



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

A Contrastive Analysis of Idioms and Idiomatic Expressions in Three English and Persian Novels for Translation Purposes

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The significance of idioms and idiomatic expressions in English can be understood from their appearance in all types of discourse ranging from every day conversations to scientific texts. So, the present study deals with the translation of idioms and idiomatic expressions from English into Persian focusing on the procedures involved. Baker's model (1992) which groups possible procedures into four strategies was chosen as the theoretical framework of this research. This study is an attempt to investigate strategies used in translating and also to find out which strategy is mostly used. To do so, a total number of 90 idioms and idiomatic expressions were extracted from three English novels. This study was carried out through a comparative study of idioms and idiomatic expressions from English into Persian. The findings of the research indicated that four strategies were used in translating idioms and idiomatic expressions and their frequency of being used is different and also it was revealed that most of the data were translated by paraphrase.

Keywords: Idioms, Idiomatic Expressions, Paraphrase, Translation.

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Introduction

Translation has become an activity of enormous importance in recent decades. We live in an internationalized world where a great number of individuals are in continuous contact with foreign cultures and languages both in their professional lives and in informal contexts usually via mass media. The more internationalized the world becomes; the greater the importance of translation grows. Translation helps us to overcome cultural and linguistic boundaries and enables communication between different cultures. Thus, translation is an important issue in today's world.

Since translation has become important at both national and global level, it is a subject worth a closer study and scrutiny. Obviously, there is a wide range of topics which could be studied in terms of translational aspects. The present study focuses on the translation of idioms and idiomatic expressions.

Idioms are important and natural part of all languages and are prominent parts of our daily speech. Idioms are normal part of our language use and we rarely notice how vastly we use them in our everyday speaking and writing. As there are so many idioms in all languages, these language-fixed expressions are worth studying.

Idioms are considered as one of the hardest and most interesting parts of English vocabulary. But, they are considered as one of the most peculiar parts of the language; on the other hand, they are difficult because of their unpredictable meanings. Moreover, idioms are culture-bound and this may cause great problems for translators. Therefore, in order to transfer a source language idiom into the target language, translators must choose the most appropriate strategy. It is notable that the examination and evaluation of strategies applied in translating idioms and idiomatic expressions are very useful for translators.

In addressing idioms and idiomatic expressions, it is notable that as idioms are part of culture, people may not understand the meaning of an idiom because its meaning cannot be determined by knowing the meaning of the words that form it, and some translators are not familiar with methods and strategies of translating idioms and idiomatic expressions. Therefore, they delete some linguistic elements. Consequently, it is necessary to do a research in this area of translation.

It seems that idioms and idiomatic expressions are one of the main components of the literary texts and finding target language equivalent for them is of great importance. Thus, choosing a wrong strategy may hinder communication. Therefore, it seems necessary to study translation strategies which have been used in translating idioms and idiomatic expressions from English into Persian. Idioms are regarded as one of the most important elements in every language and culture. Investigating and studying the strategies used by translators in translation of novels can be a method to find weak points and problems that translators deal with in the process of translating these items.

With regard to the significance of idioms, Ghaffari (2001) mentions that without using idioms, languages become harsh, because words are like the skeleton of the language and idioms are like its soul. Therefore, wrong translation of idioms may damage the soul of the language.

Since idioms are culture-specific, translating them is an important and interesting area of study. As each language has its own way of expressing certain things,

corresponding idioms and idiomatic expressions may not be found in another language. As this study is on translating idioms, it is appropriate to define them. Weinreich (1969, 42) defines an idiom as "a phraseological unit that involves at least two polysemous constituents, and in which there is a reciprocal contextual selection of sub-senses".

In all languages, there are a great number of expressions whose meaning cannot be inferred from the individual words of the phrase. An expression in one language may not exist in some other languages or the language may have a very different expression to convey the same meaning. That is why translation of idioms may sometimes be problematic.

Due to the language-specific nature of idioms, their translation sometimes can be somewhat challenging. Idioms must be recognized, understood and analyzed before appropriate translation methods can be considered. One must, first of all, be able to spot idioms from a text. It is very important that a translator recognizes an idiom when she/he encounters it. The ability to identify idioms is of great importance and their meaning should never be understood literally. Concerning the identification of idioms, Larson (1984, 143) states that "the first step in the translation of idioms is to be absolutely certain of the meaning of the source language idiom". Therefore, the most important issue in translating idioms is the ability to distinguish the difference between the literal meaning and the real meaning of the expression.

The English language is richer in idioms and idiomatic expressions than Persian. That is why it is a simplistic view to assume that English idioms and idiomatic expressions have the same form and meaning in Persian. Thus, it is necessary to study how translators translate them in the literary texts from English into Persian. Sometimes, they translate idioms literally. This may be due to the fact that either a translator is an amateur and not familiar with idioms and idiomatic expressions, or they do not have enough capabilities in their mother tongue to express them. Therefore, they delete some linguistic elements. Consequently, translating idioms is one of the most difficult tasks for translators. It is noteworthy that the evaluation of strategies applied in translating idioms and idiomatic expressions is very useful for translators.

Since understanding the meaning of an idiom cannot be determined by knowing the meaning of the words that form it, this study is to investigate the strategies which have been used by translators in translating idioms and idiomatic expressions in novels, in general, but particularly, in three English novels of *Animal Farm*, *Lord of the Flies* and *the Old Man and the Sea*. Baker's (1992) model of translating idioms and idiomatic expressions has been used as the theoretical framework and at the end of the research, it will be clear that whether it is applicable or not.

Considering that idioms and idiomatic expressions are problematic items for translation, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What strategies are used in translating idioms and idiomatic expressions from English into Persian in *Animal Farm*, *Lord of the Flies* and *the Old Man and the Sea*?
2. Which strategy is mostly used in translating idioms and idiomatic expressions from English into Persian in *Animal Farm*, *Lord of the Flies* and *the Old Man and the Sea*?

Literature Review

Idioms

Idioms are generally defined as language-specific expressions which usually carry a non-literal meaning that can be very different from the literal meaning of the expression. Idiomatic expressions are common in all languages and are used widely in all types of communication in written as well as in spoken interactions, in formal and informal contexts. Idioms are colorful and lively expressions which are usually unique and specific in any language. The fact that there are so many idioms in all languages makes them an important part of our everyday language use and an interesting area of study.

Why are idioms important and worth studying? Because idioms are common part of normal everyday language use. They are also fascinating parts of the language. As Fernando (1996, 25) states "idioms not only ensure that our communication is coherent and cohesive, but they also produce discourse that is socially acceptable as well as precise, lively and interesting". Furthermore, it is commonly agreed that a native-like command of a language demands familiarity with idiomatic expressions and the ability to use them fluently and appropriately.

Definitions of Idiom

The term 'idiom' is generally used in a variety of different senses. According to Cacciari (1993, 27), this is due to the fact that idioms are somewhat difficult to define. Hence, there is some disagreement over what kind of expressions should be counted as idioms.

Fernando's (1996, 38) definition of an idiom is threefold. Firstly, she states that idioms are conventionalized multi-word expressions. Secondly, they are almost always non-literal. Thirdly, idioms are indivisible units whose components cannot be varied or varied only within definable limits. Conventionality, non-literalness and invariability are therefore the cornerstones of Fernando's (1996) definition of an idiom.

Bolinger (1975, 100) describes idioms as a group of words with set meanings that cannot be calculated by adding up the separate meanings of the parts. Alexander (1978, 98) gives a practical definition for idiomatic expressions. In his view, they are multi-word units which have to be learned as a whole, along with associated sociolinguistic cultural and pragmatic rules of use. Besides, Baghinipour (2005) defines an idiom as a multi-word construction; it is a semantic unit whose meaning cannot be usually deduced from the meanings of its constituents, and has a more or less non-productive syntactic structure.

Theories on Translating Idioms

In general, translation theorists recognize three different translation strategies for idioms:

1. Translating an idiom with a non-idiom;
2. Translating an idiom with an idiom;
3. Translating an idiom literally.

Nida and Taber (1969, 106) exclude literal translation strategy and suggest three translation strategies for idioms:

1. Translating idioms with non-idioms;

2. Translating idioms with idioms;
3. Translating non-idioms with idioms.

They claim that most frequently source language idioms can only be translated with target language non-idioms, and also admit that sometimes it is possible to match a source language idiom by an equivalent target language idiom (Nida and Taber 1969, 108).

The most recommended translation strategy for idioms is translating them with a natural target language idiom which has the same meaning as the original source language. Bassnett (1980, 24) suggests that:

“Idioms should be translated on the basis of the function of the phrase. The source language idiom should be replaced by a target language idiom that has the same meaning and function in the target language culture as the target language idiom has in the source language culture.”

Newmark (1981) proposes another challenge for the translation of idioms. According to him, the original source language idiom and its translation should be equally frequent in the two languages (Newmark 1981, 8). He also states that the benefits of the strategy of *matching an idiom by an idiom* are related to the stylistic balance between the source and the target language texts. By translating source language idioms with corresponding target language idioms, the style and manner of expression of the source text can be conveyed to the target language text. Therefore, the translator should make every effort to find a corresponding target language idiom for a source language idiom. If there is none available, the idiom should be translated with a normal, non-idiomatic expression which conveys the same meaning.

Baker (1992), in her book *In other words*, offers the following as the strategies for translating idioms and idiomatic expressions:

1. Using an idiom of similar meaning and form: regarding this strategy, she states that this strategy involves using an idiom in the target language and it conveys roughly the same meaning as that of the source-language idiom and consists of equivalent lexical items (Baker 1992, 72).

2. Using an idiom of similar meaning but different form: concerning this strategy, she mentions that it is often possible to find an idiom or fixed expression in the target language which has a meaning similar to that of the source language idioms or idiomatic expressions, but consists of different lexical items (Baker 1992, 72).

3. Translation by paraphrase: as sometimes it is impossible to find the right equivalent or any idiom in the target language. Therefore, a translator can use translation by paraphrase. Using this kind of strategy, a translator transfers the meaning of an idiom using a single word or a group of words which roughly corresponds to the meaning of idiom but it is not an idiom itself. However, the use of this strategy involves certain disadvantages of losing quality and stylistic flavor. Newmark (1988, 109) states that “while using this strategy not only components of sense will be missing or added, but the emotive or pragmatic impact will be reduced or lost”. According to Baker (1992, 74), when it is not possible for the translator to

find a match for source language idiom, or whenever using idiomatic language in the target text is not appropriate because of the different stylistic preferences of source and target languages, the translator uses the paraphrase.

4. Translation by omission: Baker (1992, 77) specifies that an idiom may sometimes be omitted altogether in the target text. This may be because it has no close match in the target language, its meaning cannot be easily paraphrased, or for stylistic reasons.

In this part, the researcher deals with some studies, which have been done previously on idioms and idiomatic expressions. The results of those studies are presented in the following:

Mirza Suzani (2007) in his article entitled “*sports idioms and duality of meaning in translation*” concluded that if a translator understands the sport, the game and the way it is played, he/she will understand better the idiomatic expressions derived from these games and henceforth, can produce a more successful translation out of the texts.

Tasnim (2001) aimed at investigating the relationship between the knowledge of idioms and reading comprehension. At the end, she concluded that in teaching English, more emphasis should be given to idioms and they should be taken more into consideration in syllabus designing, testing and teaching.

Delfani (2009) investigated the idiomatic expressions in movie subtitles and the results of her studies indicated that the third and second strategies of Baker’s (1992) model in translating idiomatic expressions were the most frequent strategies. The findings of Adili’s study (2010) in translating Quranic idiomatic expressions demonstrated that translation by paraphrase was the most frequent strategy applied by both English and Persian translators. The results of Salehi’s study (2000) revealed that paraphrase is the most frequent strategy implemented in translating slang words and expressions in subtitles of American movies.

The researchers have addressed idioms, but they have drawn their attention to different areas of translating idioms in the Holy Quran, movies, etc. However, the idioms and idiomatic expressions of the novels selected by the researcher are not studied previously. Some researches also have been done on mechanisms of idioms i.e. on how idioms should be learned and produced. However, it is noteworthy that idioms are one of the figures of speech, which are rich in the literary works. That is why it is appropriate to study idioms in English and Persian novels. As each year, many novels are translated from English into Persian, it is necessary to investigate the procedures used in translating idioms and idiomatic expressions to improve their translation in English and Persian novels.

Method

The purpose of the study was to find out the types of strategies used and also to find the mostly used strategy in translating idioms and idiomatic expressions in novels from English into Persian according to the four strategies proposed by Baker (1992). The present study is corpus-based.

Materials

The following novels were chosen as the corpora of the study. They are written and translated by three different writers and translators. To provide a corpus of equal standing, the researcher selected 30 idioms and idiomatic expressions from each novel.

English Novels:

1. Golding, W. (1954). *Lord of the Flies*. London: Faber & faber.
2. Hemingway, E. (1952). *The Old Man and the Sea*. U.K.: Penguin Books.
3. Orwell. G. (1945). *Animal Farm*. London: Longman Group.

Persian Versions:

1. Amirshahi, A. (2010). *qal'eye heyvānāt*. Tehran: Amirkabir Publications.
2. Daryabandari, N. (1994). *piremard va daryā*. Tehran: Kharazmi Publications.
3. Didari, R. (1985). *sālāre magashā*. Tehran: Afrashteh Publications.

Procedures

The current research was done through several steps as follows: firstly, the researcher read each novel carefully to scrutinize and identify idioms and idiomatic expressions. Due to the fact that idioms and idiomatic expressions gain their meaning in a sentence, they were recorded in the sentences. Secondly, having finished reading the novels, a total number of 30 English idioms and idiomatic expressions were detected randomly from each novel. To make sure of the accuracy and correctness of the extracted idioms and idiomatic expressions, the researcher had to consult some dictionaries. In this regard, *Oxford Dictionary* and *Oxford Dictionary of Current Idiomatic English* paved the researcher's way. English idioms were checked carefully in the dictionaries for their form and meaning. In the third step, the Persian version of the novels was read to find the Persian equivalents of the English ones. In the fourth step, they were compared to their Persian counterparts to determine strategies of translation according to the classification proposed by Baker (1992). In the fifth step, an attempt was made to find out the strategies used, and at last, the mostly used strategy.

Discussion and Results

In the process of data analysis, firstly, idioms and idiomatic expressions of each novel were compared with their Persian translation and their strategy was determined. Secondly, the frequencies of the strategies used in translating them were calculated and finally the frequencies of the whole data were calculated. For the sake of simplicity and not repeating strategies, a code number is allocated to each strategy: one for the first strategy, two for the second strategy, three for the third strategy, and four for the fourth strategy.

Having listed English idioms and idiomatic expressions with their Persian counterparts, the researcher launched to analyze and classify the data based on the model offered by Baker (1992). The translation strategy of each idiom and idiomatic expression was identified.

The following tables and figures show the findings and statistical figures obtained for each novel.

Table 1: Frequencies and Percentages of Each Used Strategy in *Lord of the Flies*

Strategy Number	Frequency	Percentage
1	9	30
2	8	26.7
3	12	40
4	1	3.3

Table 1 displays the frequencies and percentages of strategies in *Lord of the Flies*. The data analysis showed that in this novel, out of 30 idioms and idiomatic expressions, nine cases were translated by strategy number 1, eight cases were translated by strategy number 2, twelve cases were translated by strategy number 3, and only one case was translated by strategy number 4. According to the findings of the study, Didari (1985) has been successful in translating idioms and idiomatic expressions because 30% of idioms were translated by strategy number 1. It means that the translator has been good at using an idiom of similar meaning and form. 26.7% of idioms were translated by strategy number two. 40% of the idioms were translated by strategy number 3. The strategy number 3 was the most frequently used strategy in this novel. The translator has not translated 3.3% of the idioms. So, it is notable that the translator has presented a good translation.

Figure 1: Frequencies of the Used Strategies in *Lord of the Flies*

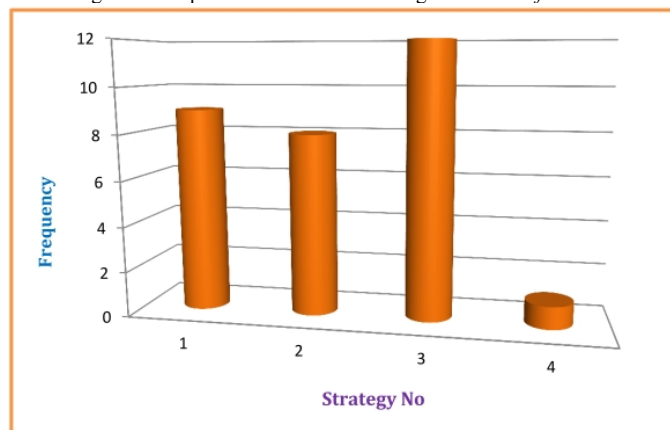


Figure 1 represents the frequencies of strategies in *Lord of the Flies*. The data analysis demonstrated that most of the idioms in this novel were translated by strategy number 3. So, it is worth mentioning that the translator has been successful in translating idioms. As he has used strategy number 3 more than strategy number 1 and 2, it is due to the fact that when the translator was not able to provide the exact equivalents for the idioms, he has translated by paraphrase.

Table 2. Frequencies and Percentages of Each Used Strategy in *Animal Farm*

Strategy Number	Frequency	Percentage
1	4	13.2
2	10	33.3
3	16	53.5
4	0	0

Table 2 displays the frequencies and percentages of strategies in *Animal Farm*. The data analysis indicated that in this novel, out of 30 idioms and idiomatic expressions, 4 cases were translated by strategy number 1. Sixteen cases were translated by strategy number 2. Ten cases were translated by strategy number three, and the strategy number four did not use. In this novel, 53.3% of idioms were translated by strategy number three. 33.3% of them were translated by strategy number two, 13.2% of them were translated by strategy number one. Therefore, it is noteworthy that Amirshahi has not used strategy number one which is the best strategy of translating idioms as much as possible, but he has translated by paraphrase.

Figure 2: Frequencies of Used Strategies in *Animal Farm*

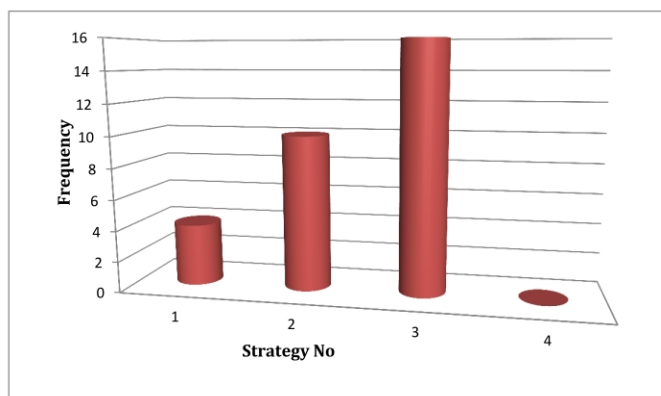


Figure 2 represents the frequencies of strategies in *Animal Farm*. The data analysis showed that most of the idioms in this novel were translated by strategy number 3. The second common strategy was strategy number 2, the third common strategy was strategy number 1. It can be inferred that Amirshahi has not been successful in translating idioms in contrast with Didari.

Table 3: Frequencies and Percentages of Each Used Strategy in *the Old Man and the Sea*.

Strategy Number	Frequency	Percentage
1	8	26.7
2	11	36.7
3	10	33.3
4	1	3.3

Table 3 depicts the frequencies and percentages of strategies in *the Old Man and the Sea*. The data analysis showed that in this novel, out of 30 idioms and idiomatic expressions, 8 cases were translated by strategy number 1, eleven cases were translated by strategy number 2, ten cases were translated by strategy number 3, and only one case was translated by strategy number four. 36.7% of idioms were translated by strategy number two, 33.3% of them were translated by strategy number three, 26.7% of them were translated by strategy number One and 3.3% of them were translated by strategy number four. Therefore, it is notable that Daryabandari has been more successful than Didari.

Figure 3: Frequencies of Used Strategies in *the Old Man and the Sea*

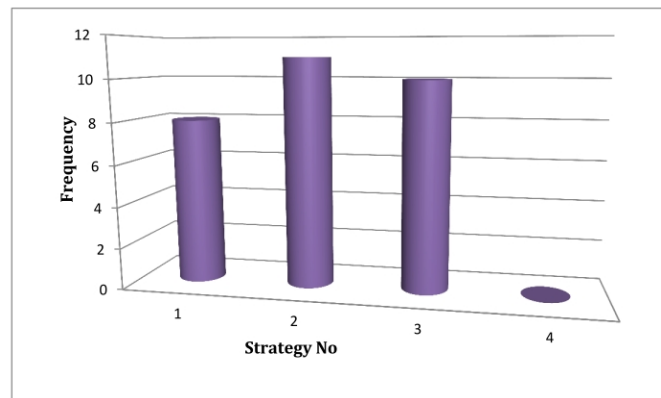


Figure 3 represents the frequencies of strategies in *the Old Man and the Sea*. The data analysis showed that most of the idioms in this novel were translated by strategy number 3, the second common strategy was strategy number 2, the third common strategy was strategy number 1 and only one idiom was translated by strategy number 4.

Having tallied the frequencies of the above-mentioned strategies of translating idioms and idiomatic expressions in the novels, the researcher found out the following frequencies for each strategy for the total number of 90 idioms and idiomatic expressions. The results of the study are summarized in table 4 and they indicated that the most common strategy in translating idioms and idiomatic expressions was translation by paraphrase.

Table 4: Total Frequencies and Percentages of Used Strategies in the Corpus

	Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
1	Using an Idiom of Similar Meaning and Form	21	23.3
2	Using an Idiom of Similar Meaning but Dissimilar Form	29	32.2
3	Translation by Paraphrase	38	42.3
4	Translation by Omission	2	2.2

As Table 4 indicates 23.3% of the idioms and idiomatic expressions were translated by using an idiom of similar meaning and form. 32.2% of them were translated by using an idiom of similar meaning, but dissimilar form. 42.3% of them were translated by translation by paraphrase. And 2.2% of them were translated by translation by omission.

Figure 4. Briefing Chart of All Used Strategies and Their Frequencies in the Corpus

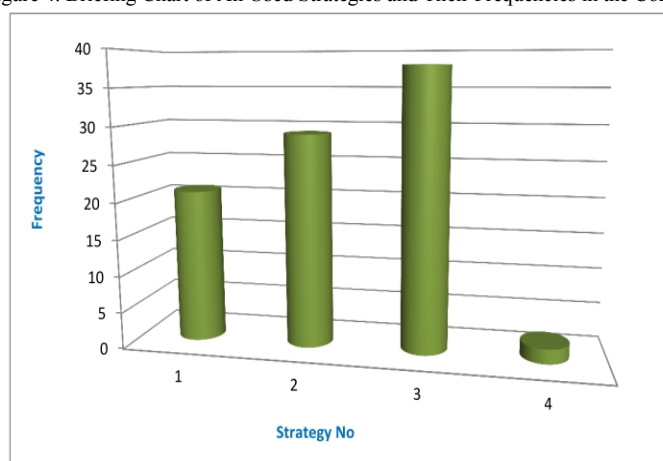


Figure 4 depicts that most of the data were translated by strategy number 3, the second common strategy was strategy number 2, the third common strategy was strategy number 1, and the fourth common strategy was strategy number 4. The frequencies of each strategy for each novel are indicated in table 5.

Table 5: The Frequencies of Each Used Strategy for Each Novel.

Novel	Strategy 1	Strategy 2	Strategy 3	Strategy 4
<i>Lord of the Flies</i>	9	8	12	1
<i>Animal Farm</i>	4	10	16	0
<i>The Old Man and the Sea</i>	8	11	16	1
Total number	21	29	38	2

As the above figures and tables indicated, the mostly used strategy was translation by paraphrase. In paraphrase, a translator transfers the meaning of idioms using a single word or a group of words which roughly corresponds to the meaning of idiom but it is not an idiom itself. Using this strategy involves certain disadvantages of losing quality and stylistic feature. The second mostly used strategy was translation by using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form. And omission was the least strategy used because when translators cannot translate an idiom in any way, omit it. As novels are not sensitive texts, the translators can omit idioms because they are mostly for amusement.

The results of the present study revealed that the mostly used strategy in translating idioms and idiomatic expressions was translation by paraphrase and Baker's (1992) model was applicable in novels and Daryabandari has been the most successful of the three translators in translating idioms.

Conclusions and Implication

In this research, the focus has been on the translation of idioms and idiomatic expressions from English into Persian. To provide an answer to the research questions, three novels were selected and analyzed. Having determined idioms and idiomatic expressions in terms of Baker's (1992) model, the frequencies of the strategies were calculated. It was found out that four strategies were used in translating idioms and idiomatic expressions which are as follows:

1. Using an idiom of similar meaning and form;
2. Using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form;
3. Translation by paraphrase;
4. Translation by omission.

The data analysis demonstrated that the translation by paraphrase was the mostly used strategy in the corpus of this study and it equals to 42.2% of the whole strategy in the research. Translation by paraphrase adopts when a translator has no choice, but has to explain the concept of the source idiom in the target language. It can be concluded that the results of the study indicated that most of data were translated by paraphrase and Baker's (1992) model can be conceived as a translation strategy for translating idioms and idiomatic expressions in novels because they were used by the translators, though not equally.

It should be considered that in choosing a strategy in translating idioms and idiomatic expressions, significance of the specific lexical items, appropriateness or inappropriateness of using idiomatic language in a given register in the target language, acceptability or nonacceptability of using idiomatic language in a given register in the target language is contingent upon the context in which a given idiom is translated. Also the style and rhetorical effect should be taken into consideration in the course of translating and translators also should have a full command of Persian idiomatic expressions because the English language is full of cliché and idiomatic expressions, but Persian language do not enjoy as much as English and they should equip themselves with idiomatic language.

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بررسی مقابله ای اصطلاحات و عبارات اصطلاحی در سه رمان انگلیسی و فارسی برای اهداف ترجمه

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اهمیت اصطلاحات و عبارات اصطلاحی در زبان انگلیسی را می‌توان از کاربرد آنها در تمامی گفتمان‌ها از مکالمات روزمره گرفته تا متون علمی، درک کرد. لذا پژوهش حاضر، به ترجمه اصطلاحات و عبارات اصطلاحی از انگلیسی به فارسی، با توجه به استراتژی‌های درگیر می‌پردازد. مدل بیکر (۱۹۹۲)، که استراتژی‌های ممکن را به چهار راه‌کار دسته‌بندی می‌کند، به عنوان چهارچوب نظری پژوهش تعیین گردید. تحقیق حاضر، کوششی جهت بررسی و ارزیابی استراتژی‌های به کار گرفته‌شده و یافتن پرکاربردترین استراتژی در ترجمه اصطلاحات و عبارات اصطلاحی می‌باشد. برای انجام تحقیق حاضر، ۹۰ اصطلاح و عبارت اصطلاحی از سه رمان انگلیسی استخراج گردید. این پژوهش، از طریق بررسی مقابله‌ای اصطلاحات و عبارات اصطلاحی از انگلیسی به فارسی انجام شد. یافته‌های پژوهش نشان می‌دهد که چهار استراتژی در ترجمه اصطلاحات و عبارات اصطلاحی به کار می‌رود ولیکن بسامد آنها، متفاوت می‌باشد و اکثر داده‌ها با استراتژی دگرگفت ترجمه می‌شوند.

واژه‌های کلیدی: اصطلاحات، عبارات اصطلاحی، دگرگفت، ترجمه.

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