Cultural Terms and Translation Strategies in Dissertation Abstracts of a Buddhist University

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Abstract

Cross-cultural translation is a challenge and a translator's burden to transfer the source language to the target language. Translation strategies are therefore important for translators. This research aimed to categorize cultural words and phrases in dissertation abstract of Buddhist Psychology, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University and to analyze the strategies employed by translators in 34 Thai translated abstracts into English submitted in 2019. Research tool was a recording form (categorizer) for cultural words and phrases based on cultural concepts and for analysis of translation strategies by Peter Newmark. Translation strategies were analyzed employing conceptual frameworks of Baker's taxonomy and Pinmanee's strategies for translating cultural-specific items. Frequency of cultural types and translation strategies were shown in percentage.

Findings were as follows: 1) in terms of cultural words and phrases, there were 194 cultural words and phrases categorized based on Newmark's concept of culture. Material culture consists of 23 words counting 11.855 % whereas religious organization consisted of 13 words. The highest occurrence was 126 words with religious concepts, teachings and beliefs followed by 32 words and phrases in

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religious activities. Regarding translation strategies, cultural translation strategies were 5 strategies consisting of (1) literal translation used with 148 words, or 76.288 %, (2) hybrid strategy, a mixed translation between literal and trans literal translation with 25 words or 12.84 %, (3) transliteration with 13 words or 6.702%, (4) free translation with 6 words or 3.92 %, (5) the least used strategy was descriptive phrase with 1.030 % or only two words. This result could be applied in translating other types of cultural texts both in classroom and outside classroom setting as well.

Keywords : Translation, Translation strategy, Novel translation

Introduction

The differences between a source language (SL) and a target language (TL) and the variation in their cultures have been still in the focus of research on translation as these two issues make the process of translating really challenge for several decades. The bigger the gap between the SL and the TL, the more difficult the transfer of a message from the former to the latter will be (Ordudari, 2007). Among the problematic factors involved in translation are numerous such as form, meaning, style, proverbs, idioms, etc. Cultural differences may create problems to translators due to the following factors as pointed out by Saibua (1997), the leading translation theorist in Thailand : (1) translation problems occur when there is no a list of translated words or text in the target language, (2) translation problems occur when there is a list of translated words or text both in the original language and in the target language, but there is no conceptual equivalence, (3) translation problems occur when there is a list of translated words or text both in the original text and in the target language, but the concept is used in a different context.

Cultural differences become interested issues among translation theorists and practitioners. For example, Nida, an American linguist (1969) proposed two "equivalence" ways; equivalence and formal equivalence, which later became the basic directions and guidelines of translation. Newmark (1988) refers to cultural equivalence as replacing cultural words in the source language (SL) with the target language (TL).Several meanings of the term 'culture' are given. Larson (1984) defines it as "a complex set of beliefs, attitudes, values, and rules which a group of people share". Newmark (1988) gives his definition "the way of life and its manifestations that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression".

In terms of cultural terms, translation theorists and practitioners proposed their classifications known as cultural specific terms (CST) like cultural words by Newmark (1988), culture-specific concepts by Baker (1992), realia by Robinson (1997), culture-bound phenomena and terms or culture-specific items by Schäffner, Wiesemann, (2001), Aixela (1996) as culture specific terms (CST), including Vinay and Darbelnet's CST (1958).The salient culture-items are given by Newmark (1988,p.95).He categorizes culture-specific items into five categories: 1) ecology (flora, fauna, winds, plains, hills); 2) material culture (food, clothes, houses and towns, transport); 3) social culture (work and leisure); 4) organizations, customs, activities, procedures, concepts (political and administrative, religious, artistic, etc.), and 5) gesture and habits. Newmark later divided culture specific items into six categories: "a) ecology; b) public life; c) social life; d) personal life; e) customs and pursuits; f) private passions (Newmark, 2010). This study employed his cultural categories for CST in the 34-dissertation abstracts.

To handle with cultural differences, many translation strategies have been proposed by translation theorists. Baker's taxonomy (1992) of translation strategies consists of 8 strategies: (i) translation by a more general word, (ii)

translation by a more neutral word/less expressive word, (iii) translation by cultural substitution, (iv) translation using a loan word or loan word plus explanation, (v) translation by paraphrase using a related word, (vi) translation by paraphrase using an unrelated word, (vii) translation by omission. Newmark (1988) proposed 18 strategies to cope with cross cultural translation.

   Pinmanee's (2014) proposes strategies for translating cultural-specific items at the lexical and phrasal levels consisting of 1) strategies for translating the item that is well-known or has a referential meaning in the target language including (i) translation by using non literal lexical equivalents, (ii) translation by using descriptive phrases, (iii) translation by using related words, (iv) translation by using generic-specific words, (v) translation by using secondary and figurative senses; 2) strategies for translating the item that does not exist or doesn't have a referential meaning in the target language including (i) translation by using a generic word with descriptions,(ii) translation by using borrowed words,(iii) translation by using cultural substitution. Besides, she also proposes a complex theory and various and systematic strategies that can be relied upon to translate cultural specifics. According to the author, there are 3 main strategies and nine special strategies (1) 9 strategies dealing with words, message or text and meaning, (2) strategy dealing with grammar and structure, and (3) strategies dealing with the use of language, way to speak, word-choice, level, and style (Pinmanee, 2019,pp.61-68). In conclusion, in practical realities it is the translator to adapt the strategies appropriate for his/her work. The strategies used cannot be fixed prior to translating due to different texts with different cultural issues. These strategies were proposed to handle with cultural difference by cultural substitution. In fact, there is no exact match in every cultural issue. However, the similarities in the original culture to the culture of the translated version may help convey the same message that the original wants to convey.

Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University is one of the Buddhist Universities in Thailand. On September 13, 1896, His Majesty King Chulalongkorn the great, raised the status of Mahathat Witthahayalai to that of a royal college, under the title of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya (Mahachulalongkorn Royal College), aimed at providing Tipitaka studies, and higher education, not only for monks and novices, but also for laypeople (Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University,2012). The university imparts religious disciplines in three main degrees: Bachelor's degree, Master's degree, and doctoral degrees focusing on social and humanities. At doctoral level, Buddhism is very comprehensively studied by people who are interested in. Abstracts written in Thai after completion of their research are translated and submitted along.

The topic contents of study directly can be categorized into 6 kinds of culture proposed by Newmark (1988). Categorization of these cultural words and phrases in the dissertation abstracts and translation strategies used in translating abstracts from Thai into English have not yet been investigated. The researcher decided to study translation strategies based on Baker's 8 translation strategies and Pinmanee (2019) as the framework for an analysis.

Objectives of Research

1. To categorize cultural words and phrases in 34 dissertation abstracts summited to the Graduate School, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University from 2018-2019.

2. To analyze the translation strategies used in translating Buddhist terms in 34 dissertation abstracts summited to the Graduate School, Mahachulalongkorn rajavidyalaya University from 2018-2019.

Research Methodology

1. Research pattern

This is documentary research.

2. Population

Population consisted of 34 pieces of Thai-English abstracts of dissertations purposively randomized from 276 dissertations in Buddhist Studies (Doctor of Philosophy in Buddhist Studies) summited to the Graduate School Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University from 2018-2019. These abstracts were translated by the researchers

3. Research instrument

Recording forms or categorizers designed by the researcher to gather data on cultural words and phrases and translation strategies along with analysis.

4. Data collection

34 pieces of Thai- English dissertation abstracts were purposely chosen for categorization of cultural words and phrases employing recording forms (categorizers) designed by the researcher.

5. Data analysis

Cultural and phrases were categorized into cultural types and presented in a percentage (%) based on frequencies of their occurrences and translation strategies were analyzed and finally tabulated and thereby with explanation together with frequencies of their occurrences in percentage (%).

Results of Research

Research findings were hereby presented according to research objectives:

1. To categorize cultural words and phrases in 34 dissertation abstracts

Table 1: Result of categorization of cultural words and phrases

Cultural type	Frequency	(%)
1. Material culture or artefacts including religious artefacts	23	11.85
2. Organizations, customs, activities, procedures, and concepts		
1) Religious organization	13	06.70
2) Religious concepts: teachings	126	64.94
3) Religious activities	32	16.49
Total	194	100

Based on the research objective 1, cultural words and phrases consisting of 194 words in total, and they were categorized based on Newmark's concept of types of culture (1988) into 2 main cultural types: (1nd type) and (2th type) as follows: (2) material culture consisting of 23 words counting 11.855 % ; 2th type consisting of religious organization with 13 words counting 6.701 %, 126 words in religious concepts and teachings counting 64.948 %, followed by 32 words and phrases in religious activities counting 16.494 % as shown in the table 1 above:

Here are some examples of cultural words and phrases:

1) Material culture

- Tripaka, Wat Prabuddhabat, a house of pleasure, dhamma puzzle signs, Buddhist art, Buddhist mural painting, Buddhist sculpture, Buddhist religious architecture, commentary, Buddhist school, Buddha image, temple/monastery

2) Religious organization / concepts/ activities

- Mahayana Buddhism, Bodhisattva, gilanadhamma, volunteer monks, Buddha's disciple, Dhammaduta monk, active Buddhist dissemination, India-Nepal oversea Dhammaduta monks, Thai Buddhists, Triple Gem, monk, Buddhist meditation master

- suitable things/ sappàya, mindfulness/consciousness, right view/ sammàditthi the Four Noble Truths, suffering, the causes of suffering, the cessation of suffering the path to the cessation of suffering

- vipassana meditation, vipassana meditation practice, dhamma talk, dhamma practice, manner of teaching, dhamma lecture, breathing, mindfulness, occurred perception, recognition process.

2. To analyze method or strategies of translation used in translating 34 dissertation abstracts

From the study, translation strategies were found as shown in the table below:

Table 2: Result of Translation Strategies

Strategies	Frequency	%
1. Literal translation	148	76.28
2. A mixture of literal and trans literal translation (Hybrid)	25	12.88
3. Transliteration	13	6.70
4. Free translation	6	3.09
5. Descriptive phrase	2	1.03
Total	**194**	**100**

From the result indicated in the above table, there were 194 cultural words and phrases, which are mainly Buddhist terms with 5 major strategies: literal translation, transliteration, hybrid, a mixture of literal and transliteration translation, transliteration, free translation, and descriptive phrase. It was found that the translators used literal translation with highest frequency, that is 148 words or 76.288 % followed by a hybrid strategy with 25 occurrences or 12.886 % whereas transliteration with 13 occurrences or 6.701 %. Free translation was employed with 6 cultural words and phrases counting 3.092 % respectively whereas descriptive phrase strategy was used to translate only 2 cultural words counting 1.030 %.

The followings are some examples of translation strategies. The source language was presented and used in an abbreviated form (SL) and the target language with a short form (TL). Both short forms, SL and TL were used in the result and discussion sections.

Literal translation

SL ความสันโดษ (kwamsandot)   TL contentment

SL ปัจจัย 4 (paccai see)   TL four basic needs

SL อาหาร (ahan)   TL food

SL ไตรสิกขา (Trisikkha)   TL threefold training

Hybrid translation

SL พระพุทธศาสนามหายาน (Phrabuddhasasanamahayan)

          TL Mahayana Buddhism

SL โพธสัตว์ (Podisat)   TL Bodhisattva

SL บรรลุโพธิภาวะ (banlupodiphava)   TL enlighten Bodhisatva

SL วิปัสสนากรรมฐาน (vipassanakammatthan)

          TL vipassana meditation

SL ธรรมบรรยาย (dhammabanyai)   TL Dhamma lecture

SL ทมะ (tama)   TL dama-training oneself

Transliteration

SL สัมมาทิฏฐิ (sammatitthi)   TL Sammàditthi

SL ปรโตโฆสะ (paratogosa)   Tl paratoghosa

SL โยนิโสมนสิการ (yonisomanasikan)   TL yonisomanasikàra

SL ภาวนา 4 (pavanasie)   TL bhàvanà

SL พุทธโยคะ (Putthayoga)   TL Buddhayoga

Free translation

SL การพัฒนาปัญญา (kanpattanapanya) TL development of Buddhist
          wisdom

SL สาราณียธรรม (sananeeyatam)   TL strengthen with the state of
          Conciliation

SL พุทธโยคะอินทรีย์สมดุล (Puttayoga-insisomdul)

          TL the Yoga program

Descriptive phrase

SL ผู้เจิม (phulerm)   TL people who anoint

SL ผู้ถูกเจิม   TL people who were anointed

Conclusion and Discussion

The findings were presented according to research objectives.

1. To categorize cultural words and phrases in 34 dissertation abstracts

Cultural words and phrases found in 34 dissertation abstracts consisted of 194 words categorized into 2 cultural words and phrases based on Newmark's 5 types of culture: 2) 23 words for material culture or artefacts including religious artefacts, and 4) 13 words for organizations, 126 words in religious concepts; teachings and 32 words for religious activities. Cultural words and phrases in found in this study were accorded with Newmark's cultural types (1988).

2. To analyze the translation strategies used in translating Buddhist terms in 34 dissertation translation strategies

From analysis, four main strategies; literal translation, transliteration, hybrid translation, and free translation including descriptive phrase strategy were employed in translating 34 abstracts. From findings, there were 194 cultural words and phrases with literal translation strategy (148), 25 words with a mixture of literal and transliteral translation (Hybrid), 13 words with transliteration, 6 terms with free translation, and 2 words with descriptive phrase. These strategies corresponded with Pinmanee's framework (2014; 2019) and Baker (1992).

Discussion

1. Categorization of cultural words and phrases

Based on the research objective 1, cultural words and phrases consisting of 194 words in total, and they were categorized based on Newmark's concept of types of culture (1988) into 2 main cultural types: (1nd type) and (2th type) as follows: (2) material culture consisting of 23 words counting 11.855 %; 2th type consisting of religious organization with 13 words,

126 words in religious concepts and teachings followed by 32 words and phrases in religious activities. Regarding material culture or artefacts including religious artefacts, some religious artifacts were borrowed from transliterated Pali or Sanskrit word as shown in example below:

SL: พระไตรปิฎก (phratripidok)   **TL:** Tripitaka

This cultural term was taken to use in the target text to retain Buddhist term. This Tripitaka is the Buddhist scripture containing the Buddha's teaching. These findings correspond Aunsuwan's study (n.d.) conducted on cultural word phrase translation from Thai into English in Buddhist books. In the study, some religious artifacts were borrowed in English translated version like the word "**พระสูตร**" (phrasut), which is rendered as '**sutra**' in the target language to preserve the Buddhist term. Religious teachings were also included in religious concepts as below:

SL: สาราณียธรรม (saraniyadham)   **TL:** strengthen with the state of conciliation

As shown in the example, the Buddha's teaching called "**สาราณียธรรม**" (saraniyadhamma) is one of the essential social teachings related to religious concept of unity and peace in human society. This result is in line with Aunsuwan's study (n.d.) which also categorizes the Buddha's essential teaching called 'อริยมรรค" 'Eightfold Noble Paths' into religious concept. Next, it is religious activity included in the 4th type of culture as shown below:

SL: ปฏิบัติสมาธิทำจิตใจให้สงบ (patibat samadhi tamjit jai hai sangob)

TL: meditation practice

Meditation practice is one of the Buddhist spiritual development activities in Buddhism. This result is in line with Aunsuwan's study (n.d.) which also categorizes the meditation practice into religious activity.

2. Translation strategies

Regarding translation strategies employed in translating cultural words and phrases in 34 dissertation abstracts, there were four strategies used. Each strategy was used to make the target language effective and understandable.

1) Literal Translation

Some cultural words and phrases in the source text were transliterated from Pali into Thai. To translate these terms, the translators have used literal translation strategy as shown below.

SL: ปัจจัย 4 (catupaccaya)   **TL**: four basic needs

From the example, the meaning of the translated text was translated directly from the Pali word **จตุปัจจัย** (catupaccaya) containing the meaning of four requisites for Buddhist monks: cloth, food, shelter, and medicine. This religious word has the closest meaning to the four basic needs in English (TL). This finding is accorded with Riangsiri (n.d.) who explore and study the strategies for translating Pali and Buddhist terms in from Thai into English in DHUTANGA: WHAT TO DO? WHERE? WHAT FOR? By P.A. Payutto. According to his finding, nonliteral lexical equivalent is used when a translator can find an equivalent meaning in the target language by selecting the easy and comparable meaning into the target meaning. For example, the Pali word '**เสนาสนะ 5**' (senasana) meaning 5 kinds of shelter. The closest meaning of the word '**เสนาสนะ**' (senasana)   in the target language is lodging. This is also in line with Buranapong's findings in her study (2001) which reveal 3 strategies suitable for translating the Buddhist terms: literal translation, and hybrid method - a mixture of transliteration and literal translation.

2) Transliteration

Some cultural words and phrases in the source text are in Pali and usually transliterated to Thai. In translating these terms into English (TLX, the

translators have used transliteration method using Pali word in Thai and in translated text with Pali Romanized form without translation. For example, the word '**สัมมาทิฏฐิ**' (**sammàditthi**) may be rendered in English as 'right view'. Buddhists themselves are familiar with this term and it can be translated using strategy called a transliteration or use the original word instead of using the target word as '**sammàditthi**'. This corresponds with Angsuwan's study (n.d.) that confirms that loan word from the original source can be used along with literal translation strategy. In the same way, Buranapong (2001) pointed out that to make readers from other culture understand, some definitions to the Buddhist terms can be added as well.

3) A Mixture of literal and transliteration translation: Hybrid

Some cultural words and phrases were translated employing a mixture of method/strategy called a hybrid. In the source language, cultural words and phrases are in a mixed form of Thai and Pali. In this regard, in these 34 dissertation abstracts, the hybrid strategy was employed to handle with such words. Hybrid strategy here refers to a mixture of literal and transliteration as shown below:

SL: วิปัสสนากรรมฐาน (vipassanakammatthana)

TL: Vipassana meditation

From the example, the translators employed a hybrid method, literal and transliteration translation. Vipassanakammatthana is a loan word (Pali) whereas meditation is literally translated from the word kammatthana. This corresponds with Riangsiri's work (n.d.) that in translating some Buddhist terms a translator can employ two mixed methods with the application of a loan word with a short description or an explanation for readers' further understanding. For example, the word '**เอกาสนิกังคะ**' (ekasanikanga) is transliterated as '**Ekasanikanga**' with an explanation 'one pensioner's practice.

4) Free translation

This strategy is used when a translator wants to keep meaning in the source language as much as possible. Some cultural source texts are not understandable and fine to readers. What translators did is to translate the original text into the simple English to make readers understand the translated text as indicated in the sample below:

SL: ผู้มีหัวใจประดุจพรหม (phume haujai pradut prom)

TL: good heart

The simple and fine English words for the original text is understandable. Originally, the source text "**ผู้มีหัวใจประดุจพรหม**" can be literally translated as '**those whose heart is like a Brahma God**". The translated version is not easy to understand because readers who are from different cultural context cannot understand who the Brahma God is and why human heart has something to do with the Bramma God. That could cause confuse to readers. Simple English can used as free translation. Burapong (2001) pointed out that free translation strategy can work effectively when a translator finds some cultural text complex which cannot be easily translated. What the translator is to arrange the original idea and conclude all idea in a concise and simple English.

5) Descriptive phrase

Some cultural terms in the abstracts were translated with descriptive phrase; using phrase to describe. This strategic is used when the translator must handle with hard- to perceive terms that cannot be easily translated with a word or very short phrase as shown in example:

SL: ผู้ถูกเจิม (phu thukjerm)   **TL:** people who were anointed

The above example indicated that the term '**ผู้ถูกเจิม**" is hard for readers from different contexts to understand what it is about. The descriptive phrase can be used. In this regard, Riangsiri (n.d.) points out that to handle with such hard-to- perceived term, "some unique features in terms of appearances, functions, and purposes that can lead to the understanding of that particular concept were given to make readers understand more easily".

New Body of Knowledge

1. Translating what is found in targeted culture
2. Translating what is not found in the targeted culture
3. Translating what is found in targeted culture with inequality.
4. Interpreting techniques for Buddhist context and appropriate adjustment methods in Thai-English translation

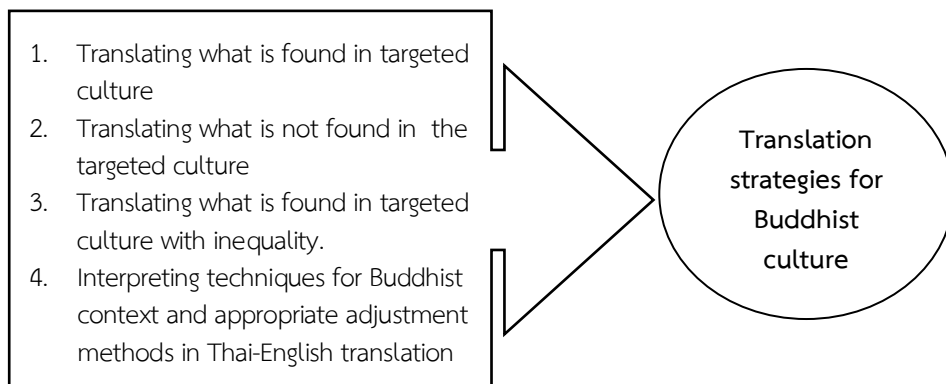Translation strategies for Buddhist culture

Figure 1: New body of knowledge

New body of knowledge obtained from the result of the study revealed translation strategies for Buddhist culture as shown in the figure above. The implication of the study can be used with the classroom context in particular and translation in general. For a teacher of translation and students or learners, translation strategies used in this study can be employed while translating other cultural texts.

Suggestions for Research

1. Suggestions for applying the research results

1) Results can be applied as a model for cultural text translation in classroom setting.

2) The research results can be used as a model for translating other type of cultural texts

2. Suggestions for further research

1) Techniques of modification or adjustment of cultural words and phrase translation can be investigated.

2) Techniques of translation used by translators while handling with cultural words and phrases.

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