# Culture- Specific Problems of Journalistic Texts from English into Kurdish Translation

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## Abstract

The study focuses on the cultural– specific problems came across in the process of translating journalistic texts from English into Kurdish. Mainly and from the translator's viewpoint, one of the most difficult tasks is dealing with metaphors and allusions which are culturally specific. The study involves a quantitative method. The most common issues in the journalistic translation among all the types of cultural challenges are to be tackled. The present study focuses on English-Kurdish translation of journalistic texts. To achieve the aims of the study a questionnaire is designed for the translators and college teachers who have taught and worked as translators.

For the purpose of analysis, examples will be widely selected to reflect the issue under discussion. The study findings exposed that translators face difficulties in translating

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cultural aspects and item like; Proverbs, colloquial words and expressions, collocations, Religion, gender terms, and politics etc.

**Keywords**: Translation, journalistic Text, cultural-specific, journalistic translators, equivalence.

# المشكلات الثقافية الخاصة بالنصوص الصحفية
## من الترجمة الإنجليزية إلى الكردية

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**المستخلص**

تركز الدراسة على المشاكل الثقافية المحددة التي ظهرت في عملية ترجمة النصوص الصحفية من اللغة الإنجليزية إلى اللغة الكردية. بشكل رئيسي ومن وجهة نظر المترجم ، فإن إحدى أصعب المهام هي التعامل مع الاستعارات والتلميحات الخاصة ثقافيًا. تتضمن الدراسة طريقة كمية. يجب معالجة القضايا الأكثر شيوعًا في الترجمة الصحفية من بين جميع أنواع التحديات الثقافية. تركز الدراسة الحالية على الترجمة الإنجليزية–الكردية للنصوص الصحفية. لتحقيق أهداف الدراسة، تم تصميم استبيان للمترجمين ومعلمي الكليات الذين قاموا بالتدريس وعملوا كمترجمين. لغرض التحليل، سيتم اختيار الأمثلة على نطاق واسع لتعكس القضية قيد المناقشة. كشفت نتائج الدراسة أن المترجمين يواجهون صعوبات في ترجمة الجوانب الثقافية وما شابه ذلك الأمثال والكلمات والعبارات العامية والعبارات والدين ومصطلحات الجنس والسياسة وما إلى ذلك.

**الكلمات الدالة**: ترجمة، نص صحفي، ترجمة ثقافية، مترجم صحفي، معادلة.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This study is an extracted manuscript of thesis or Ph.D. dissertation. It's about (Cultural- Specific Problems of Journalistic Texts from English into Kurdish Translation). The introduction starts with the definition of translation. According Catford (1965, p. 20) "translation is the substitution of text in one language with an equivalent text in another one". In this definition, the most important thing is the equivalent textual material. Yet, it is still vague in terms of the type of equivalence. Culture is not taken into account. The study of journalistic translation, focuses on the role of culture and how translators deal with lexical and stylistic concerns. According to Faiq (2004), Culture refers to a set of values and views that are often held by particular social communities as well as the attitude taken by text producers and

receivers, including translated texts throughout the mediation process. communication is the purpose of translation. Basically, language is the most significant form of communication for human beings. Language is influenced by culture and points of views of other people consciously or unconsciously. Translation has a significant role in intercultural communication, which causes significant cultural transformations from one culture to another. Therefore, through language a great deal of communication between different cultures occurs.

Translation for the language of journalism has a certain peculiarity that distinguishes it from other types of registers. media texts express translation acts and news and it communicates information. It is purely a denotative text. It is relatively easy to translate as far as construction and style are concerned, with some cultural difficulties of lexical item order at the most.

According to M. A. K. Halliday, the theory of context existed before the theory of text. He believes that context comes before text. Here, context refers to the situational and cultural context (Halliday and Hasan, 1985:5- 7). So, for understanding of the text, this context (context of situation and culture) is essential, which becomes the first condition for translating. Translation without comprehension of the text is therefore nonsensical, and it is impossible to understand a text without understanding its culture.

## 1.1. THE STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

What are the cultural specific problems and difficulties in journalistic translation that arise in the process of translating journalistic texts from English into Kurdish?

It is clear that When a translator translates a text from English into Kurdish and vice versa, it's somehow difficult to restrict completely to the source text, especially those which are related to the concept of culture.

## 1.2. AIMS OF THE STUDY

The study aims at:

- Finding out the problematic area of translating journalistic texts, particularly with regard to cultural issues.
- To offer new insights into how effectively to employ various possible translation procedures to tackle cultural difficulties in journalistic translation.
- To improve translators' consciousness of cultural encounters and serve them to cultural translation processes that can successfully tackle translation difficulties at the cultural level.
- Finding appropriate solutions for such problems in the process of rendering from (SL) to (TL).

## 1.3. THE METHODOLOGY

To achieve the aims of the study, the following procedures will be followed:

1. Designing questionnaires will be prepared as the tools of the study.
2. Analyzing and interpreting the results obtained in the questionnaires.
3. Presenting the findings and the conclusions.

## 1.4. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The importance of the study lies in the following points:

1. It tackles the types of issues that are common in journalistic translation from English into Kurdish and vice versa.

2. The study provides translators, especially with a good understanding of journalistic translation and cultural concepts in both languages.
3. The study aids those translators who are interested in the field of journalistic translation.

## 1.5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study attempts to answer the following questions:

**1.** To what extent culture is challenging in journalistic translation for translators?

**2.** What kinds of translation errors are common in journalistic texts?

**3**. What are the strategies used by translators when translating journalistic texts?

## 2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

There are lots of studies regarding journalistic translation but not many on translating cultural challenges in journalistic translation which are chosen chronologically; One of the previous studies is published in 1999 by Chen Hongwei, entitled (Cultural Differences and Translation), It discusses the influence of cultural differences on translation—a cross-cultural communication event. The study first examines the differences between Chinese and English arising from their respective mental culture, which is mainly revealed in image and function, integrity and individuality, covertness and overtness, thought and form. It then further offers effective approaches to solve culture-bound problems in translation from Chinese into English.

The second study is conducted by Ahmed-Sokarno Abdel-Hafiz (2002) entitled (Problems in Translating English Journalistic Texts into Arabic: Examples from the Arabic Version of Newsweek). This paper examines the problems arise while translating English journalistic texts into Standard Arabic. The analysis presents the most common problems in journalistic translation are associated with: (a) the selection of the equivalent TL word or expression is inappropriate (b) the failure in observing the syntactic and stylistic differences between the SL and the TL and (c) violations in the translated text due to some TL rules. According to him the overuse of the strategy of formal equivalence in English-Arabic translation causes a multitude of lexical, syntactic, collocational and idiomatic problems in the TL text. Literal translation also leads to problems related to cohesion.

The third one is written by Monireh Akbari (2013), entitled (The Role of Culture in Translation). It illustrates the crucial interaction between culture and language and then underlines the role of culture in translation. This study tries to review the role of culture in translation briefly and at the end some strategies for the translation of culture-specific items is proposed. It emphasizes the issue of culture and its complex relationship with language regarding culture-specific items are among the most difficult issues that a translator may face. Therefore, the issue will be also essential to those people who are going to teach and/or evaluate how to translate different texts from language into another.

Another study is done by ying Ting Chuang (2011) entitled (The challenges of new media translation: a multimodal approach to website translation). It identifies three major features that new media owns about translation: partial translation, multiple semiotic representation, and consistency.it aims at discovering the connections among these three features by inspecting the cross-cultural and cross-modal representation of web pages. It also tries to display how the translator uses modal resources to form segments, produce a partial translation and maintain consistency between texts. In conclusion, the researcher came across the result that new media translation produces its own systems of multimodal representation and method of textual interpretation.

Moreover, a study is investigated by Sabir Hasan (2015) who has written about (Procedures and Strategies in English-Kurdish Translation of Written Media Discourse)[1]. It investigates translation procedures and strategies employed in recent English-Kurdish translation of written media discourse. To do so a merged model is formulated based on a combination of three influential taxonomies of translation procedures proposed by Vinay and Darbelnet (1958/1995), Newmark (1988) and Dickins, Hervey and Higgins (2002). The researcher applied the model to a set of 45 journalistic texts translated from English into Kurdish, which altogether make a corpus of approximately 75,000 words. As a result, literal translation, borrowing and omission are the most frequently performed translation procedures at the linguistic level, and cultural borrowing, cultural re-domestication, and calque are the most frequent at the cultural level.

The sixth study was written by Jafar Ibrahim Saidan (2016) entitled (A Study of Cultural Bias in Journalistic Translation from English into Arabic and Vice Versa). This study aims at investigating the intrusion of culture that might make translators of journalistic texts biased in their translation. it targets to measure the translator's propensity for cultural bias when translating a journalistic text. The data is obtained by means of questionnaires and interviews. The results indicate that the highest was for "Supporting a certain ideological agenda plays a vital role in subjectivity when translating cultural texts", it also shows that the journalist's translators have a high level of cultural bias while they are translating the journalistic texts.

## 3. METHOD

Methodology is an important component of a study; it lets readers assess the consistency of the study. It Describes what you did and shows how your methods match your aims. McGrath (1994), asserts that doing a research simply means "the systematic use of some set of theoretical and empirical tools to try to increase our understanding of some set of phenomena or events" the researcher has prepared and addressed a questionnaire to 100 instructors who have taught translation and have worked in this field along with translators working in the field of journalism, that comprises a set of 20 questions that aims to collect information from a respondent.

### 3.1 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

To assure the validity of the questionnaire and interview, the researcher asked some talented experts (see appendix) to evaluate the questionnaire and find out if the questions are suitable and if they can be helpful for the aim of the study or not. They recommended deleting, editing, and adding some statements to the questionnaire, and according to the comments of the experts, the questionnaire and the interview questions are modified.

For the reliability of the questionnaire Cronbach's alpha is measured which is the most common measure of "reliability". It is most commonly used when you have multiple Likert questions in a questionnaire that form a scale and you wish to determine if the scale is reliable or not. The alpha score of this study is 0.76 which means that the reliability levels are acceptable for all the study variables as it is shown in the table below;

Table: The reliability level for study variables

| Questionnaire | Cronbach Alpha |
|---|---|
|  |  |

_____

| 0.76 |
|---|

## 4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Data was calculated according to Likert scale and through measuring the size of the problem of each (questionnaire statements) separately. The measure was as follows: -
If the Average of the responses is around (3.41-5.00) the result is (high)
- If the Average of the responses is around (2.60-3.40) the result is (medium)
- If the Average of the responses is around (1.00) the result is (low)

Table: Qualitative Interpretation of 5-Point Likert Scale Measurement

| Likert-Scale Description | Likert-Scale | Likert Scale interval |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Disagree | 1 | 1.00-1.80 |
| Disagree | 2 | 1.81-2.60 |
| Neutral | 3 | 2.61-3.40 |
| Strongly Agree | 4 | 3.41-4.20 |
| Agree | 5 | 4.21-5.00 |

Pimentel, J. L. (2010). A note on the usage of Likert Scaling for research data analysis. USM R&D Journal, 18(2), 109-112.

### 4.3 DATA ANALYSIS FOR RESEARCH QUESTION NUMBER ONE

The First Question of this Study is:

To what extent culture is challenging in journalistic translation for translators?

**Table: shows the results of the arithmetic means, standard deviations, and relative weights of the individuals' responses to the items of the first question.**

| No | Items | Mean | Standard deviations | Relative weights | The level | Rank |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Sociocultural contexts are among most effective factors that lead to cultural challenges in journalistic translation. | 4.69 | 0.46 | 93.80 | Strongly Agree | 1 |
| 2. | In journalistic translation, a translator faces problems during translating cultural words and expressions in sentence and paragraphs that contain kinship terminologies. | 4.43 | 0.55 | 88.60 | Strongly Agree | 2 |
| 3. | Cultural backgrounds in both TL and SL are important in translating idioms. | 4.25 | 0.75 | 85.00 | Strongly Agree | 3 |
| 4. | social traditions are considered to be culturally challenging in journalistic translation. | 4.13 | 0.60 | 82.68 | Agree | 4 |
| 5. | Differences between the two languages in expressing identity cause cultural confusion in journalistic translation. | 4.07 | 0.74 | 81.40 | Agree | 5 |
| 6. | Cultural aspects such as; stereotypes, norms, idioms etc…often create difficulties. | 3.97 | 0.68 | 79.40 | Agree | 6 |
| 7. | Journalistic translators seem to have some sorts of flexibility in expressing their own ideas in the translation process. | 3.27 | 0.86 | 65.40 | Agree | 7 |

The answer to this question is examined by extracted means, and standard deviations. Then the results of this question are retrieved by means of questionnaire. The respondents were asked to choose, among choices, which indicate their degree of agreement or disagreement on the given items.

The results of the table above show that the average ranged between (4.69-3.27). The results point out that the highest was for "Sociocultural contexts are among most effective factors that lead to cultural challenges in journalistic translation.", with mean of (4.69) and standard deviation of (0.46) with strongly agree level, and the relative weights of (93.80) which is the total sum of the value and shows the importance of the item. Whereas the lowest was for "Journalistic translators seem to have some sorts of flexibility in expressing their own ideas in the translation process." with average of (3.27) and standard deviation of (0.86) with agree level.

Then, the second highest item is "In journalistic translation, a translator faces problems

| No | Items | Mean | Standard deviations | Relative weight | The level | Rank |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Unfamiliarity with cultural expressions is one of the problems a translator faces during the translation process. | 4.52 | 0.50 | 90.40 | Strongly Agree | 1 |
| 2. | Proverbs are considered to be one of the challenges for the translators. | 4.41 | 0.81 | 88.20 | Agree | 2 |
| 3. | When translators lack sufficient knowledge concerning the methods, techniques and procedures of translation, they may encounter difficulties in translating cultural expressions. | 4.32 | 0.72 | 86.40 | Strongly Agree | 3 |
| 4. | colloquial words and expressions make translators' task quite difficult. | 4.28 | 0.51 | 85.60 | Strongly Agree | 4 |
| 5. | Failure in arriving at the right equivalence of the lexical item in the target language is often a problem. | 4.27 | 0.51 | 85.40 | Strongly Agree | 5 |
| 6. | Journalistic translators are likely to face challenges in translating collocations between the two language. | 4.20 | 0.53 | 84.00 | Neutral | 6 |
| 7. | Translating journalistic texts might be influenced by the cultural aspects transmitted from one generation to another. | 3.90 | 0.62 | 78.00 | Agree | 7 |
| 8. | Religion affects translation as; the differences in the two cultures as far as the two religions Islam and Christian, create problems in translation. | 3.85 | 0.91 | 77.00 | Agree | 8 |
| 9. | Difficulties in translating gender terms arise when grammatical distinction doesn't exist in one of the languages. | 3.63 | 1.09 | 72.60 | Agree | 9 |
| 10. | politics is one of the challenges translators face when translating a journalistic text. | 3.57 | 0.92 | 71.40 | Agree | 10 |

during translating cultural words and expressions in sentence and paragraphs that contain kinship terminologies." which indicates that the translators strongly agree that the second-high level with (4.43) mean and standard deviation of (0.555). Results

indicate that kindship terminologies are another reason leads to cultural challenges in the process of translation. The relative weight of this item is (88.6). this item takes the second rank. The third high ranges for the question one in which the translators agree upon is "Cultural backgrounds in both TL and SL are important in translating idioms." with a mean of (4.25) and the standard deviation of (0.75). The relative weight of this item is (85.00). This item takes the third rank.

When it comes to the medium ranges it can be noticed that translators have answered item "social traditions are considered to be culturally challenging in journalistic translation", with mean of (4.13) and the standard deviation which gives an indication of how much the values deviate from the Mean is of (0.60), and the relative weights of (82.68) which shows the importance of the item and the percentage of respondents' view towards social traditions to be one of the challenges for the journalistic translation process. The second medium item, the translators agree upon to be challenging is "Differences between the two languages in expressing identity cause cultural confusion in journalistic translation" with a mean of (4.07) and standard deviation of (0.74), and the relative weight of this item is (81.40). this item indicates that translators assume that expressing identity between both the source and the target language cause cultural problems.

The third medium item is "Cultural aspects such as; stereotypes, norms, idioms etc…often create difficulties", with mean of (3.97), standard deviation of (0.68) and relative weight of (79.40). the low range for the first question is "Journalistic translators seem to have some sorts of flexibility in expressing their own ideas in the translation process", with mean of (3.27), standard deviation (0.86) and relative weight (65.40).

What kinds of translation errors are common in journalistic texts?

The Table below shows the results of the arithmetic means, standard deviations, and relative weights of the individuals' responses to the items of the second dimension.

The results of the above table show that the average ranged between (4.52-3.57). The results point out that the highest was for "Unfamiliarity with cultural expressions is one of the problems a translator faces during the translation process.", with mean of (4.52) and standard deviation of (0.50) with strongly agree level, and the relative weights of (90.40) which is the total sum of the value and shows the importance of the item. Most of the translators believe that not having enough cultural knowledge about the source language takes the first rank of being one of the errors translators face in the process of translation. Second item which is "Proverbs are considered to be one of the challenges for the translators". It has mean of (4.41) which is the second rank with (0.81) standard deviation and relative weight of (88.20). the translators strongly agree that proverbs are to be one of the errors they face during the translation of journalistic texts. The third item which is among the highest rank is "When translators lack sufficient knowledge concerning the methods, techniques and procedures of translation, they may encounter difficulties in translating cultural expressions". With mean of (44.32), standard deviation of (0.72) and relative weight of (86.40) strongly agree that lack of enough information about the methods, procedures and techniques of the translation creates problems in translating cultural terms. Item number four is "colloquial words and expressions make translators' task quite difficult". It has mean of (4.28), standard deviation with (0.51) and relative weight of (85.60), in this item translators strongly agree that colloquial words and expressions make translators' task difficult.

Item five is "Failure in arriving at the right equivalence of the lexical item in the target language is often a problem." Takes strongly agree level with mean of (4.27), standard deviation of (0.51) and relative weight of (85.40). sixth item is "Journalistic translators are likely to face challenges in translating collocations between the two language." With

mean of (4.20), standard deviation (0.53), and relative weight of (84.00) of the translators are neutral in answering this question.

Concerning the medium item "Translating journalistic texts might be influenced by the cultural aspects transmitted from one generation to another". With mean of (3.90), standard deviation of (0.62) and relative weight of (78.00) of the translators agree that the process of translating journalistic texts are effected by those cultural terminologies that are transmitted from one generation into another. Eighth item which is considered to be medium is "Religion affects translation as; the differences in the two cultures as far as the two religions Islam and Christian, create problems in translation". With mean of (3.85), standard deviation of (3.85) and relative weight of (77.00). The third medium item is "Difficulties in translating gender terms arise when grammatical distinction doesn't exist in one of the languages". With mean of (3.63), standard deviation of (1.09) and relative weight of (72.60). the last item of this question which is considered to be low among the answers is "politics is one of the challenges translators face when translating a journalistic text". With mean of (3.57), standard deviation of (0.92) and relative weight of (71.400) of the translators agree that politics is challenging in the process of translating journalistic texts.

What are the strategies used by translators when translating journalistic texts? What are appropriate solutions for such problems in the process of rendering from (SL) to (TL)?

**The Table below shows the results of the arithmetic means, standard deviations, and relative weights of the individuals' responses to the items of the third dimension**

| No | Items | Mean | Standard deviations | Relative Weight | The level | Rank |
|----|-------|------|---------------------|-----------------|-----------|------|
| 1 | Translators should be unbiased and aware of the culture of the target language. | 4.72 | 0.45 | 94.40 | Strongly Agree | 1 |
| 2 | Free translation seems more applicable when a translator faces difficulty in rendering a cultural item. | 3.96 | 0.58 | 79.20 | Agree | 2 |
| 3 | Naturalization is one of the best strategies to be performed when a SL word is transferred into TL text in its original form. | 3.84 | 0.83 | 76.80 | Agree | 3 |

The results of the above tables how that the average ranged between (4.72-3.84). The results point out that the highest was for "Translators should be unbiased and aware of the culture of the target language.", with mean of (4.72) and standard deviation of (0.45) with strongly agree level, and the relative weights of (94.40) which indicates the importance of the item. The medium level which is "Free translation seems applicable when a translator faces difficulty in rendering a cultural item.", this item has the mean of (3.96), standard deviation of (0.58) and the relative weight with (76.20). the low level of third question is "Naturalization is one of the best strategies to be performed when a SL word is transferred into TL text in its original form". This item has (agree) level with mean of (3.84), standard deviation of (0.83), and relative weight of (76.80).

## 5. Conclusion

1. Translators strongly agree that Sociocultural contexts that refer to the language is closely associated to the culture and society in which it is used. These sociocultural contexts are among most effective factors that lead to cultural challenges in journalistic translation.
2. For them, in journalistic translation, a translator faces problems during translating cultural words and expressions in sentence and paragraphs that contain kinship terminologies. The way Cultural backgrounds in both TL and SL are important in translating idioms. Briefly speaking a translator should have enough information about cultural background of both source and target languages.
3. %82 of the translators agree that social traditions are considered to be culturally challenging in journalistic translation. This can be special holidays, clothes, greeting, et…
4. %81 of the translators agreed that Differences between the two languages in expressing identity cause cultural confusion in journalistic translation,
5. Cultural aspects such as; stereotypes, norms, idioms etc…often create difficulties in the process of translating journalistic texts since finding a suitable equivalent for each aspect creates difficulties.
6. Unfamiliarity with cultural expressions, Proverbs, colloquial words and expressions, collocations, cultural aspects transmitted from one generation to another, Religion, gender terms, and politics are translation errors that are common in journalistic texts.
7. The other translation errors that are common in journalistic text is that When translators lack sufficient knowledge concerning the methods, techniques and procedures of translation.
8. Translators believe that Failure in arriving at the right equivalence of the lexical item in the target language is often a problem.
9. The main strategies translators use in the process of translation are; Translators should be unbiased and aware of the culture of the target language, Free translation, and Naturalization is one of the best strategies to be performed when a SL word is transferred into TL text in its original form.

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