Culture through Keywords in Kenneth Wong's Translation of "Spirit Food" by Nu Nu Yi (Inwa)

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Abstract

In observing language used in literature, as Nunan and Choi (2010) claimed, "each language has its own unique link to the culture with which it co-exists". Culture embodies values, dictums, proverbs, symbols, taboos and even language as it is used as a communicative tool to express culture. This paper attempts to explore reflection of source language culture in keywords found in Kenneth Wong's translated version of "Spirit Food" by Nu Nu Yi (Inwa). Keywords were generated using Word Smith Tool 8.0 by Scott (2020). As the theme itself is culture-bound, Wong attempted to reflect source language culture in keywords. Descriptive qualitative method was applied in approaching culture using Cultural Category by Nida (1964), Translation Procedures by Newmark (1988), and Translation Strategies by Baker (1992) and Cultural Category by Yule (2010). The reliability and accuracy of results of the research were justified using IBM SPSS Statistics 26.0 by Nie, et al. (2019). Key findings showed that there is significant correlation between cultural category by Nida, and translation strategy and part of speech; between translation procedure and translation strategy; between cultural category by Yule and part of speech; and between part of speech and frequency.

Keywords: Cultural category, Culture, Keywords, Translation procedures, Translation strategies

Introduction

As the original writer of "Spirt Food" by Nu Nu Yi (Inwa) advocated, translators who "keep the translation as faithful as possible to the original novel without spoiling the theme, words and hallmark of the characters contained in the novels" are much in demand **)**Thae Thae Myint and Zon Pann Pwint, 2011**(**. Due to limited cultural as well as linguistic knowledge of source language, most aesthetic values of source literary texts are affected. Therefore, this study was done to identify the extent to which translator – Kenneth Wong – endeavored to employ faithful translation of cultural words and concepts.

Literature Review

1. Keywords

Keyword is defined as a word that is "statistically characteristic of a text or set of texts")Culpeper & Demmen, 2015(. Its frequency in the text is compared to expected frequency in a much larger corpus. In cultural studies, keyword is regarded as an expression of ideologies like philosophy, dogma, values, beliefs, principles and taboos.

> "Every language has its own keywords, which reflect the core values of the culture. Consequently, cultures can be revealingly studied, compared, and explained to outsiders through their key words."

)Wierzbicka, 1991(

Keywords reflect culture in some way or another as they serve as communicative tools to mediate cultural values in texts to readers. Therefore, it is worth researching to prove reflection of culture even in translated text through keywords.

2. Cultural Category

Nida (1964) proposed five categories of cultural items known as ecology, material culture, social culture, organizations, customs, activities, procedures and concepts, and gestures and habits. Examples of each category can be seen as follows:

Table 1
Cultural Category by Nida (1964)

No	Category	Examples in Myanmar Context
1	Ecology	Wind; Rose; Mount Zwekabin
2	Material culture	Pickled tea salad; Yangon; Min Yar Zar Ship
3	Social culture	Hide and Seek; Farmer; Vendor
4	Organizations, customs, activities, procedures and concepts	Buddhism; NLD; Water Festival
5	Gestures and habits	Nod; Thumb and pointer finger in a circle; Folded arms

Cultural categories proposed by Yule (2010) include: kinship terms, time concepts, linguistic relativity and determinism, classifiers, address terms and gender words.

Table 2

Cultural Category by Yule (2020)

No	Category	Examples in Myanmar Context
1.	Kinship terms	Aunt; Brother; Mother
2.	Time concepts	Early afternoon; Late afternoon; Lent (Myanmar)
3.	Linguistic relativity	Pink for girls; Blue for boys; Brick red for monks
4.	Linguistic determinism	Categorization of ache in Myanmar: □□□□□□□□; □□□□□; □□□□□□□□□□□□; □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□; □□□□□□□□□□; □□□□□□□□□□□□□ (for stomach only); □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
5.	Classifiers	-□□□□ as suffix to refer to someone as owner □□□□□□□□□□□ = birthday girl = owner of birthday □□□□□□□ = nun = owner of Sila or moral conduct □□□□□□□□□ = donor = owner of donation
6.	Address terms	Ama (Mom); Aba (Dad); Apu (Child)
7.	Gender words	□□□□□□□□□ as self-reference "I" for men □□□□□□ as self-reference "I" for women □□□□□□□□□ as self-reference "I" for monks and nuns

3. Translation Procedures by Newmark (1988)

Translation procedures by Newmark are as follows:

Table 3

Translation Procedures by Newmark (1998)

No.	Translation Procedure	Definition
1.	Literal Translation	Direct translation
2.	Transference	Transferring target language word without changing the form
3.	Naturalization	Adjusting source language word to pronunciation and morphology of target language
4.	Cultural Equivalent	Culture word
5.	Functional Equivalent	Culture-free word
6.	Descriptive Equivalent	Description of culture word
7.	Synonymy	Similar target language word
8.	Through-Translation	Literal translation for already recognized terms
9.	Shifts or Transpositions	Changes of word forms and verb forms of source language
10.	Modulation	Translation which includes variation in point of view
11.	Recognized Translation	Official translation of any institutional terms
12.	Translation Label	Provisional translation of source language
13.	Compensation	Translation in which meaning lost in immediate translation is clarified
14.	Reduction	Removing elements in translation
15.	Expansion	Adding elements in translation
16.	Paraphrase	Modifying the meaning of source language
17.	Couplets	Using more than one procedure
18.	Notes, Additions, Glosses	Using notes, additions and glosses

4. Translation Strategies by Baker (1992)

The followings are translation strategies proposed by Baker (1992).

1. Translation using its equivalence in the target language
2. Translation using word/phrase with different propositional meaning

3. translation by a more neutral/less expressive word

4. Translation by cultural substitution

5. Translation using a loan word

6. Translation using loan word plus explanation

7. Translation by a more general word (superordinate)

8. Translation by omission

9. Translation by paraphrase using unrelated words

10. Translation by paraphrase using related words

11. Translation by partial substitution

Methodology

1. Research Design

In carrying out research on the reflection of culture in translated version of "Spirit Food", mixed method – descriptive qualitative and quantitative methods – was used. Descriptive qualitative method was applied in describing and analyzing keywords, categorizing keywords related to culture and investigating the presence of translation procedures and translation strategies. Data were statistically entered in tables and SPSS data set using quantitative method to reinforce reliability of data and data interpretation.

2. Population and Samples

Wong's English translation of Myanmar short story "Spirit Food" by Nu Nu Yi (Inwa) was chosen to analyze in this paper. As the focus of this paper was to highlight how Myanmar culture was reflected even in translated text. The reference corpus in sifting keywords was "Smile as they Bow" by Nu Nu Yi (Inwa) as both were written by the same writer under the theme of Myanmar culture related to spirits or Myanmar Nats. There were 38 keywords generated by Word Smith Tool 8.0.

3. Instruments and Procedures

Instruments used in carrying out this research were Word Smith Tool 8.0 for identifying keywords, Cultural Categories proposed by Nida (1964) and Yule (2020), Translation Procedures by Newmark (1988) and Translation Strategies by Baker (1992). Reliability of collected data and interpretation of data were strengthened by Pearson's Correlation Coefficients and Linear Regression generated by IBM SPSS Statistics 26.0.

4. Data Collection

Data were collected firstly by identifying keyness in Wordlist of translated text "Spirit Food" using "Smile as they Bow" as reference corpus. Part of speech of keywords were identified. Next, their frequency was put into high and low frequency groups based on the average frequency generated by Word Smith 8.0. Keywords related to culture were categorized using cultural categories by Nida (1964) and by Yule (2020). Two different categorizations were applied to reinforce reliability and validity of data categories. After that, both translation procedures by Newmark (1988) and translation strategies by Baker (1992) were used in evaluating how translator engage in translation process of keywords. Then correlation among part of speech, frequency, cultural categories, translation procedures and translation strategies were identified using Pearson's Correlation Coefficients and Linear Regression.

5. Data Analysis

Descriptive data analysis of categorizing cultural keywords and the use of translation procedures and translation strategies was done by describing, observing, analyzing and interpreting collected data. Statistical data were generated using Pearson's Correlation Coefficients Formula:

$$r = \frac{n(\Sigma xy) - (\Sigma x)(\Sigma y)}{\sqrt{[\,n\Sigma x^2 - (\Sigma x)^2\,]\,[\,n\Sigma y^2 - (\Sigma y)^2\,]}}$$

and Linear Regression Formula:

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_i + \varepsilon_i$$

Dependent Variable — Y_i

Population Y intercept — β_0

Population Slope Coefficient — β_1

Independent Variable — X_i

Random Error term — ε_i

Linear component — $\beta_0 + \beta_1 X_i$

Random Error component — ε_i

automatically in IBM SPSS Statistics 26.0. There were correlations significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed) and coefficients between dependent variable – Translation Procedure and Translation Strategy were significant at ($p<.05$).

Results

The results of the research showed that 11 keywords out of 38 keywords of "Spirit Food" were not culture-bound and could not be categorized according to cultural categories by Nida (1964) and Yule (2020). It was observed that beliefs were implied along with linguistic determinism. For instance, traditional beliefs beef and spirit(s) co-occurred through linguistic determinism. Beef is typically a kind of meat in English culture but is a meat for spirit food, which is usually served to evils to please them so that they will not disturb human beings in Myanmar culture. Direct translation equivalence of Myanmar words – □□□□□□ – for "beef" is "dark/black meat". As its name suggests, in Myanmar culture, beef has been regarded as meat for evils in the dark.

In addition, translator's attempt to introduce Myanmar culture to target language audience can be seen when he directly adopted "dok" to refer to the sound Htwe Sein beat the edge of bamboo tray through transference. Due to culture difference, the way sounds are heard and the words to express those sounds are different from culture to culture. People from English culture would hear the sound "dok" as "bonk" as culture and linguistic relativity influence the way people think, perceive, speak and even hear. For

instance, the sound from gun is "bang" in English and "□□□□□ /□□□/" in Myanmar.

Keywords related to customs reflected linguistic determinism of Myanmar culture and were translated mostly through literal translation and cultural equivalent. Due to the use of less expressive and culture-neutral word like "offering" to refer to both present and donation of food to evils, translated word carried different propositional meanings. In Myanmar, translation of "offering" – □□□□ – is normally collocated with donations for monks, nuns and poor people. The word "present" is used in the situation, in which Htwe Sein gave vegetables to her relatives. If the word "offering" is used with ordinary people, it implies that they are poor and are thus donated.

The most frequent categories of culture by Nida (1964) found in this research were ecology and material culture as culture was reflected through beliefs about setting, time and entities. Words related to ecology were translated literally and only one word – dusk – implied linguistic determinism. It is believed in Myanmar culture that dusk is the time most evils and haunting spirits and ghosts start to look for prey. Even clothes hung outside the house and at the verandah are put inside the house before dusk so that evils cannot possess in these clothes.

Material culture was reflected through objects like bamboo, sarong and pouch. Except sarong, pouch and kyat, the rest of keywords for material culture were translated using literal translation. Translator's use of cultural equivalent was to help his target readers to understand better but using cultural equivalent in translating sarong and pouch caused the original meanings lost in translation. Sarong is merely a long piece of cloth whereas "□□□□□□" or longyi in Myanmar is a cloth sewn into a cylindrical shape. The meaning of "□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□" was affected as the translator used the word "pouch" which means a small bag carried in in a pocket or attached to a belt. In fact, "□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□" in Myanmar culture is wearing the longyi across the body (from left or right shoulder to left or right waist) as a big bag to carry things like fruits,

vegetables, flowers and marbles. Descriptive equivalence or addition should be used in translating such culture-bound keywords so that target readers can visualize them in their mind's eye.

The only keyword which portrays social culture is "Htwe" which is translated using transference and equivalence in target language. In Myanmar culture, the word □ □ □ □ (Htwe) is used to refer to the youngest one in a family. It can be used to classify that this person is the youngest one in his or her family and is loved by everyone in family. The summary results of data analysis of reflection of culture through keywords can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4

Reflection of Culture through Keywords

No.	Key word	Part of speech	F		Cultural Category by Nida (1964)	Cultural Category by Yule (2020)	Translation Procedure by Newmark (1998)	Translation Strategy by Baker (1992)
1	HTWE	Proper Noun	35	High	Social Culture	Classifier	Transference	Equivalence in the target language
2	SEIN	Proper Noun	35	High	-	Address Term	Transference	Equivalence in the target language
3	HER	Pronoun	58	High	-	-	Literal Translation	Equivalence in the target language
4	KYI	Proper Noun	14	High	-	Classifier	Transference	Equivalence in the target language

Table 4 (Continued)

No.	Key word	Part of speech	F		Cultural Category by Nida (1964)	Cultural Category by Yule (2020)	Translation Procedure by Newmark (1998)	Translation Strategy by Baker (1992)
5	MOTHER	Noun	20	High	-	Kinship	Literal Translation	Equivalence in the target language
6	SHE	Pronoun	37	High	-	-	Literal Translation	Equivalence in the target language

No.	Key word	Part of speech	F		Cultural Category by Nida (1964)	Cultural Category by Yule (2020)	Translation Procedure by Newmark (1998)	Translation Strategy by Baker (1992)
7	BAMBOO	Noun	11	High	Material Culture	-	Literal Translation	A more general word (superordinate)
8	MEDIUM	Noun	8	Low	-	Linguistic Determinism	Cultural Equivalent	Word/phrase with different propositional meaning
9	SON	Noun	12	High	-	Kinship	Literal Translation	Equivalence in the target language
10	HMAT	Proper Noun	7	Low	-	-	Transference	Equivalence in the target language
11	MOM	Noun	7	Low	-	Address Term	Literal Translation	Equivalence in the target language
12	BEEF	Noun	7	Low	Beliefs	Linguistic Determinism	Literal Translation	Equivalence in the target language
13	RICE	Noun	13	High	Material Culture	Linguistic Determinism	Literal Translation	Equivalence in the target language
14	SARONG	Noun	6	Low	Material Culture	-	Cultural Equivalent	Cultural substitution
15	SPIRIT	Noun	11	High	Beliefs	Linguistic Determinism	Cultural Equivalent	Word/phrase with different propositional meaning
16	TEE	Proper Noun	4	Low	-	-	Transference	Equivalence in the target language

Table 4 (Continued)

No.	Key word	Part of speech	F		Cultural Category by Nida (1964)	Cultural Category by Yule (2020)	Translation Procedure by Newmark (1998)	Translation Strategy by Baker (1992)
17	KONE	Proper Noun	4	Low	-	-	Transference	Equivalence in the target language
18	DOK	Noun	4	Low	Beliefs	-	Transference	Equivalence in the target language

No.	Key word	Part of speech	F		Cultural Category by Nida (1964)	Cultural Category by Yule (2020)	Translation Procedure by Newmark (1998)	Translation Strategy by Baker (1992)
19	SEEMED	Verb	4	Low	-	-	Literal Translation	Equivalence in the target language
20	BAMBOOS	Noun	4	Low	Material Culture	-	Literal Translation	A more general word (superordinate)
21	PLEASE	Adverb	11	High	-	-	Cultural Equivalent	Cultural substitution
22	SPIRITS	Noun	7	Low	Beliefs	Linguistic Determinism	Cultural Equivalent	Word/phrase with different propositional meaning
23	VILLAGE	Noun	9	Low	-	-	Literal Translation	Equivalence in the target language
24	FOOD	Noun	9	Low	Customs	Linguistic Determinism	Literal Translation	Word/phrase with different propositional meaning
25	POUCH	Noun	3	Low	Material Culture	-	Cultural Equivalent	A more general word (superordinate)
26	MILLET	Noun	3	Low	Ecology	-	Literal Translation	Equivalence in the target language
27	SWAYED	Verb	3	Low	-	-	Literal Translation	Equivalence in the target language
28	FOREST	Noun	3	Low	Ecology	-	Literal Translation	Equivalence in the target language

Table 4 (Continued)

No.	Key word	Part of speech	F		Cultural Category by Nida (1964)	Cultural Category by Yule (2020)	Translation Procedure by Newmark (1998)	Translation Strategy by Baker (1992)
29	GRAINS	Noun	3	Low	Ecology	-	Literal Translation	Equivalence in the target language
30	KYAT	Noun	9	Low	Material Culture	Linguistic Determinism	Transference	A loan word

31	RAN	Verb	4	Low	-	-	Literal Translation	Equivalence in the target language
32	OFFE RING	Noun	7	Low	Customs	Linguistic Determinism	Cultural Equivalent	A more neutral/less expressive word
33	SPOO N	Noun	3	Low	Material Culture	-	Literal Translation	Cultural substitution
34	CORN	Noun	3	Low	Ecology	-	Literal Translation	Equivalence in the target language
35	DUSK	Noun	3	Low	Ecology	Linguistic Determinism	Literal Translation	Equivalence in the target language
36	SAID	Verb	8	Low	-	-	Literal Translation	Equivalence in the target language
37	WIND	Noun	4	Low	Ecology	-	Literal Translation	Equivalence in the target language
38	LEAV ES	Noun	5	Low	Ecology	-	Literal Translation	Equivalence in the target language

Pearson's correlation coefficients and linear regression were used to predict the correlations and coefficients in resulted data.

Table 5

Pearson's Correlation Coefficients of Refection of Culture in Keywords

Correlations					Cultural_ Category by_Nida	Cultural_ Category_ by_Yule	TranslationPr ocedure	Translation_ Strategy
		Part of Speech	F					
Part of Speech	Pearson Correlation	1	-.339[*]	.512[*]	.625[*]	-.055	-.160	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.037	.015	.013	.741	.336	

Correlations

		Part of Speech	F	Cultural Category by_Nida	Cultural_ Category_ by_Yule	TranslationPr ocedure	Translation_ Strategy
	N	38	38	22	15	38	38
Frequency	Pearson Correlation	-.339*	1	-.384	-.021	.066	.023
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.037		.078	.941	.695	.891
	N	38	38	22	15	38	38
Cultural Category by_Nida	Pearson Correlation	.512*	-.384	1	.629	-.061	.438*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.015	.078		.051	.788	.042
	N	22	22	22	10	22	22
Cultural Category by_Yule	Pearson Correlation	.625*	-.021	.629	1	-.428	-.194
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.013	.941	.051		.112	.489
	N	15	15	10	15	15	15
Translation _Procedure	Pearson Correlation	-.055	.066	-.061	-.428	1	.326*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.741	.695	.788	.112		.046
	N	38	38	22	15	38	38
Translation _Strategy	Pearson Correlation	-.160	.023	.438*	-.194	.326*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.336	.891	.042	.489	.046	
	N	38	38	22	15	38	38

Note.*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 5 proves that there are significant correlations (p<0.05) between parts of speech of keywords, and frequency and cultural categories by Nida and Yule, between cultural category by Nida and translation strategy, between translation procedure and translation strategy. As 66% of keywords are nouns and cultural categories by Nida (1964) and Yule (2020) are nouns, the most significant correlation is found between parts of speech, and frequency and cultural categories. As the nature of cultural categories by Nida (1964) and Yule (2020) are different in that the former focuses on entities and social and material culture whereas the latter bases categories on Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, cognitive categories and social categories, there is no signification correlation between them.

Correlation is significant with 0.42 between cultural category by Nida (1964) and translation strategy by Baker (1992). The reason is that keywords related to ecology and material culture are 14 out of 38, which is 37% are translated mostly through equivalence in the target language. The rest of strategies used in translating material culture are cultural substitution, loan word and more general word (superordinate). Shared knowledge behind keywords are found in both Myanmar and English culture. For instance, dusk is the time spirits, ghosts and evils start to look for prey or victims. The concept of spoon and wooden spoon is the same as spoon is used for eating and wooden spoon for stirring and serving food. Their correlation can best be illustrated as in the following figure.
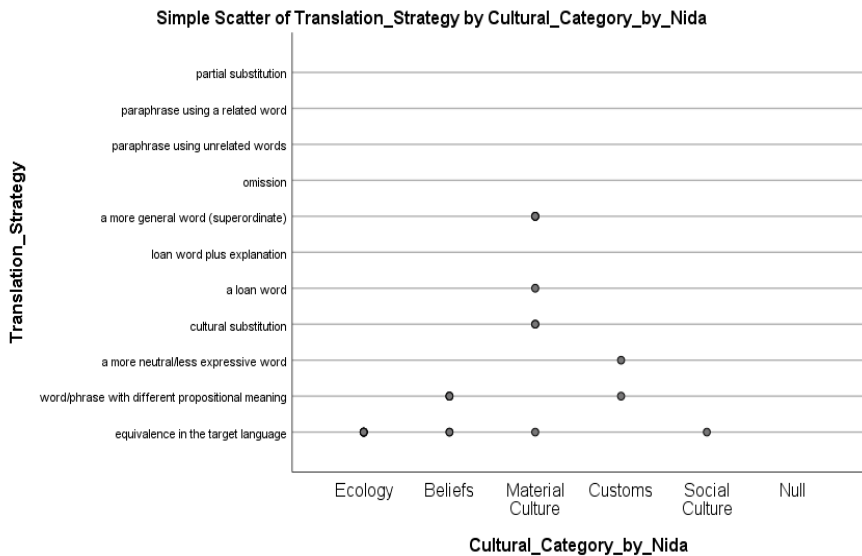

Figure 1. Simple scatter for correlation between translation strategy by Baker (1992) and cultural category by Nida (1964).

Sig. (2-tailed) between translation procedures by Newmark (1988) and translation strategies by Baker (1992) is 0.46 ($p < 0.05$). The correlation between translation procedures and translation strategies is interwoven as both basically show how translator engage in translation process. Once the

link between them is broken in analyzing the same translated text, it proves that researcher's way of conducting analysis is fallible. In this research, it was found that 68% of translation strategy observed was equivalence in target language and that strategy is correlated with literal translation and transference. The reason behind this is that translator attempted to engage in faithful translation while trying to preserve Myanmar culture as knowledge for his target audience. Strategies like using words with different propositional meaning, using words for cultural substitution and using general words (superordinates) were correlated with literal translation and cultural equivalent. This is the result of lack of equivalence in some cultural perspectives in source language and target language which led translator to use words as substitution and general words so that target audience can understand denotative meaning. For instance, the word "bamboo" was used in translated text while Nu Nu Yi (Inwa) illustrated that Htwe Sein's husband died while looking for bamboo shoots. The reason is that it is not common to cook bamboo shoots as dish in English culture. Figure 2 shows scatter plot for this correlation.
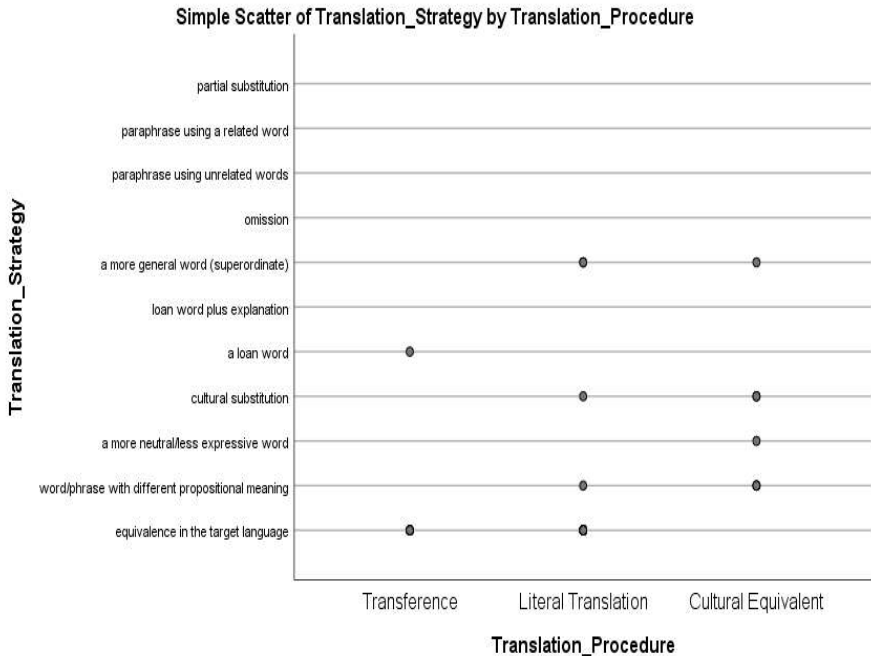
Figure 2. Simple scatter plot for correlation between translation strategies by Baker (1992) and translation procedures by Newmark (1998).

Discussion

This research proved that there are still influences of both source language culture and target language culture in translated text. It can be noted that translator used transference, loan words, cultural equivalent frequently to maintain source language culture while at the same time trying to help his target audience understand more about culture through cultural substitution and superordinate. Limitation of his art of translation can be found in the use of words with different propositional meaning. Although it is almost impossible to compare two cultures accurately due to lack of equivalence, translation would have been better if paraphrasing and addition were used to justify cultural differences and to avoid making his target audience misunderstand.

In accordance with the nature of keywords whose part of speech can be noun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition and so forth, it can be observed that cultural categories are identified mostly in nouns rather than verbs and adverbs. In addition, it is intriguing to imply that culture is represented through name – Htwe for youngest one in family – as well. Due to cultural differences, same word can carry more than one underlying meanings. In order to compensate the meaning behind "food for evils", the word "spirit'" was used to modify what kind of food Htwe Sein was offering and to whom she was serving.

Correlation between cultural categories by Nida (1964) and Yule (2010) was absent due to their different nature and perspectives. The former focuses on ecology, material culture, social culture, organizations, customs, activities, procedures and concepts, and gestures and habits whereas the latter identifies culture through kinship terms, time concepts, linguistic relativity and determinism, classifiers, address terms and gender words. The presence of correlation between translation procedures and translation strategies strengthened the validity and reliability of researcher's analysis of different ways of translation proposed by different scholars. It is in fact procedures like descriptive equivalent, modulation and paraphrase, and strategies like loan word plus explanation, paraphrase using unrelated words and paraphrase using related words were not found due to the fact that this present study adopting corpus-based approach focused on keywords rather than sentences.

Recommendations

1. Implications

It is hoped that results of this research will significantly help researchers and students who would like to approach culture from corpus-based study and from translation point of view. This present research will also be a shot of encouragement for teachers who teach language through literature and keywords used in representation of culture in particular. Furthermore, this paper will be an initiative for researchers who have linguistic and cultural

knowledge of Myanmar to start observing how culture is distinctively reflected even in keywords or at lexicon level adopting corpus-based approach.

2. Further Studies

The present study is a small-scale research which focuses on a piece of literature. Further researches can be on larger piece, on masterpieces of the same author or those of contemporary authors both in source language and in target language. It is worth studying to observe specifically culture-bound literature so that interwoven relationship between language and culture can be explored. This reinforces the study of multidimensional study of different cultures and the they shape linguistic relativity and linguistic determinism.

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