

Translating Young Adult Fiction from English: The *Visibility* of the Filipino Translator and Its Implications on the Teaching and Learning of Literary Works

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Abstract: This study aimed to investigate selected Filipino translators' approach in dealing with culture-specific items (CSI) in translating young adult fiction from English to Filipino and in particular, how visible they are in the translated work (Venuti, 1995, Eco, 2001). For this purpose, the culture-specific items in Filipino translations of Kiera Cass's *The Selection* and Stephanie Perkins's *Anna and the French Kiss* were taken into consideration. These young adult novels were selected because they 1) have an existing Filipino translation 2) they reflect a culture different from that of the Filipino (in this case, it is the American culture that is embedded in the novels), and 3) they are very popular novels among young adults and thus have a wide readership. This exploratory investigation employed a parallel corpus study and a consolidation of translation strategies proposed by four translation theorists: Aixelá (1996), Davies (2003), Fernandes (2006), and Klingberg (1986). The results of the study were indicative of the translators' target-oriented tendency with the most frequently applied strategy being naturalization. This tendency points to these Filipino translators' inclination to being "visible" which may have implications on the use of translated works for teaching and learning purposes.

Key Words: Translation; Translator; Literary translation; Culture-specific items; Filipino language; Young Adult fiction

1. INTRODUCTION

The basic task of a translator has always been to take a text written in one language and transpose it into another language, for a new set of readers. However, the challenge is the expectation that the original will still be present in the translated version. In literary translation, the expectation is that the translation will not read like a translation – that the reader will perceive that what they are reading is an original.

Despite the Philippines' long history with the

English language and even though English is the second language of many Filipinos and is, in fact, one of the country's official languages, many readers still enjoy reading literary work in Filipino. In addition, the Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino (KWF), the sole language agency of the Republic of the Philippines, is providing programs for the development and advancement of translation in the country and proposes at least four reasons to advocate for Filipino translations: 1) Translation transfers the knowledge contained in the languages of the world into Filipino; 2) Translation offers new perspectives and new experiences; 3) Translation instills love of country,

builds a nation; and 4) Translation makes a better nation with a deeper understanding of its diverse cultures and values (Labor, 2020).

Translating is difficult enough without the challenge of translating culture-specific terms (CST). Newmark (1981, p. 7) declares that “translation is a craft consisting in the attempt to replace a written message and/or statement in one language by the same message and/or statement in another language,” but any translator will agree that this is easier said than done. Words are strongly linked to the specific cultural context where the text originates or with the cultural context it aims to recreate (Tairovna, Yadullaevna, & Mamadiyrovna, 2021) and thus any translation of words is also an attempt to “translate” culture.

Because CSTs are inevitable in any text, many scholars have proposed procedures for effective translation (see Aixela; 1996; Hervey & Higgins, 1992; Klingbreg, 1996; Newmark, 1988). Many of these procedures involve added explanation, rewording, explanatory translation, explanation outside the text, substitution of an equivalent in the culture of the target language, substitution of a rough equivalent in the culture of the target language, localization, deletion, and simplification. With the use of these procedures,

Of particular interest to translation scholars are translations of CSTs in children’s and young adult’s books, particularly fantasy fiction. As observed by Sabermahani and Ghazizade (2017), children and even young adults have a limited amount of knowledge and language ability, translators of novels for this audience may encounter difficulties while dealing with culture-specific items. They cannot easily decide whether to domesticate or foreignize such terms. Localized fantasy novels are especially interesting and important to analyze because they are usually extremely expressive of the country where they were developed. Davies’s 2003 study of Harry Potter translations found that instead of dealing with each culture specific item separately, on its own merits, it is sometimes helpful to adopt a macro perspective which looks at sets of culture specific

items in terms of their joint contribution to the development of the whole text.

Other studies that looked into translators’ strategies in translating CSTs also focused on literary work. Neupane (2013) categorized CSTs in Bhattarai’s novel *Muglan*, investigated and analyzed the strategies applied in the translated version, assessed the strategies for plausibility, and evaluated gaps in the translation. The conclusion, unsurprisingly, is that cultural references necessitate the use of appropriate strategies for transferring them across languages. The most frequent strategy was the translation by cultural substitution, followed by loan word (plus explanation), neutral word and general word.

Many popular children’s and young adult novels have been translated for the purpose of widening readership. Inggs (2003) observed that in Russian translations of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, and *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, the approach to translation is largely random and that there was no attempt on the part of the translators to situate the stories in a Russian context, and that they have retained intact both the cultural backdrop and the moral values put forward in the works. Petrulione (2012) described the strategies used to translate two Joanne Harris’s novels into Lithuanian and found that the strategy of localization has been used most often.

Alwazna (2014) on the problem of a mediation between language and culture in any translation task argues for using domestication, as a cultural translation strategy. This strategy has predominantly been employed in Arabic-English translation by Western translators such that target texts would be produced in such a way that fits the culture of the target language and lives up to the expectations of the target reader.

There have been few studies recently on translation strategies specifically on translating CSTs and the reason is not due to the irrelevance or unimportance of the topic but possibly due to the endless arguments on what constitutes a translation

theory in the first place. Most investigations reveal many conflicting theories and strategies, but perhaps these conflicts are inevitable and permanent. What might be more helpful and necessary is to continue to advance theories relevant to current needs and situations and procedures and strategies of translating cultural concepts which might help translators choose the procedures that seem to be more effective than the others. Further, translation, more than ever in this age of accessible information, is no longer exclusively cultural and linguistic but is also an instrument for influence and advocacy.

In education, where translated work is utilized as teaching material, it is important to analyze the translation strategies of translators because their visibility (or lack thereof) greatly influences the accessibility, understanding, and appreciation of literary work.

The present study thus aimed to explore strategies used by Filipino translators in translating CSTs in two popular young adult novels in English: Stephanie Perkins's "Anna and the French Kiss" and Kiera Cass's "The Selection." It is hoped that the results of this exploratory investigation will reveal Filipino translators' stance on visibility and be a springboard for a subsequent investigation on how this affects the teaching and learning of these materials. This study also endeavors to contribute to the ongoing discussion and revive interest in and research on translation and translation studies in the Philippines.

2. METHODOLOGY

This descriptive qualitative study investigated the procedures that two Filipino translators use to translate culture-specific terms in two young adult novels in English. The corpus of this study comprised two novels: "Anna and the French Kiss" by Stephanie Perkins and "The Selection" by Kiera Cass. Anna and the French Kiss was translated by Srah Bulalacao and The Selection was translated by Susie R. Baclagobn-Borrero. These two novels were selected for analysis due to their availability and

popularity among Filipino young adult readers of fiction.

The parallel corpus (English novels and their Filipino translations) was scrutinized and CSTs including names, domestic life and activities, measurements, etc. were detected. Thereafter, the strategy or strategies applied to translate each of these items were identified. The strategies were combined from the taxonomies introduced by Aixelá (1996), Davies (2003), Fernandes (2006), and Klingberg (1986) These included: transliteration, rendition, convention, substitution, intratextual addition, extratextual addition, naturalization, omission, and cultural dilution.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The present study investigated the strategies adopted by Filipino translators to translate culture-specific terms in young adult novels from English to Filipino. For this purpose, two popular works in this genre, namely "Anna and the French Kiss" by Stephanie Perkins and "The Selection" by Kiera Cass were scrutinized for application of nine strategies namely: transliteration, rendition, convention, substitution, intratextual addition, extratextual addition, naturalization, omission, and cultural dilution.

Rendition: It is applied when the item is translated by its *meaning*. In this case, the actual word order of the source text is not necessarily the same in the target text. In other words, rendition is a strategy by which the *sense* of the CST is rendered in the target language.

Examples of Rendition:

From "The Selection"

Source Text::Our money was tight as a high wire.
Target text: Mahirap ang pera.

Source text: stuck-up little wimp
Target text: aroganteng walang silbi

From “Anna and the French Kiss”

Source text: god-awful granite cherub

Target text: napaka pangit na estatwang kerubin

Source text: eggplant tapenade

Target text: kakaibang putaheng talong

Convention: It refers to a strategy in which a term is translated in a conventionally accepted way. It is usually used in translating literary or historical characters as well as geographical names.

Examples of Convention:

From “Anna and the French Kiss”

Source text: Madeline, Amelie, Moulin Rouge, Eiffel Tower, Arc de Triomphe, Napoleon, Marie Antoinette, French Revolution, Bastille Day, Louvre, Mona Lisa, Hogwarts, Chocolate chaud

Target text: same terms

Intratextual addition: It is applied to provide additional information when translators think that an item is not ideologically appropriate or comprehensible. The strategy functions to make explicit something that is only partly revealed in the source text.

Example of Intratextual addition:

From: “Anna and the French Kiss”

Source text: Honestly. Trousers.

Target text: Napatalon ang puso ko sa kung paano niya binigkas ang salitang “pantalón.” Juskolord.

Naturalization: It is used to make translation more transparent and fluent for the target text readers. In this case, the translator reproduces a cultural reference with its closest natural equivalent in the target language. It, therefore, refers to the substitution

of a source culture reference with a target one.

Examples of Naturalization:

From “The Selection”

Source text: snake pit

Target text: preso

Source text: brick wall

Target text: pader na sagabal

Source text: don't be silly, kitten

Target text: wag ka ngang ganyan, anak

Source text: freckles

Target text: pekas

From “Anna and the French Kiss”

Source text: cable-knit sweater

Target text: ginantsilyong panlamig

Source text: orangey tan

Target text: mala kahel na kayumangging kutis

Source text: total dick

Target text: mayabang na gago ang asal

Source text: I totally rock

Target text: napaka astig ko talaga

Omission: It is used when a ST cultural reference is deleted during the process of translation because it is either ideologically or stylistically inappropriate for the TT reader.

Examples of omission:

From “The Selection”

Source texts: swooned, snot, wild card

Target text: none

Cultural dilution: It aims to produce a more general or neutral rendition; therefore, target readers can more easily understand the cultural backgrounds of the source text.

Examples of cultural dilution:

From “The Selection”

Source text: magnetic

Target text: nakakabighani

Source text: absolute heathen

Target text: hampaslupa

Retention: This strategy is not in any of the taxonomies but was added to describe and categorize CSTs that were retained and not translated at all.

Examples of retention:

From “The Selection”

Source text: royalty, pasta, jailbreak, homeschooling, baking pan, tree house, soccer ball, mashed potatoes, baking pastries, caste.

Target text: none

From “Anna and the French Kiss”

Source text: cafe, bistro, boating shoes, granola, har, bloody, har

Target text: none

Convention: It refers to a procedure in which an item is translated in a conventionally accepted way. It is usually used in translating literary or historical characters as well as geographical names.

Examples of convention:

From “Anna and the French Kiss”

Source text: Madeline, Amélie, Moulin Rouge, Eiffel Tower, Arc de Triomphe, Napoléon, Marie Antoinette, French Revolution, Bastille Day, Louvre, Mona Lisa, Hogwarts, Chocolate chaud

Target text: same terms

The results generally reveal the tendency of Filipino translators to be more target text-oriented. This is apparent in the frequency of use of the strategy of *naturalization* which is used to make translation more transparent and fluent for the target text readers. In this case, the translator reproduces a cultural reference with its closest natural equivalent in the target language. It, therefore, refers to the substitution of a source culture reference with a target one. This can be seen in examples such as “snake pit” being translated to “preso” which is a concept that Filipinos are more familiar with and also the translation of “freckles” to “pekas.” This propensity to use naturalization may imply Filipino translators’ desire to ensure that their translations are accessible and relatable. This contrasts with previous studies such as Sabermahani and Ghazizade’s (2017) which found that the use of naturalization and substitution was so rare in all translations on the account of Persian translators’ tendency to avoid domestication as much as possible. Further, Filipino translators do make use of omission as a strategy while Persian translators do not which, to some extent, emphasize the translators’ faithfulness to render all materials of the source resorting to various methods.

Another commonly used translation strategy was *rendition* which involves translating a term by its meaning. Because rendition is a strategy in which the sense of the CST is rendered in the target language, it is actually very similar to naturalization. Thus, this again reveals that Filipino translators make certain that their versions are target text- and target culture-oriented.

Filipino translators also use *cultural dilution* which is a strategy that aims to produce a more

general or neutral rendition so that target readers can more easily understand the cultural backgrounds of the source text. The term “magnetic” which is synonymous to “attractive” was translated to “nakakabighani” which is an adjective that is very Filipino. Another CST “absolute heathen” was translated to “hampaslupa” which is actually not the equivalent term as harthern actually refers to “pagano” or a pagan, but with cultural dilution, and the context in which the CST was used, the translator opted to favor a target reader-familiar term.

Retention, which is a strategy that is not found in any taxonomy probably because of the irony that it does not actually translate per se, was also utilized by the Filipino translators in this study. The terms cafe, bistro, boating shoes, granola, and the phrase “har. bloody. har” were retained possibly because there were no cultural equivalents in Filipino and translating would change the meaning completely. In the novel “The Selection,” the terms royalty, pasta, jailbreak, homeschooling, baking pan, tree house, soccer ball, mashed potatoes, baking pastries, and caste among others were also retained in the source language probably because although these are terms specific to the Western/American culture, these have been inculcated into the Filipino culture due to the influence of the Americans and also of media.

The translation strategy of convention was used to “translate” proper names in “Anna and the French Kiss” as this is a strategy in which an item is translated in a conventionally accepted way and is commonly used in translating literary or historical characters as well as geographical names.

Intratextual addition, which provides additional information when translators think that an item is not ideologically appropriate or comprehensible make explicit something that is only partly revealed in the source text. It might be used to clarify ambiguities as well. There are few instances of intratextual addition in both novels possibly because the translators were cautious to render the translation relatable and accessible but still as accurate and “equivalent” to the source text as much

as possible. In the translation of the phrase “Honestly. Trousers,” (translated to: “Napatalon ang puso ko sa kung paano niya binigkas ang salitang “pantalón.” Juskolord.) however, this strategy seemed to be necessary as the humor in the utterance was difficult to translate without adding information that would somehow contextualize it and give it a “flavor” of Filipino humor.

4. CONCLUSIONS

This study set out to investigate the strategies used by Filipino translators in translating culture-specific terms young adult novels in English. The utilization of these procedures was scrutinized in “Anna and the French Kiss” by Stephanie Perkins and “The Selection” by Kiera Cass. The results revealed that Filipino translators were inclined to use the strategy of *naturalization* of CSIs on target text. In other words, *target-oriented strategies* were more utilized to prioritize making the text more comprehensible and relatable over retaining the culture of the original text. The dominance of this strategy points to these Filipino translators’ inclination to being “visible” in their work which may have implications on the use of these materials for teaching and learning purposes.

This exploratory investigation hopes to revive the interest in translation studies especially in the Philippines where the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB MLE) policy necessitates the translation of educational materials into many different mother tongues and where the KWF advocates for the development and advancement of translation in the country.

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