



Investigating the Applied Norms and Strategies for Translation of Idioms: A Corpus-Based Study of the Novel “The Old Man and the Sea”

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Abstract

Idioms are the fixed expressions whose meanings cannot be understood from the personal sense of the words that constitute them. When idioms are used in literary texts such as novels, the difficulty of rendering them may get even more severe. This study tries to determine the most frequent strategies used in Persian rendering of English idioms in “*The Old Man and the Sea*” novel. In addition, choosing the initial norm translation of Toury is the second goal of the present study. For this purpose, three Persian translations of the novel were selected by three Persian translators named Mohammadtaghi Faramarzi, Nazi Azima, and Najaf Daryabandari. Several 60 idioms were extracted from the book, and their Persian translations also were categorized. The results showed that the most translation strategies used by Mohammadtaghi Faramarzi are translation by “*paraphrase using a related word*”. Related to norm translation, Mohammadtaghi Faramarzi used acceptability more than adequacy norm. Translation by “*paraphrase using a related word*” was also used mainly by Nazi Azima. Acceptability norm is the most frequent norm used by Nazi Azima. Finally, translation by “*paraphrase using unrelated words*” is the most strategy used by Najaf Daryabandari. In addition, he mostly used the acceptability norm comparing to the adequacy norm.

Keywords: Acceptability; Adequacy; Idiom; Norm translation; Translation strategy

INTRODUCTION

Every day various literary books and texts are translated by different well-known translators

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in Iran, but amongst the huge number of translated published books, only a few meet the desired reception by the readers and reaches a mass circulation. Idioms and fixed expressions are an inalienable part of each language found in large numbers in most of the languages. Since the meaning of these collocations cannot be understood from the superficial meanings of the single words constituting them, so there are some problems in both processes of understanding and translating.

The process of translating idioms and fixed expressions from one language into another is a fine work which obliges a translator to have a good knowledge of both languages and cultures being shared or transferred. People of different languages use completely different idioms to convey a similar meaning, in a way that while an idiom might be completely tangible and easy to understand for the interlocutors of a specific language. This originates of the fact that each language has got some culture-specific items that are completely different from the corresponding items in another language. Furthermore, evaluating translations of idiomatic expressions and their situation as a norm in society requires awareness of the strategies translators applied in their translations.

Considering difficulties of idiomatic translation, the present study provided the answer to the following questions:

1. *What are the most frequent strategies used by the three translators of the novel "The Old Man and the Sea"?*
2. *To what extent have the translation versions of the novel "The Old Man and the*

Sea" observed Toury's adequacy and acceptability?

Due to the qualitative nature of research questions, no null hypotheses were formulated.

Norm

The concept of norm, as cited in "Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies" (Baker, 2001, p. 163), refers to regularities of translation behavior within a specific sociocultural situation. Toury (1995) uses the term in the following sense: "the translation of general values or ideas shared by a community – as to what is right or wrong, adequate or inadequate – into performance instructions appropriate for and applicable to particular situations" (p. 55).

Norm in Translation

The concept of norm at first was proposed by Levy' (1969), but later it was circulated by Toury (1994). Schäffner (1999) claimed that norm is a widely used concept in translation task whose value has been both asserted strongly and called into question. He added that norms' functions in any community are considered as standard models of correct behavior. Toury (1995) asserted that every society and community own s set of sociable rules and norms which reflect its identity in different situations. The acquisition of these functions is perquisite task for every translator.

Norms are analytical and procedural tools in the history of translation. They are considered as psychological and social entities in any

society (Hermans, 1996). Norms help the stability of interpersonal relations of a particular language, society, and culture. Chesterman (1993) defined norms as set of specific rules and behaviors which are accepted in a community and translators are required to learn them in order to produce a desirable task. Later, he divided norms of translation into two categories; *professional* and *expectancy* norms. Professional norm refers to professional behavior taken by professional translators. Expectancy norm is the expectancy of a society or readership to a piece of text which should native like.

Translation Strategies

The term “*strategy*” is often said similar to the term *technique*. In some ways it can be called similar because some experts use these terms with the same purpose. For example, Mona Baker proposes some strategies to translate idiomatic expressions, whereas Andrejs Veisberg proposes some techniques to translate idiomatic expressions. Both expressions aim at the same point. According to *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*, technique is a method of doing or performing something whereas strategy is a plan to accomplish a specific goal.

In order to find the strategies against the idioms used by the translators, the Baker’s model (1992) concerning the strategies of translation applied in this research which indicates some strategies used by the translators.

According to Baker (1992), the following strategies can be used by translators:

a) “Translation by a more general word (Superordinate): this is one of the commonest strategies for dealing with many types of non-equivalence, particularly in the area of propositional meaning. It works equally well in most, if not all, languages, since the hierarchical structure of semantic fields is not language-specific” (P. 26).

b) “Translation by a more neutral/less expressive word” (p. 28): it has to do with differences in expressive meaning.

c) “Translation by cultural substitution: this strategy involves replacing a culture-specific item or expression with a target-language item which does not have the same propositional meaning but is likely to have a similar impact on the target reader” (P. 31).

d) “Translation using a loan word or loan word plus explanation: this strategy is particularly common in dealing with culture-specific items, modern concepts, and buzz words” (P. 34).

e) “Translation by paraphrase using a related word: this strategy tends to be used when the concept expressed by the source item is lexicalized in the target language but in a different form, and when the frequency with which a certain form is used in the source text is significantly higher than would be natural in the target language” (P. 37).

f) “Translation by paraphrase using unrelated words: if the concept expressed by the source item is not lexicalized at all in the target language, the paraphrase strategy can still be used in some contexts. Instead of a related word, the paraphrase may be based on modifying a superordinate or simply on

unpacking the meaning of the source item, particularly if the item in question is semantically complex” (P. 38).

g) “Translation by omission: this strategy may sound rather drastic, but in fact it does no harm to omit translating a word or expression in some contexts. If the meaning conveyed by a particular item or expression is not vital enough to the development of the text to justify distracting the reader with lengthy explanations, translators can and often do simply omit translating the word or expression in question” (P. 40).

h) “Translation by illustration: this is a useful option if the word which lacks an equivalent in the target language refers to a physical entity which can be illustrated, particularly if there are restrictions on space and if the text has to remain short, concise, and to the point” (P. 42).

Idiom Translation

Idioms are considered as an essential and integrated part of language. Using idioms can add nerve and life to any written and spoken form of communication. So, idioms enrich language and produce a strong impression on people and communication would be more effective when they are used. Larson (1984) suggested that idioms carry certain connotations. According to Crystal (1980) idioms are sequence of words which function as a single unit and they are semantically and often syntactically restricted.

Another definition is proposed by Brenner (2003) which expresses idioms as frozen

phrases as a unit, have a special meaning different from the literal meaning of the words separately. Baker distinguished idioms from collocations. She considered collocation as more flexible language pattern and their variation is possible but idioms are frozen patterns of language which allow little or no variation in form and often carry meanings which cannot be deduced from their individual components.

Types of Norms

Toury’s Target-oriented approach (1995) recognizes 3 different kinds of norms: *Preliminary norms*, *Operational norms*, and *Initial norms*. A preliminary norm focuses on two factors; *translation policy* and *directness of translation*. Operational norms govern the decisions made by translator while he is translating, these kinds of norms divided into *Matricial norms* and *Textual linguistic norms*.

Finally, *Initial norms* pertain to translator’s preference to subject oneself to the active norms of the source text or the target. Mainly two kinds of initial norm have paramount importance namely adequate and acceptability norm. Sticking to the source language norm and trying to remain the source language norm and guidelines during translation task, produce an adequate translation norm. On the other hand, acceptability norm translation is the product of preferring target language norms.

METHODS

Source Materials



This study was conducted to find the most frequent strategies and norms employed in translation of idioms in English novel *“The Old Man and the Sea”* by Ernest Hemingway and in three Persian translations thereof by Najaf Daryabandari, Nazi Azima and Mohammadtaghi Faramarzi. 60 English idioms of the novel and their Persian translations by the mentioned three translators were selected to find out the most frequent strategies and norms applied in their translations.

Design

The present study was a corpus-based and comparative study of ST and TT with a descriptive approach to analysis of norms and strategies in translation of idioms in the novel *“The Old Man and the Sea”* by Ernest Hemingway and three Persian translations thereof.

Theoretical Framework

Among different available models for translation of idioms, the theoretical framework of this study was associated with the Toury's (1995) translation norms which are called preliminary, initial and operational norms among which only initial norms will be investigated in this research. In order to investigate each applied strategies for translation of each idiom, the Baker's (1995) model of strategies is applied.

Procedure

In order to provide answer to the mentioned research questions, first, the novel was read carefully and all the idiomatic expressions were extracted by the English literature professional expert and then they were listed and analyzed precisely. Second, the three Persian translations of the novel by Najaf Daryabandari (1385), Nazi Azima (1393), and Mohammadtaghi Faramarzi (1395) were read and the Persian equivalents for those idiomatic expressions were found and listed. Finally, based on Baker's (1992) model of strategies, the frequency of strategies and also the topmost strategies were determined and among different norms proposed by Toury's (1995) model, the initial norm was scrutinized during this study.

To describe how the initial norms have governed the translation of this novel, the data of idioms were collected and needed to be precisely and objectively analyzed. For this purpose, the gathered data will be analyzed based on different classifications of Toury's (1995) model for behavioral norms of translation. As far as initial norms are concerned, the gathered data were analyzed one by one to check if the translators have had the tendency to be bound with source language or have been subjected toward target language and culture to finally answer the second research question. If the translators had been dedicated to reflect the denotation, connotation, style, cultural burden and other features of the source language or culture, then it would be stated that the norms override translators toward adequacy. If the translators, on the other hand, had attempted to choose the equivalents with

more direction toward reflecting target culture and language, then it would have been concluded that the translators have been subjected to acceptability norms.

The frequency and percentage of strategies and norms applied for each idiom were calculated and also the overall frequency and percentage of each strategy were displayed in a table. The data have been illustrated in charts and diagrams. In the following samples, MF, NA & ND are subsequently stands for Mohammadtaghi Faramarzi, Nazi Azima and Najaf Daryabandari.

Some examples:

1. I need that badly

MF: خیلی به این باد احتیاج دارم

NA: خیلی لازم دارم

ND: لنگشم

In the presented translations, the first and second have been translated by paraphrase using related words and the third translation was translated by cultural substitution, so according to Toury (1995), all three translations were applied acceptability norms which are known and acceptable for target society.

2. That's very kind of you

MF: خیلی لطف کردی

NA: دستت درد نکنه

ND: چقد مهربونی

In the mentioned translations, the first and second translations have been translated by cultural substitutions which are acceptable for target community and the third one was

translated by paraphrase using related words which is also acceptable to the target society.

3. He was full of resolution

MF: سراپا تصمیم بود

NA: عزمش جزم بود

ND: تصمیم و اراده ای خلل ناپذیر داشت

In the above translations, it should be noted that the first and second translations were translated by cultural substitution which are acceptable and familiar for target reader and the third translation was translated by paraphrase using unrelated words which is adequate according to Toury (1995).

4. Live a long time and take care of yourself

MF: سال های سال زندگی کنی و مواظب خودت باشی

NA: خیر ببینی پسر. مواظب خودت باش

ND: بهتر است زیاد عمر بکنی و از خودت مراقبت کنی

Among all above translations, Azima in the only who translated by cultural substitution in order to domesticate the idiom for the reader and her translation is the only which is acceptable in target society. The other translations have been translated by paraphrase using related words which are foreign and not acceptable in target community.

5. I had to get rid of him too fast

MF: مجبورم هرچه زودتر از شرش خلاص شوم

NA: باید زود از شرش خلاص بشوم

ND: باید هرچه زودتر خودم را از دست آن راحت کنم

The mentioned idiom has translated with related words by all three translators and it keeps the original sense and meaning of the

source text, so it can be said that according to the norms offered by Toury (1995), all mentioned translations are accepted by the reader and target society.

6. You did not stay long, the man thought

MF: پیرمرد گفت تو که نیامده رفتی

NA: زیاد اینجا نمودی

ND: پیرمرد گفت مثل این است که نخوآستی بیشتر از این کنار من بمونی

Obviously, all translations of the above idiom are acceptable based on the Toury's norms, but amongst them translation by Faramarzi is a sample of cultural substitution, Azima has translated with related words and Daryabandari has applied the strategy of paraphrase using unrelated words.

7. But the cut was in the working part of his hand

MF: درست همونجایی از دستش بریده شده بود که بیشتر بکارش می آمد

NA: بریدگی در قسمت کارآمد دستش بود

ND: دستش زخم شده بود

Translation by a more general word is a strategy suggested by Baker (1992) for superordinate translations such as the mentioned translation by Daryabandari. In translation by Daryabandari, the equivalent for "working part of the hand" was omitted and translated in general which is acceptable for reader. Further, other translations have been

translated by related words among which, translation by Azima is adequate and translation of Faramarzi was applied acceptability norm.

RESULTS

Based on the collected data, the present study has come to the following results:

1. The strategy of applying loan word and neutral word, suggested by Baker (1992) were not used at all in three translations of the idioms.

2. The most frequent strategy employed in translation of idioms in English novel "*The Old Man and the Sea*" was "translation by paraphrase using related/unrelated words".

3. The most frequent norm employed by three mentioned translators in translation of idioms of the above novel is "Acceptability Norm" according to the norms classification suggested by Toury (1995).

4. Translation by a cultural substitution was the third strategy applied by translators.

5. Translation by illustration (6.7 %), translation by a more general word (1.7 %) and translation by omission (1.7 %) are respectively the other strategies suggested by Baker (1992) and applied by translators in translation of idioms of the mentioned novel.

Table 1
Translation Strategies Used by Mohammadtaghi Faramarzi

Translation Strategies		
1 Translation by a more general word	Frequency	1
	Percentage	1.7
	Valid Percent	1.7
	Cumulative Percent	1.7
4 Translations by paraphrase using a related word	Frequency	37
	Percentage	61.7
	Valid Percent	61.7
	Cumulative Percent	63.3
8 Translations by paraphrase using unrelated words	Frequency	18
	Percentage	30.0
	Valid Percent	30.0
	Cumulative Percent	93.3
9 Translations by cultural substitution	Frequency	4
	Percentage	6.7
	Valid Percent	6.7
	Cumulative Percent	100.0

Table 2
Norms Used by Mohammadtaghi Faramarzi

Norm		
1- Acceptability	Frequency	31
	Percent	51.7
	Valid Percent	51.7
	Cumulative Percent	51.7
2- Adequacy	Frequency	29
	Percent	48.3
	Valid Percent	48.3
	Cumulative Percent	100

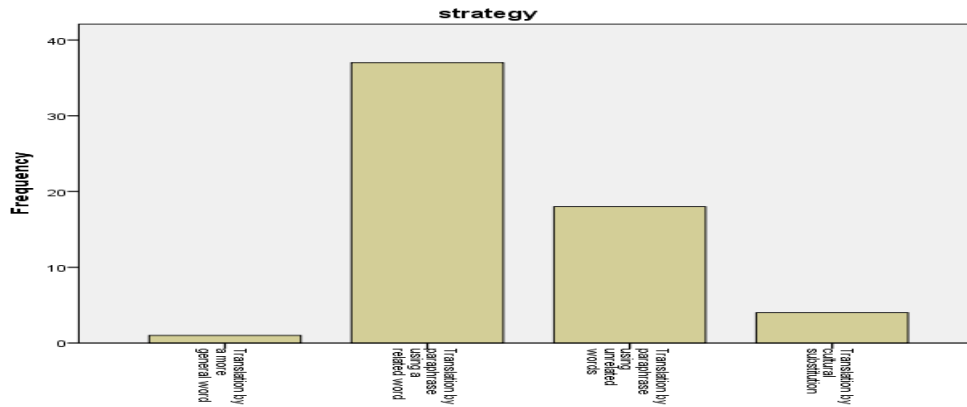


Figure 1. Distributions of translation strategies by Mohammadtaghi Faramarzi

Table 3

Translation Strategies Used by Nazi Azima

Translation Strategies		
3 Translations by cultural substitution	Frequency	7
	Percentage	11.7
	Valid Percent	11.7
	Cumulative Percent	11.7
5 Translations by paraphrase using a related word	Frequency	33
	Percentage	55.0
	Valid Percent	55.0
	Cumulative Percent	66.7
6 Translations by paraphrase using unrelated words	Frequency	15
	Percentage	25.0
	Valid Percent	25.0
	Cumulative Percent	91.7
7 Translations by omission	Frequency	1
	Percentage	1.7
	Valid Percent	1.7
	Cumulative Percent	93.3
8 Translations by illustration	Frequency	4
	Percentage	6.7
	Valid Percent	6.7
	Cumulative Percent	100.0

Table 4
Norms Used by Nazi Azima

Norm		
1- Acceptability	Frequency	40
	Percent	66.7
	Valid Percent	66.7
	Cumulative Percent	66.7
2- Adequacy	Frequency	20
	Percent	33.3
	Valid Percent	33.3
	Cumulative Percent	100.0

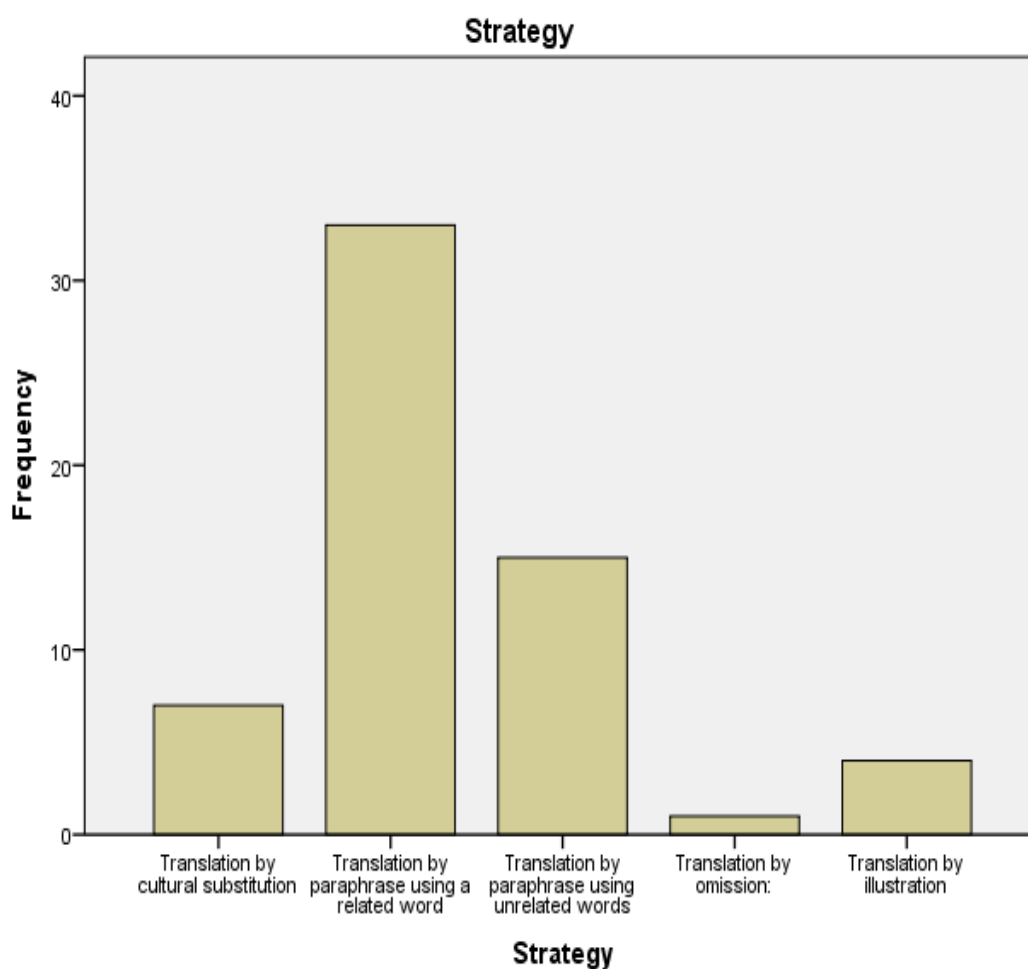


Figure 2. Distributions of translation strategies by Nazi Azima

Table 5
Translation Strategies Used by Najaf Daryabandari

Translation Strategies		
1 Translation by a more general word	Frequency	1
	Percentage	1.7
	Valid Percent	1.7
	Cumulative Percent	1.7
3 Translations by cultural substitution	Frequency	5
	Percentage	8.3
	Valid Percent	8.3
	Cumulative Percent	10
5 Translations by paraphrase using a related word	Frequency	17
	Percentage	28.3
	Valid Percent	28.3
	Cumulative Percent	38.3
6 Translations by paraphrase using unrelated words	Frequency	32
	Percentage	53.3
	Valid Percent	53.3
	Cumulative Percent	91.7
7 Translations by omission	Frequency	5
	Percentage	8.3
	Valid Percent	8.3
	Cumulative Percent	100.0

Table 6
Norms Used by Najaf Daryabandari

Norm		
1- Acceptability	Frequency	41
	Percent	68.3
	Valid Percent	68.3
	Cumulative Percent	68.3
2- Adequacy	Frequency	19
	Percent	31.7
	Valid Percent	31.7
	Cumulative Percent	100.0

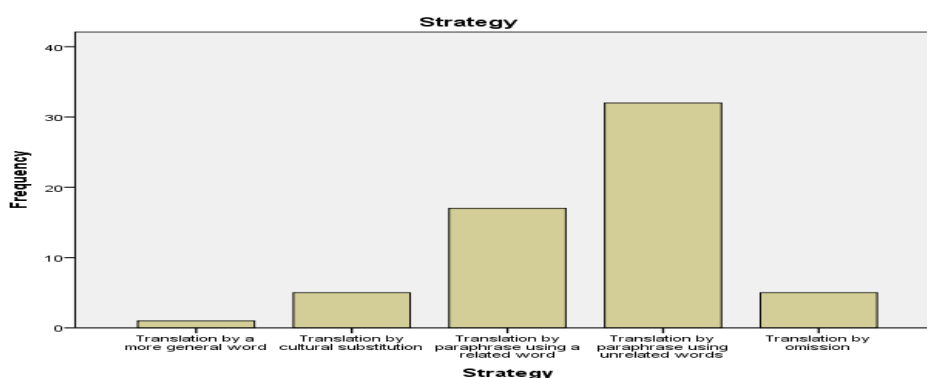


Figure 3. Distributions of translation strategies by Najaf Daryabandari

DISCUSSION

Findings related to the first research question of the study, lend supplementary support to the view often expressed in the literature that different kinds of translation strategies employed by different translators. The results of this study supported Belfaqe (2009) who carried out a study regarding the more

acceptable translation strategies by Arab translators and readers. Based on the obtained data, he confirmed that Arab readers and translators mainly prefer the content of the message and translated equivalent idiom were of significant importance.

On the other hand, the results of the performance of Mohammadtaghi Faramarzi were in line with Khosravi and Khatib (2012).

They conducted a study to show the applied idiomatic translation strategies used in the Persian translation of *“To Kill a Mockingbird”* by Harper Lee and *“Of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck”*. Based on their findings, *“paraphrase”* was the most common strategy applied in the translation of the two above novels.

The result of second research question is in line with many scholars such as Jawad (2009) who investigated the Norm translation in Arabic original literary texts and English translations to scrutinize norms involved in determining certain translation choices. Results showed the using of acceptability norm and generally the culture and structure of target language.

In agreement with the findings of the present research, another study by Jabbarzadeh (2007) tried to shed light on the applying norms in Iranian and American subtitles. In her descriptive study, Jabbarzadeh (2007) believed norms to be frequently used patterns. She found that in Iranian and American subtitles, the translators mainly try to reflect the TL culture and identity. On the other hand, Khoshaligheh and Ameri (2014) also scrutinized the applying norms in translating the taboo and culture specific items in subtitling and dubbing of American movies into Iranian contexts. It was pointed out that Anglophone world was of a secular culture while Iranian culture was religion-oriented and relatively restrained.

CONCLUSION

First, the main purpose of this study was

focusing on the strategies and respectively the norms applied in translations of idiomatic expressions, so based on the results, it can be said that Mohammadtaghi Faramarzi has mainly used *“Translation by paraphrase using a related word”* and *“Translation by paraphrase using unrelated words”* strategy for translation idiomatic expressions. Further, Nazi Azima has preferred *“Translation by paraphrase using a related word”*. At last, Najaf Daryabandari has mainly used *“Translation by paraphrase using unrelated words”* more than the other strategies. According to the obtained results, all three translators have preferred to apply *“translation by paraphrase using related/unrelated words”* and then *“substituting by cultural items”* in translation of idiomatic expressions. This strategy tends to be used when the concept expressed by the source item is lexicalized or even non-lexicalized in the target language but in a different form.

Second, the present study tried to determine the norms applied in translation of these three Persian translations. In this study, the norms governing translation behavior and decision-making processes was mainly based on the concept of norms developed by Toury (1995); therefore, the results showed that all three Persian translators have mainly preferred acceptability norm in their translations.

Finally, the acceptability norm is more acceptable and understandable in TL. Actually, among the mentioned three translations of *“The*

Old Man and the Sea” novel, Najaf Daryabandari is glaringly more obvious in using proper strategy and norm translation in rendering the idiomatic expressions. We can come to this conclusion that Najaf Daryabandari is probably more successful in translation of the mentioned novel and he can be a good sample for applying proper strategies and norms in translation of idiomatic expressions.

Contribution to New Knowledge

It is crystal clear that translation is a cultural bridge of communication between nations. Translation has been able to bring different societies and nations closer together. One of the problematic issues in translation, which is also examined in this article, is the translation of idiomatic terms. In this article, the difficulty of these cultural manifestations was studied. The results of this research actually add a golden sheet to the translation industry. The findings of this study help both academia and individuals. It would help individual translators to use appropriate translation strategy facing frozen idioms and expressions. Also, considering the importance of cultural frozen expressions and idioms, the findings of this study call the attention of decision makers to pay more attention on translation of idiomatic expressions in academic context.

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