

## Translation Strategies of Culture-Specific Items from English to Persian in Translation of "Othello"

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### Abstract

This study investigated the translation strategies of culture-specific items in translation of 'Othello' by William Shakespeare into Persian by Abdolhossein Nooshin. First, the English culture-specific items and their corresponding translations were identified. Then, the frequency of the strategies used by the translator according to Newmark's translation model and Venuti's domestication and foreignization theory were determined. After collecting and analyzing the data, it was concluded that cultural equivalent and domestication strategies were the most frequently used strategies applied by the translator. The findings also suggested that Venuti's theory is not adequate enough because it is too general and it should have some more subcategories.

**Keywords:** Culture- Specific Items, Newmark's Translation Strategies, Othello, Venuti's Theory.

### 1. Introduction

Nowadays, the most important literary works have been translated in many languages. Therefore, it is important that a translator convey the message of source language (SL) correctly. Baker states that "The source-language word may express a concept which is totally unknown in the target culture. The concept in question may be abstract or concrete; it may relate to a religious belief, a social custom, or even a type of food. Such concepts are often referred to as culture-specific" (Baker, 1992). Baker (1992) refers to these items as 'culture- specific concepts' and believes that these concepts may cause problems in selecting an appropriate equivalence.

In this research an attempt was made to show how to translate culture-specific items (CSIs) in 'Othello' written by William Shakespeare and translated by Abdolhossein Nooshin based on Venuti's (1995) theory of domestication and foreignization and Newmark's (1988) model. According to Venuti's (1995) theory: "Domestication is an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language culture values, bring the author back home", and "Foreignization is an ethnodeviant pressure on those (cultural) values to register the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text, sending the reader abroad" (Venuti, 1995). In Newmark's (1988) model there are strategies for translating CSIs: Transference, Naturalization, Cultural equivalent, Functional equivalent, Descriptive equivalent, Synonymy, Through translation, Shift/Transposition, Modulation, Recognized translation,

Translation label, Compensation, Componential analysis, Reduction and expansion, Paraphrase, Couplets, Note, Literal translation, and Deletion.

The purpose of this study was to identify some strategies for translating CSIs which were applied by the translator and suggested the frequently used strategies for translators who want to translate different cultural texts. It also referred to the shortcomings of Venuti's theory (1995) in evaluation of translation of cultural items in this translation. Considering the role of cultural items in literary translation, the present study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the translation strategies of CSIs from English into Persian in translation of 'Othello'?
2. Which strategies are more frequently used for translating CSIs in translation of 'Othello'?

This research is significant due to the importance of literary translation in Persian language. Accuracy of rendition of CSIs is important in this field. The investigation of different translation strategies applied in translation of 'Othello' can provide useful information for other translators. Therefore, the researcher conducted the present study for the first time to evaluate the translation strategies applied by the translator. Additionally, what doubles the significance of this study is its focus on the shortcomings in translation of CSIs. The use of both Newmark's model (1988) and Venuti's theory (1995) for evaluating this translation was the other merit of this research.

## **2. Method**

### ***2.1 Theoretical Framework***

The purpose of this research was to carry out an analysis and description of strategies applied by the translator according to Newmark's model (1988) and Venuti's theory (1995) to cope with CSIs in translation of 'Othello' and to find whether these strategies are useful or not. The researcher tried to find out what has been the main tendency of the translator towards domestication and foreignization strategies. To this aim, the translation of a literary text was compared with the original text. The theoretical framework of this research is based on what Newmark (1988) expressed in his book "*A Textbook of Translation*" about the translation of CSIs and Venuti's (1995) domestication and foreignization strategies. By a domesticating strategy, Venuti means a translation strategy in which a transparent, fluent style is selected to reduce the strangeness of the foreign text (FT) for a TL reader, whereas by a foreignizing strategy, he means a translation strategy in which a target text (TT) intentionally breaks target conventions by maintaining something of the foreignness of the original (Venuti, 1995). In this research, 'Othello', the famous work of art written by William Shakespeare, along with its Persian translation, translated by Abdolhossein Nooshin, were selected as the corpus of the study.

### ***2.2 Data Collection Procedure***

Based on Newmark's (1988) model and Venuti's theory (1995), 500 cases of cultural words of the play 'Othello' were randomly extracted. To answer the research questions, the following steps were taken in this research. First, Newmark's translation strategies, Venuti's domestication and foreignization strategies were studied. Reading 'Othello' and its Persian translation was the second step in this study. Then by identifying CSIs in 'Othello' along with their equivalences in the translation text, the tables of these items with their translation strategies were provided. Presenting the frequency of applying different strategies and determining the percentage of using each strategy was the last step in this study. By checking the outcomes, the researcher could find the answers to the research questions.

### 2.3 Data analysis Procedure

Having collected all the data from the original and its translated book, the researcher analyzed the data by categorizing them according to Newmark's (1988) model and Venuti's (1995) theory. First, the English sentences in which the CSIs occurred and their translations were extracted. The next process was searching for the exact meaning of the terms in Oxford dictionary. The researcher juxtapose CSIs with their translations and recognized the strategies used by Abdolhossein Nooshin for rendering them. Therefore related tables and figures were provided. By determining the frequency of each translation strategy, the percentage of using each translation strategy was identified and then the translator could obtain an exact result which is explained in details with the related tables and figures in the next section. For a few number of strategies, the researcher found no examples.

### 3. Results

In what follows, some strategies which are described by Newmark (1988) and Venuti (1995) are presented accompanied by their samples extracted from 'Othello' in order to find appropriate answer to the research questions.

Table1 *The Samples of Translation Strategies Used*

Number	English text	Persian translation	Newmark's translation strategies	Venuti's translation strategies
1	Othello	اتلو	Transference	Foreignization
2	Heaven have mercy on me!	پروردگارا به من رحم کن!	Cultural equivalence	Domestication
3	Palestine	بيت المقدس	Functional equivalent	Domestication
4	Fair wife	زن خوشگل	Literal translation	Foreignization
5	Bell	بانگ ناقوس	Descriptive equivalent	Domestication
6	Ruffian	مست	Synonymy	Domestication
7	Lieutenant	نایب	Through-translation	Foreignization
8	Populous cities	شهر پر جمعیتی	Transposition	Domestication

9	Terrible summons	هياھوی وحشت انگيز	Modulation	Domestication
10	To serve to my turn	تا بتوانم به مقصود خودم برسم	Paraphrase	Domestication
11	The bookish theoretic	آن چه را که از کتاب ياد گرفته	Expansion	Domestication
12	Christian	-	Deletion	Domestication
13	Does understand the word?	می شنوی؟	Reduction	Domestication
14	Dismiss you	تو را روانه کنم	Synonymy+ Expansion	Domestication

### 3.1 Findings of the Research Based on Newmark's (1988) Model

After identifying the translation strategy used for translation of each CSI, and determining the frequency and percentage of occurrences of each strategy, the following results were obtained:

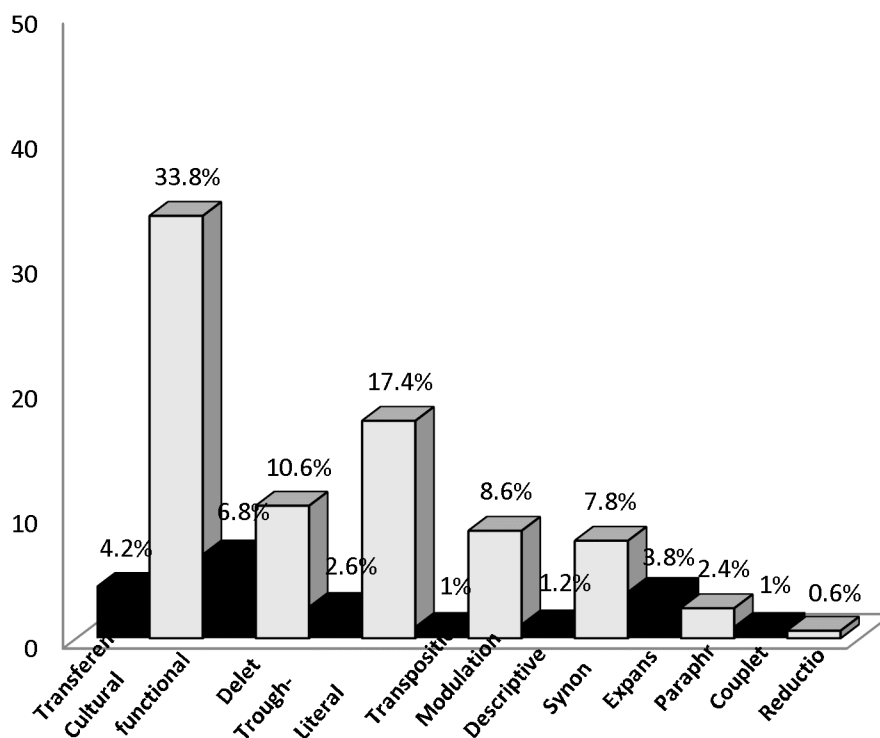


Figure 1. Percentage of using Newmark's strategies

As the figure 1 shows, cultural equivalent translation strategy with 33.8 % is the most frequent strategy which the translator applied for rendering CSIs. Literal translation strategy with 17.4 % is the second strategy applied for translating

CSIs. Deletion and modulation with 10.6 % and 8.6 % are respectively the third and fourth strategies applied by translator. The fifth strategy is synonymy with 7.8 % and the sixth strategy is functional equivalent with 6.8 %. The other strategies with their percentages of using are these strategies: Transference with 4.2 %, expansion with 3.8 %, through-translation with 2.6 %, paraphrase with 2.4 %, descriptive equivalent with 1.2 %, transposition and couplet with 1 % and reduction with 0.6 %.

### 3.2 Findings of the Research Based on Venuti's Theory (1995)

All 500 cases of CSIs were classified based on Venuti's theory of domestication and foreignization strategies. Among all chosen CSIs, the translator has used the domestication strategy for rendering 380 items, and the foreignization strategy for 120 items.

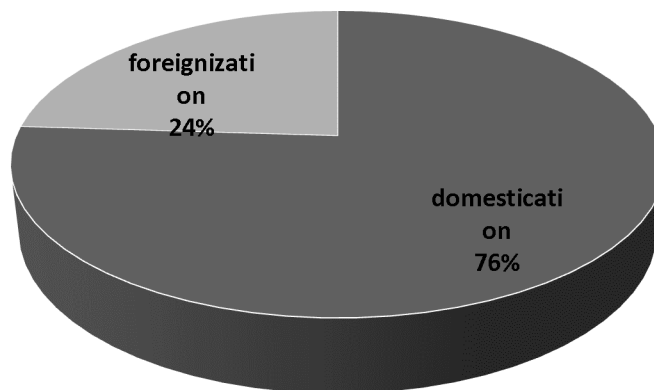


Figure 2. Percentage of using domestication and foreignization strategies

As it was illustrated in the pie graph, the domestication strategy with 76% and the foreignization strategy with 24% were the two strategies which the translator used for rendering this play. Moreover, this graph illustrated that the translator tendency was toward domestication strategy.

### 4. Discussion

The obtained results through conducting of this research revealed that the translator used different translation strategies based on Newmark's model (1988) and Venuti's theory (1995) for rendering 'Othello'. Here, through comparing and interpreting the results, research questions can be answered. Concerning Nooshin's translation, the strategies which were used by him for rendering this play were: Cultural equivalent, transference, functional equivalent, deletion, paraphrase, through-translation, literal translation, expansion, transposition, modulation, descriptive equivalent, synonymy, couplet and reduction. Moreover, there was no samples of using recognized translation, translation label and notes strategies.

After calculating the percentage of usage of Newmark's strategies in translating culture-specific items from English into Persian, it was revealed that in

translating CSIs, the translator has used cultural equivalent strategy (33.8 %) more than the other translation strategies, while reduction was the procedure that forms 0.6 % of the cases used less than other procedures. The percentage of using the other strategies proposed by Newmark (1988) were shown in figure 1. Moreover, among procedures proposed by Venuti (1995) for rendering CSIs the tendency was towards domestication strategy with 76 %, while the foreignization strategy formed 24 %. The most frequently used domestication strategy was cultural equivalent. The frequency of this strategy was 33.8 % in Nooshin's rendering. High application of this strategy made Nooshin's translation a target-oriented translation. Therefore, it can be argued that the translator used cultural equivalent to make his translation more readable for target readers. Among the foreignization strategies translator used transference, literal translation, and through-translation strategies for rendering CSIs. Nooshin's most frequently used foreignization strategy was literal translation with the frequency of 17.4 %. This figure shows the translator substantial unwillingness to apply foreignization strategies in his translation. As it can be resulted from figure 2, the domestication frequency in Nooshin's translation is 52 % more than the frequency of foreignization strategy. In other words, Nooshin's rendering is 52 % more target-oriented than source-oriented. The analysis also shows that there are no samples related to recognized translation, notes, and translation label strategies in translation of this book.

The different translation strategies proposed by some scholars can be for or against domestication or foreignization strategies. In fact, both domestication and foreignization have their advantages and disadvantages. Domesticating translation is easier for the readers to understand and accept. Foreignization translation strategy preserves the ST formal features and informs the target readers of the SL culture, but alien cultural images may cause the translation to be unacceptable for target readers. The findings of the present study shows that the use of domestication strategy more than foreignization strategy by Nooshin for rendering 'Othello' makes this translation comprehensible for Persian readers. Moreover, the researcher concluded that the use of combination of Newmark's model (1988) and Venuti's theory (1995) were appropriate models for translating this masterpiece.

### **5. Conclusion**

The main concern of this study was to find out what translation strategies have been used by the translator in translating culture-specific items of a famous play 'Othello', and also to find out the most frequently used strategy for rendering this masterpiece. The results of the analysis of CSIs and their translations showed that Abdolhossein Nooshin has used Newmark's strategies (1988) and Venuti's theory (1995) for translating CSIs. Among all Newmark's strategies, cultural equivalent translation strategy was the most frequent strategy which the translator applied for rendering CSIs. On the other hand, the findings showed that

domestication procedure was the most pervasive translation strategy in Persian translation and Nooshin's translation was more target-oriented than source-oriented. The findings of this study can be of use for amateur translators and whoever wants to translate the other masterpieces. Moreover, the findings of this research showed that Venuti's theory (1995) is not adequate enough because it is too general, and therefore it should have subcategories in domestication and foreignization to be more suitable for accurate analysis of translated texts. However, in order to have better translations especially in the area of literary works, further research is required.

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