultural context available in the TC. To make reader understand information easily or to make the English Literature and Language Review 11 text more informative or explicit some additions are made. This procedure is adopted when some expressions in SLT are left unsaid and the translator intends to convey the supplementary message by appropriate addition from the cultural context of the TL

2.3.5. Deletion refers to omission of SL lexical items, phrases and even sentences while reducing into TL. Generally, it occurs at syntactic level in translation but items omitted are mostly lexical expression. A translator decides to delete some items not faithfulness in translation but to make the communication effective. In some redundant and unnecessary items are omitted.

2.3.6. Back Translation is one of the ways of testing the quality in translation. Crystal (1978), introduces back translation as one translator then turns the 'B' text into 'A' and the resulting 'A' text is compared with the original 'A' text. If the text are virtually identical. It is strong evidence that the original translation is of high quality.

2.3.7. Couplet is the combination of two translation procedures (borrowing-literal) for the translation of one SL terms. In Newmark (1981) words, "it refers to the combination of two translation procedures for one unit as a couplet." The SL terms are borrowed and transliterated Rules in the target languages". Crystal (1991), argues a similar view as "The sources text is followed, but is normalized according to the rules of the target language ". Translation is also SL oriented. In the translation the SL grammatical construction into their nearest TL equivalent but the lexical word are again translated singles, out of context (Newmark, 1981) Literal translation

preserves linguistic meaning of source languages text. It focuses on semantic content of SL but neglect pragmatic meaning.

2.3.8. Paraphrasing/Definition This procedure is a form of explanatory equivalence. Target language explains the meaning of the source language term using different words in order to make it easier to understand. In paraphrasing, the semantic content which is realized in the source language in a single term is syntactically distributed in the TL. Newmark (1981), argues paraphrasing is "an amplification or explanation of the meaning of a segment of the text." Normally, if the TLT has not exact substitution for the SLT term is replaced by definition or description (Iver, 1987).

#### 2.3.9. Substitution

When two cultures display a partial overlap rather than a clear-cut presence or absence of a particular element of culture, this procedure is adopted. In other words, when a source cultural element finds a similar/approximate/near equivalent in place of a full equivalent, the translator takes advantage of that similarity and uses that corresponding expression as a translational equivalent; this procedure is termed as substitution. In this case the TL offers a natural expression for its own cultural element that partly coincides with the source culture element. The main drawback of this procedure is that it may distort cultural flavour of foreign culture.

2.3.10. Sense Translation This technique is used when the exact SL equivalent is not available in the TL. In it not the words but the meaning is translated. Here, the TL term gives only one sense for the SL term not the exact meaning.

## Section three

### Data collection and analysis

#### 3.1 Samples of cultural terms

Cultural terms are words, phrases, or concepts that are specific to a particular culture and carry unique meanings, connotations, or significance within that culture. Translating cultural terms from English to Kurdish in “**Romeo and Juliet**” by William Shakespeare requires careful consideration of both languages’ cultural contexts. Here are some examples of cultural terms from the play and their translations from the book of the same title in Kurdish which was translated by (Dr Salah Baban) in (2010).

##### Example 1

- **English:** She'll not be hit with (**Cupid's**) arrow
- **Kurdish:** تیری (کیۆپد) به لایدا نایه .
- **(Cupid) کیۆپد**

کیۆپد خوای دلدار ییبه تیره کهی بهر هر چ که سیک بکهویت , دهیخاته داوی دلدار ییبهوه

##### Example 2

- **English:** This night I hold an old accustomed feast, whereto I have invited many a guest.
- **Kurdish:** ئەم شەو ئاهەنگێک دەبەستمەوه گەلێک لە دوست و ناسیاو هکانی خۆم بانگ کردوو

##### Example 3

- **English:** Borrow Cupid's wings, and soar with them above a common bound .
- **Kurdish:** بآلی کیۆپد بخوازه و بهرز , به ئازادی , بفره بهسەر راده و سنووری زهوییهکاندا

#### Example 4

- **English:** O, then, I see (Queen Mab) hath been with you. She is the fairies' midwife,
- **Kurdish:** ئەھا، دەبینم (بانووشا ماب) شەو، لەگەڵتا بوو ئەو ئەممانی پەربییەکانە.
- (Queen Mab) بانووشا ماب

کەسایەتییەکی ئەفسانەییە خەوی خوش دەنێرێتە ناو مێشکی پیاوی نوستوووە. پیاو هەمیشە خەو بە ژنی جوان و ئیسک سووکەو دەبینێت کە لە پەری ئاسمان دەچن. بانووشا ماب ئەو جورە پەربییانە دەهێنێتە دنیای خەیاڵی پیاووە. وەک چون مامان، مروفی نوێ دەهێنێتە دنیاوە.

#### ➤ Example 5

- **English:** Even or odd, of all days in the year, Come Lammas Eve at night shall she be fourteen. Susan and she (God rest all Christian souls!) Were of an age
- **Kurdish:** لە رۆژانی سأل، وا ریک دەکەوێت شەوی ئاھەنگی خەرمانی ئەمسال بییت بە چوار دە. ئەم لەگەڵ سوزان - خوایە گەردنی گشت مەسیحییەک خوش و ئازاد کەیت - لەپەک تەمەندان

#### Example 6

- **English:** Enter Romeo, Mercutio, Benvolio, with five or six other Maskers, (Torchbearers),
- **Kurdish:** رۆمیۆ، مێرکیشیۆ و بینقیلیۆ لەگەڵ پینچ و شەش کەسی تردا چوونە ژوورەو هەموو بە ماسکەو (مەشخەل) یان هەلگرتبوو
- (Torchbearers) مەشخەل

کەسیک کە مەشخەلی رۆمەسمی هەلگرتی یان کەسیک کە سەرکردایەتی یان ئیلهامبەخشی ئەوانی تر دەکات لە کارکردن بەرەو ئامانجێکی بەنرخ

#### Example 7

- **English:** ROMEO: Good morrow, father.
- **Kurdish:** رۆمیۆ: باوکە، بەیانیت شادمان و باش بییت.

#### Example 8

- **English:** Blister'd be thy tongue for such a wish!



- **Kurdish:** ! بوو ئەو دەخوازیت رهیبی زمانت موو دهر بهینیت

### Example 9

- **English:** Come, is the bride ready to go to church?
- **Kurdish:** بووک ، نامادهیه ، بیت بو کلنسه ؟

### Example 10

- **English:** Enter Friar 'Lawrence alone with a basket.
- **Kurdish:** قهشه لۆرینس دهر دهکهویت ، سهبه تهیهکی به دهستهوهیه .

### Example 11

- **English:** I take thee at thy word. Call me but love, and I'll be new (baptized). Henceforth I never will be Romeo.
- **Kurdish:** به پئی ئەو وته نهرمانهئى ئیستا ، که تو به زمان ، دهر یانت برى ئەمن کار دهکهم تهنها  
قیان م گهر تو ناو بنی سهر له نوئ گیانم ، من ته عمید دهکهم له مهولا ناوی من رۆمیۆ نابی
- **(baptize)** باپتایز

مهسیحیهکان ، که منالیان دهبیت . له دواى چهند روژیک دهیبهن بو کلنسه لهوئ لهناو ناوی پیروز ههلیدهکیشن و ناوی لی دهئین . بهو کردهوهیه دهلین ته عمیتکردن

### 3.2 findings:

Cultural terms are difficult to translate because they are language specific. There are two kinds of cultural terms which are specific and universal. Universal cultural terms are easier and literal translation would most of the time work. Specific cultural terms are more difficult to translate because they are specific to a culture or language. Transliteration, which is writing the same word as it is in the second language alphabet, can be a useful technique. But as a translator you need to transfer the meaning. So, you have to add a bracket to explain the meaning of the cultural term, or you can explain the meaning in the footnote.

It is ok to borrow words from another language but they are not common you have to explain their meaning after borrowing. Sometimes a reference number, a bracket or footnote may help. Sometimes as a translator you can find a standard cultural term in the target language that's equivalent to the source term.

### **Conclusion**

Kurdish and English are two different language belonging to two different cultures. Each nation with a specific language has its own cultural terms to represent their world view. When one word of a language is translated in to another, the target language can't convey the same sense of a source text. There are no perfect

equivalence between language. Equivalence means the linguistic unit has the same meaning and effect and value in both languages. Literal translation might be useful for universal cultural term. However, the translator has to use his creativity and knowledge of both languages to understand and translate specific cultural terms from one language into another. He or she has to find a cultural term that's is common in the target language and is equivalent to it. Transliteration can be a useful technique in which the translator borrows the term from one language and uses it in another language. But he has to add a bracket or footnote in which he has to explain the meaning of the cultural term for the new readers.

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