



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***TRANSLATION STRATEGIES AND REPRESENTATION OF MEANING IN
IDIOMS IN THREE KINGDOMS***

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**TRANSLATION STRATEGIES AND REPRESENTATION OF MEANING IN
IDIOMS IN *THREE KINGDOMS***

By

KHOO YEN LOO

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra
Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of
Arts**

March 2018

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in
fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts

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March 2018

Chair: Associate Professor Yap Ngee Thai, PhD
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The target materials of this research are the idioms used in *San Guo Yan Yi* (Three Kingdoms), written in classical Chinese by Luo Guanzhong and its corresponding English translation by Moss Roberts. Idioms are fixed expressions embedded with cultural elements, which often pose difficult to translators. This study aims to compare the differences in the translation enacted from the use of the same idiom found in different context found throughout the original novel. Cresswell's (2014) and Aldebyan's (2008) qualitative methodologies are applied for the data collection and analysis. All idioms that were utilized more than six times in the original novel were analyzed. There are two distinct phases involved in the analysis. The first involved identifying the translation strategies used. The frameworks of analysis used for this phase of the study involved identification of translation strategies following Vinay and Darbelnet (2004) and Baker's (1992) suggestions on strategies for translating idioms. The second phase of the study adopted the transitivity system in the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) approach to language use by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014). In this phase of the study, the representation of the idioms in the source and target texts are examined closely to describe the literal lineament in translated texts. These processes examined provide an insight to fathom Roberts' words selection on his translation of idioms or *Chengyu*. The results show that paraphrasing is the strategy that is applied the most. It is used to rephrase the conveyed messages in the idioms. This is to explain the intended meanings of the idioms in order to ensure the way of conveying ideas are comprehensible. The use of direct literal translation is the second most frequent strategy used and it helps to retain the cultural elements or beauty of the source language. The second phase of the

investigation reveals that the idioms that were reiterated for numerous times in the novel were presented differently to accommodate the need of the contexts. These translated idioms were grouped into six different processes upon comparisons between the idioms in the source texts and the translated words or phrases. The analysis showed difference in distinct word selection, for the purpose of pertinent context presentation and message delivery. Ultimately, the analysis in this study strives to offer insights on idiom translation methodologies by illustrating the silhouette of word concordances that vary with dissimilar circumstances.



Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sastera

STRATEGI-STRATEGI PENTERJEMAHAN DAN REPRESENTASI MAKNA SIMPULAN BAHASA DALAM NOVEL *THREE KINGDOMS*

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Bahan sasaran dalam penyelidikan ini ialah simpulan bahasa yang digunakan dalam novel *San Guo Yan Yi (Three Kingdoms)*. Ia ditulis dalam Bahasa Cina klasik oleh Luo Guanzhong dan diterjemahkan dalam Bahasa Inggeris oleh Moss Roberts. Simpulan bahasa ialah ungkapan tetap yang mengandungi unsur-unsur budaya yang sering menjadi kesukaran kepada penterjemah. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk membandingkan perbezaan penterjemahan antara peribahasa yang sama yang dijumpai dalam konteks berlainan di dalam novel ini. Kaedah-kaedah kualitatif daripada Cresswell (2014) dan Aldebyan (2008) telah digunakan untuk pengumpulan data dan analisis. Semua simpulan bahasa yang diulang lebih daripada enam kali di dalam novel asal telah dianalisis. Terdapat dua peringkat dalam analisis ini. Pertama ialah peringkat penyiasatan yang mengenalpasti strategi-strategi penterjemahan yang telah digunakan. Kerangka analisis yang digunakan pada fasa ini ialah daripada cadangan Vinay dan Darbelnet (2004) dan Baker (1992). System ketransitifan dalam pendekatan Systemic Functional Linguistics daripada Halliday dan Matthiessen (2014) pula diterima pakai dalam fasa kedua. Dalam fasa kedua, representasi simpulan bahasa yang digunakan dalam teks sumber dan teks sasaran telah diperiksa dengan teliti untuk mendapatkan gambaran terjemahan literal pada teks terjemahan. Proses ini bertujuan untuk memahami pemilihan kata-kata yang berbeza oleh Roberts semasa penterjemahan simpulan bahasa atau *Chengyu* dalam novel asal. Dapatan menunjukkan bahawa parafrasa ialah strategi yang paling banyak digunakan. Strategi ini digunakan untuk memastikan mesej simpulan bahasa dapat disampaikan. Strategi ini juga berupaya menjelaskan makna yang dirancang dalam simpulan bahasa supaya dapat menyampaikan idea yang boleh difahami oleh pembaca sasaran. Strategi penterjemahan langsung ialah strategi yang kekerapannya kedua tinggi. Strategi ini membantu mengekalkan unsur-unsur budaya atau kecantikan bahasa sumber. Fasa kedua kajian ini pula mendapati bahawa simpulan bahasa yang

digunakan berkali-kali dalam novel asal telah dibentangkan dengan cara yang berbeza untuk memenuhi keperluan konteks. Simpulan bahasa yang diterjemahkan ini telah dikumpulkan ke dalam enam proses yang berlainan untuk memudahkan perbandingan antara simpulan bahasa-simpulan bahasa tersebut dengan perkataan atau frasa terjemahan. Analisis menunjukkan perbezaan dalam pemilihan perkataan yang berbeza. Ini adalah untuk memastikan penyampaian idea adalah berkait tepat dengan konteks yang berlainan. Akhirnya, analisis dalam kajian ini telah memaparkan kaedah-kaedah penterjemahan peribahasa dengan menjelaskan cara penterjemahan menggunakan perkataan yang berkesepakatan dengan novel sekiranya konteks berubah-ubah mengikut keadaan.

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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on March 2018 to conduct the final examination of KHOO YEN LOO on her thesis entitled "Translation Strategies and Representation of Meaning in Idioms in *Three Kingdoms*" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Master of Arts.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Term	Meaning
V	Verb
N	Noun
Prep	Preposition
NP	Noun Phrase
SFL	Systemic Functional Linguistics
Pr	Process
Cir	Circumstance
[]	Sub-elements found that will be put in it
{ }	Attribute of the whole clause of the phenomenon
CV	Coverb
CPART	Clausal particle
VPART	Verbal particle

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Idioms (*Chengyu* 成语) are categorized under *Shuyu* (熟语) or fixed expressions previously used by Chinese ancestors. *Shuyu* forms part of the vocabulary in a language or dialect (Song, 2002). It is also known as *Xiyu* (习语) or *Chengyu*, meaning idiomatic expressions. These expressions are considered as crystallization or fossilization of a language. The structure or words used cannot be changed easily because the meanings or functions can be affected (Baker, 1992). Such expressions are also called stereotyped phrases and considered as *Guyu* (古语) or archaic expressions. Some of these archaic expressions have been classified as common sayings (*Suyan* 俗言), idioms (*Chengyu* 成语), proverbs (*Yanyu* 谚语), two-part allegorical saying (*Xiehouyu* 歇后语), commonly used phrase (*Guan yongyu* 惯用语), and maxims (*Geyan* 格言) as revealed in a Chinese grammar book (Xiandai Hanyu Yufa 现代汉语语法, 2000). These expressions are generally grouped under *Shuyu* as fixed expressions, with rich meanings (ibid.). They are the summaries of long sentences with complicated thinking of Chinese ancestors. These expressions embody culture, morality, lifestyle, experiences, astronomy, science, physical geography, literature, and music. They are also commonly used among the people in both verbal and written forms.

Idiom with special characteristics are considered as one of the most important components in *Shuyu* (Xiandai Hanyu 现代汉语, 2003; 邵敬敏 shao jin min, 2002). This study focuses on Chinese idioms because they are commonly used in Chinese and other languages, with strong cultural associations. Idiom as categorized under *Shuyu* or fixed expressions mostly use techniques, for example, expounding, analogy, metonymy, and exaggeration to describe and convey meanings (Xiandai Hanyu Cidian 现代汉语词典, 2002). Cui (1997) states that *Shuyu* is a special symbol in a fixed form which expresses a thought. The influences of history and common usage in Chinese society have made these language signs acquire their special characteristics.

Shuyu is the part of language that is enriched with cultural details, different forms of characteristics, meanings, and functions according to sociolinguistics. Therefore, words used in *Shuyu* reflect humanity and human behavior of the language users. *Shuyu* has intimate connections to people's daily lifestyle and

it reveals both positive and passive thinking. These fixed expressions have power by dominating people's behavior, affecting their judgment, and shaping their culture constantly (ibid).

Generally, idioms are normally formed using four words. These idioms have been used for a long time and circulated among Chinese speakers until today. They are normally used in the written language especially on solemn occasions or for political essays (Huang & Liao 2002; Xiandai Hanyu现代汉语, 2003). However, the structure of idiom has never changed as it cannot be modified or divided into smaller parts (Cui, 1997; Cihai editing committee members, 1989; Hu et al., 1990 in Xiandai Hanyu Tijie Cidian现代汉语题解辞典). This situation can result in fragmented and meaningless sentences (Cui, 1997). Fixed expressions or *Shuyu* normally contain metaphoric literal meanings and have specific idiomatic meanings, after being long established by the common people. Nevertheless, there is still a minority of *Shuyu* with words converted by replacing with certain suitable words to convey the same meanings. However, this situation happens rarely. For example:

- (1) “重见天日” / “重睹天日” (chong jian tian ri/chong du tian ri)
Word for word gloss in English: Can see the light again;
Translated meaning in English: Bring it to light again;
- (2) “成王败寇” / “成王败贼” (cheng wang bai kou/ cheng wang bai zei)
Word for word gloss in English: winner can become king but loser become bandit;
Translated meaning in English: Winner takes all;
- (3) “比屋可封” / “比户可封” (bi wu ke feng/bi hu ke feng)
Word for word gloss in English: every house can be knighted;
Translated meaning in English: There are wise men everywhere.

These idioms have the same meaning although the words used in each idiom are different. Example (1) has“见” (jian) and“睹” (du) with the meaning as ‘see’; example (2) employs different words“寇” (kou) and “贼” (zei) to describe the defeated bandit whereas example (3) has “屋” (wu) and“户” (hu) to represent the households. Therefore, idioms used in classical novels are hard to understand as it is difficult to trace their correct definitions and origins. They are archaic expressions that exist in ancient contexts. Hence, only some of these expressions can be understood easily from the words whereas others cannot (Zhou, 2000).

There are two types of idioms: those that can be comprehended easily and others that are difficult to be comprehended as they are influenced by culture (Wu, 2015). Here are the easily understood examples:

- (4) “滴水石穿” (di shui shi chuan)
Word for word gloss in English: dropping water hole stone;
Translated meaning in English: little strokes fell great oaks.

(5) “因祸得福” (yin huo de fu)

Word for word gloss in English: due to a disaster, fortune is obtained;

Translated meaning in English: blessing in disguise.

The examples (4) and (5) can be understood literary because they reveal the original definitions when separated into two phrases of two words each: “滴水 (di shui) and 石穿 (shi chuan)”; “因祸 (yin huo) and 得福 (de fu)”. The readers can understand the original meanings of the separated phrases easily. However, the phrases become an idiom when they are combined. The idiomatic meaning is not revealed directly when the phrases are separated as the latter phrase conveys a different meaning. Therefore, the readers need to connect the phrases together to get the full meaning of the idioms. For example, “滴水 (di shui)” which means water dropping and “石穿 (shi chuan)” which means making a hole in the stone are two phrases with different meanings. Both of these phrases portray a scene with dropping of water making a hole in a stone. For the other example, “因祸 (yin huo)” means due to disaster and “得福 (de fu)” means obtaining a fortune. The meanings of these phrases do not make sense when read separately. However, the readers can comprehend the meaning of the idiom when the phrases are used together.

Some examples are difficult to understand from the words formed:

(6) “聊胜于无” (liao sheng yu wu)

Word for word gloss in English: passable better compare nothing;

Translated meaning in English: better than a stick in the eye.

(7) “丁一卯二” (ding yi mao er)

Word for word gloss in English: man one mortise two;

Translated meaning in English: confirmed, firm or strong.

For the examples (6) and (7), they cannot be understood easily when separated into two parts. The meaning for the word ‘gloss’ in English shows that not every word in an idiom has any meaning when read separately. Therefore, one needs to track the sources for the idioms in order to understand their meanings.

Chinese idioms are normally derived from a long and tortuous history, ancient books and records (Cui, 1997). The meanings of these idioms are embodied in concealed stories. These idiomatic expressions are fixed in structure and commonly formed by utilizing four words to convey one meaning. The words formed cannot be changed, added, or deleted. The sequence of words also cannot be altered easily.

Idioms are inherited from different sources (Xiandai Hanyu 现代汉语, 2003) and contain real, specific, and summarized meanings. Those with real meanings are derived from real stories or histories of the ancestors. The example for this category is shown in (8). This idiom described a scholar named Lu who always

felt sad for not having a high position and great wealth in his life. One day, when he was sleeping, somebody was cooking using fine grains. He dreamed that all his wishes had come true. However, he realized that all of these wishes were just his desires that would never come true when he woke up. The example of idiom conveying specific meanings is shown in (9) in which there are no redundant words used to form the idiom. Most idioms use simple words to convey deeper or hidden meanings but only some of them can be understood easily as in (9). The example for the idiom that expresses the meaning by summarizing with usually four words is shown in (10). The meaning in this kind of idioms is integrality, that is, the words used to form these idioms are veiled yet profound (Xiandai Hanyu Tijie Cidian现代汉语题解辞典, 1990). The example of (10) represents someone who is open and with nothing hidden in the mind. His chest is described as keeping no city or mansion inside. This example clearly shows that an idiom is formed with precise words to convey the message.

(8) “黄粱美梦” (huang liang mei meng)

Word for word gloss in English: Yellow grain pretty dream;
Translated meaning in English: Fond dream.

(9) “万紫千红” (wan zi qian hong)

Word for word gloss in English: myriad purple thousand red;
Translated meaning in English: full of beautiful colours.

(10) “胸无城府” (xiong wu cheng fu)

Word for word gloss in English: breast non city mansion;
Translated meaning in English: simple and candid.

Basically, there are three different ways for idioms to express ideas: lexical meaning, special meaning, and additional meaning (Cui, 1997). Expressing the meaning by using lexical meaning is like having the same function as literal meaning:

(11) “仗势欺人” (zhang shi qi ren)

Word for word gloss in English: rely on power and bullying others;
Translated meaning in English: fraud on a power;

Idioms with special meanings often derive meanings from ancient sources and are difficult to explain. They can have either literal meanings or embedded meanings which can be confusing. These kinds of idioms which are formed rhetorically are usually derived from stories or histories that cannot be interpreted literally from the words used. Furthermore, they contain specific meanings which can only be used in certain situations to prevent misunderstanding. The examples are:

(12) “四面楚歌” (si mian chu ge)

Word for word gloss in English: four sides Chu's (country's name)
song;
Translated meaning in English: besieged from all sides.

The example for (12) is used to describe a very dangerous situation by comparing to the range when surrounded by the enemy, a common war scene. This kind of idioms with particular meanings cannot be applied anywhere else as wished. For additional meaning, it refers to idioms that convey the meanings literally by including sentimental elements in expressing the thoughts. The meanings in idioms which are derived from these elements are complicated and varied based on the contexts which are difficult to understand (Cui, 1997).

(13)“能说会道” (neng shuo hui dao)

Word for word gloss in English: can speak can talk;

Translated meaning in English: Have a gift of the gab;

Example (13) describes a person who can talk fluently. However, it is not suitable to use this idiom to describe a situation where a person is not able to bring out the points while talking.

The examples provided show that idioms are symbolic units in a cognitive linguistic framework, with phonological and semantic representations (Taylor, 2002) which are hard to understand. Therefore, idioms with a lot of information from ancient Chinese sources need to be spread to the future generations and non-Chinese to ensure that these idioms can be inherited and retained. As idioms in Chinese cannot be understood easily by non-native speakers, translation is the best way in transmitting the meanings. However, translation work is a challenging task to convey the messages appropriately to the target readers.

To sum up, idioms are fixed idiomatic phrases that are unchangeable and have been practised by the folks for a long time by passing down from generation to generation. These idioms that are embodied with the knowledge from Chinese ancestors have shaped Chinese lifestyle and behaviour until today. However, some of the idioms which are derived from different sources cannot be understood easily or justified by the native users based on only the words used in the original form.

1.2 Translation

Translation is rewriting or representing a work by borrowing ideas from the source text to the target text involving different languages, after decoding and encoding by translators which may have a different grammatical structure (Bassnett, 2002; Brislin, 1976). The words or sentences used should have similar meanings in both the source and target languages to make sure that the expressed meanings make sense for the target readers (Catford, 1965). Hence, translators need to be loyal to the source text and avoid adding too much of their own ideas in the target text (Cuellar, 2010).

Translation study stems from comparative literature and contrastive analysis (Lili Ni, 2009), with at least two different languages. Translators need to

consider both languages and rewrite in the target language. They also need to keep the essence of both languages. In the preface of a book entitled *Chinese-English Translation* (Fang & Ma, 1996), it is stated that a comparison of the different elements in two languages helps readers to recognize the relationships between the two languages. Therefore, the translators can have better views or ideas during translation. Furthermore, the translators act as agents to transfer messages from one language to another by comparing the elements in the two different languages. Then, the underlying culture and discourse ideas can be preserved (Azabdaftary, as cited in Akbari, 2013).

Brislin (1976) defines translation as the general work which shifts the thinking and ideas by rewriting the messages from the source text to the target text without being concerned about the forms, standard, established orthographies, or signs found in the source text. However, translators still need to ponder on the correctness, lucidity, and naturalness of the translation to reflect the ideology of the source text (Bassnett & Lefevere, 1995; Bassnett, 2002). Similarly, Bassnett (1980) argues that translators need to ensure two conditions during translation. First, the surface meaning of both languages must be approximately similar. Second, the translators need to convert the structure of the source language closely into the target language but not too closely which can then seriously affect the structures of the target language. These conditions are important because translation is not a work where translators can always get the equivalent words or phrases easily in the target language to represent ideas in the source language (Winter, 1961). Language is not a nomenclature that can replace terms easily from language A to language B. Every language articulates its system differently. Therefore, translators need to find out the ways to express ideas of the source language in the target language accurately and naturally (Winter, 1961; Culler, 1976).

Comprehension of the source text is the most important process to present the target text appropriately. There are different ways that translators can use to comprehend the source context and represent it to fulfill the expectations of the target readers. Translators should follow three important rules suggested by Luo and Jiang (2010). First, translators should set the target for their works and translation procedures. Next, they should consider the rules of coherence. They also should express the essence of the source language by making sure that ideas are accurately conveyed to prevent misunderstanding for the target readers. The last rule that translators need to follow is loyalty. They are free to use any strategy to implement the set purpose in translation but they must be as loyal as possible to the source text. This loyalty is the highest standard that needs to be achieved (Luo & Jiang, 2010).

1.3 Representation

Representation is a way to represent somebody or something using a specific method by describing using a statement to make the ideas known by others (Oxford, 2005). It also means describing a model, picture, thing or statue of a

person (Collins, 2009; Cambridge, 1997). Representation uses languages to represent something or the world meaningfully. It gives meaning to things and makes sense of the world involving people, objects and events through language. It is a necessary process to produce meanings for the intended messages to be exchanged between people. It represents something by describing it for the purpose of placing a likeness in one's mind. Representation is a way to give meanings for things or scenes through language to make sense of the world by expressing complex thoughts in easier ways to let people understand (Hall, 1997).

Hall further states that people from the same background share a similar conceptual map for interpreting ideas in a language easily. The meanings of things are basically constructed by the system of representation which is fixed by a code. The code sets up the relationship between the language system and conceptual system to let people to form something in mind, for example, a combination of alphabets in the word "vegetable" represents the vegetable that we eat. Furthermore, Hall states that "culture" is a term which regulates the relationship of translation with the shared conceptual maps, language systems, and the codes. The codes work to stabilize the meaning between different languages. However, there is no final fixing of meaning as social and linguistics rules change from time to time. Therefore, new phrases are coined and new codes exist.

1.4 Statement of the Problem

Generally, two main problems are found in translation. The first is language mismatch and the second is cultural elements presented in the source text that can influence the translator (Baker, 1992). Winter (1961) claims that translation cannot be done without facing trouble even when ready with the basic requirements. This problem arises because at times there are no equivalent words or phrases that can match the messages in a language to express the exact same messages in another language. Translators may miscomprehend the source text or have difficulties in adapting the ideas to the target text.

Baker (1992) lists eleven problems that can result in non-equivalence between two languages. A problem is that the source language and target language have differences in the conveyed meanings which are hard to be transformed into another language. In an example given by Baker (1992, p22), the Indonesian language has a difference between *going out in the rain without knowing that it is raining* which is known as "kehujanan" and *going out in the rain and knowing that it is raining* which is noted as "hujan-hujan". Consequently, translators can find it hard to select appropriate terms to describe peculiar situations that do not exist in the target language. When words in the source language are semantically complex to be expressed, some concepts especially those which are not common in terms of culture and religion in the source language cannot be lexicalized in the target language. This problem happens as sometimes there are no suitable phrases that can be

used for translation (Baker, 1992). According to Baker (1992), a single word with a single morpheme may convey a more complex set of definitions compared to a whole sentence. According to her, languages automatically evolve compact forms to refer to complicated concepts.

The semantic of the idioms focuses on the meaning of the idioms (Yule, 2000) to function as a “toolkit” in a language to elaborate the meanings to the level of sentence meaning (Griffiths, 2006). According to Huang (2010), there are two different characteristics for the meaning of idioms, ancestral heritage, and variability. The idioms with the characteristics of ancestral heritage do not change their meanings easily. There are four factors that can affect the changing of meanings for the idioms that are grouped under variability. These factors are (a) amplifying the description on the target object; (b) shrinking the description on the target object; (c) shifting of the central meaning in the idioms; and (d) shifting of expressions (Huang, 2010; Zuo, 2004).

According to Huang (2010), three factors affect the changing of meanings for idioms. They are: (a) the development of the society which influences the changing of the mind of the people; (b) the changes of the morpheme or structure in the idioms; and (c) the shifting of the perspectives of the people (Huang, 2010). For the translators who are not aware of the changes of the meanings for these idioms, they might make the mistakes when doing the translation. Translators also need to be aware when doing translation that involving two different languages especially when the target language lacks super ordinate or specific terms (hyponyms). Problems may arise with the concealed ideas when the ideas cannot be presented in the target language accurately.

There is another problem when using loan words from another language in the source text to express important terms. Words borrowed can sometimes have the same form and spelling, but are used differently as they are influenced by different cultures and social lifestyles. This situation is called “false friends”, according to Baker (1992). The “false friends” tend to occur even in European languages that have high similarities between them. For example, the English word “embarrassed” shares a similar spelling but different definition of meaning with a Spanish word “embarazada” which means “pregnant”.

Three Kingdoms (San Guo Yan Yi), the selected novel for this study, is a Chinese novel written by Luo Guanzhong based on the historical facts and creation of storylines during the mid-14th century. It was translated into modern English in 1995. Various studies have been conducted to investigate English translated idioms. However, there are few research studies done on *Three Kingdoms* (Zhang, 2011). Few of them have focused on the different words or phrases used in translating the repeated idioms, as used in a novel. Such a thesis by Zhang (2011) compared two English versions using skopotherapy by enlightening the purposes of the translators using different terms in their translations.

According to Cai (2010) and Zhang (2012), misinterpretation in the translation work by Roberts is found and they claimed that his work needed to be refined. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate through the translation strategies and process types regarding the translation of the selected and repeated idioms used in the novel. This investigation on the repeated idioms could reveal how they were translated into the target language according to the different contexts in which the same idioms were used. This investigation also involved examining the sentences containing the selected idioms by analyzing the context, with one sentence before the idioms and one sentence after it.

Culture is also a problem faced by translators in translation (Baker, 1992). Different languages can be differentiated easily due to the differences in cultural backgrounds. For example, English and Chinese are from two different language families and these languages are different in terms of culture, moral values, and daily lifestyle. Therefore, translators need to fully understand the differences in the culture and history of both languages to minimize mistakes made.

1.4.1 Difficulties in Target Culture Acceptance during Translation

A difference in cultural practices between different languages is a challenge in translation. Cultural practices can influence thinking, moral values, and also daily behavior (Samovar & Porter, 1997; Vermeer, 1989 and Newmark, 1988). Culture is developed in a community and practised by generations using only one particular language (Tylor, 1920; Hymes, 2000). The rooted thinking of a community can be another challenge for translators to overcome either for the target readers or translators themselves. This is a challenge because specific cultural aspects which are practised and considered ideal by a group of people may not be accepted easily by another group in idiom (14).

(14) “牛眠龙绕” (niu mian long rao)

Word for word gloss in English: cow sleep dragon coil;

Translated meaning in English: description of a good place (Xiandai

Hanyu 现代汉语, 2003).

This idiom depicts two animals: cow and dragon. The cow has the characteristic of hardworking whereas dragon is the symbol of the emperor (Cai, 2010). The dragon in English language is considered a symbol of evil (ibid). Both Chinese and English languages have different definitions for dragon that can be understood only after knowing the culture of the people who use the language. This idiom describes a place with good ‘fengshui’ (风水) to attract the cow to sleep and the dragon to coil up.

According to Castro-Paniagua (2000), culture is impartial but objectivity may not be achieved easily. In other words, the translation of cultural practices from different backgrounds should be unprejudiced and is free from preconceived opinions. Translators should make judgments based on what they have observed and be uninfluenced by any prejudice. However, it is hard to achieve

this state. For example, Buddhists advocate a vegetarian eating habit, Muslims are not allowed to eat pork whereas Hindus are prohibited from consuming beef. The reasons for practising these different rules from different religions may be difficult for translators to explain. They have to stay objective even when they themselves may not be able to accept these practices. Therefore, cultural practices may influence how one adapts to a foreign culture. Translators who work with cultural aspects are also the cultural receivers and they may have difficulties in adapting themselves to accept the thinking or ideas in a source language.

As culture is both a problem and a challenge that need to be faced by every translator, Nida (2001) encourages translators to master at least two different cultures to make the translation work understandable to the target readers. Hence, translators are advised not only to be bilingual, but also bicultural (Snell-Hornby, 1988) due to the cultural gap between the source and target languages which is always a problem for translators to close. They need to compare both cultures and present them appropriately in the target text because translating is to compare different cultures (Nord, 2006).

From the reviews presented so far, culture is used to describe one's special lifestyle to help differentiate between ethnic groups. Sometimes the standards of moral values for a particular ethnic group may be unacceptable to another ethnic group. Culture is a very important aspect for people to know others well but unfortunately it can be the most difficult part to accept. Therefore, it is important to know how Roberts translated the idioms by applying different translation strategies.

1.4.2 Difficulties in Translating Idiomatic Expressions

Idioms as the fixed expressions that circulate among the folk from ancient times are culture-bound in every language (Cui, 1997). Idiomatic translation can raise concerns in the translation field as translating idiomatic expressions can be equated with translating culture that having embedded meanings (Dabaghi & Bagheri, 2012). Translating idioms is one of the most difficult tasks. According to Newmark (1988), it is hard to get idioms with the same meanings and frequencies in two languages. The idioms with different characteristics in a language are difficult to be transformed into another language. This problem is because the translation work tends to devalue the idiomatic language and ends up sounding unnatural. Translators need to get the natural equivalence between the source language and target language during their translation to convey the meanings or ideas in idioms (ibid).

Specifically, Baker (1992) reveals two main problems faced when translating idioms. The first problem is the ability to discover and understand an idiom accurately. The second problem is the difficulty to acquire idiomatic phrases

with similar meanings to convey in the target language. She further lists the problems faced by translators during the translation of idioms.

First, an idiom may have no equivalent match in the target language. Different languages have different grammar rules which can be hard for non-native speakers to master, let alone idioms with special grammar rules. Another aspect is that culture can bring challenges to the translators when there are no idioms with equivalent cultural concepts to match between the source and target languages. Furthermore, idioms used in uncommon sentence structures are also considered as problematic for translators.

Second, an idiom may have a similar counterpart in the target language, but it may differ in terms of the context used. Idioms from different languages can have similar meanings, but are conveyed differently to suit the culture or context. In the example given by Baker (1992, p69), “to sing a different tune” refers to a change of opinions or instructions from others to describe a contradictory situation. A similar idiom in Chinese is example (15).

(15) “唱对台戏” (chang dui tai xi)

Word for word gloss in English: sing opposite stage opera;

Translated meaning in English: put on a rival show.

This idiom describes a contradictory situation by using a stronger political connotation compared to the previous one. It can be interpreted in a complementary situation rather than contradictory one as used as an English idiom.

Third, an idiom may be used in the source text with both of its literal and idiomatic meanings at the same time. This situation impedes the translator from representing it successfully in the target text (Baker, 1992). Idioms in the source language can be easily understood literally but difficult to be interpreted to reveal the idiomatic sense expressed in a context. For example (16).

(16) “不管三七二十一” (bu guan san qi er shi yi)

Word for word gloss in English: does not care three seven twenty one;

Translated meaning in English: does not care what is happening and insists on doing as one wishes.

The words used in forming this idiom are easily understood as “someone does not care about the multiplication between three and seven”. However, it is hard to interpret the multiplication and its results which were used to describe someone’s indifferent attitude. Therefore, for the idioms that are used in a context to express both literal and idiomatic meanings, translators may misunderstand the humor in the idioms and translate them differently.

The last problem in translation is the conventions of using idioms in written discourse. An idiom in a language can have a different convention mode compared to one in another language. Some idioms are suitable to be used in written materials to convey scenes or situations to bring rhetorical effects for the context (Fernando & Flavell, 1981). However, when idioms are overused in

public reading materials, readers may feel that the text is unreadable especially when the translated context is not suitable for the use of idioms (Baker, 1992). Due to the problems listed, it is essential to know how Roberts represented the idioms by investigating through transitivity system proposed by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) and Li (2007).

Idiomatic expressions are an element in a language with profound knowledge from ancient times. They can be difficult for translators to master and translate accurately. Hence, it is essential to know how Roberts translate the meanings of the idioms by investigating through transitivity system proposed by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) and Li (2007). Language is inseparable from culture where no language can exist without culture; culture also does not emerge out of the void (Dabaghi & Bagheri, 2012). Culture has been practised from generation to generation and these practices have also been recorded in texts. These literary texts consist of ideas from the authors with cultural elements especially those found in idioms that are handed down from the ancestors. This study investigated idioms or fixed expressions found in a classical literary text because fixed idiomatic expressions written in texts are features in a language that can best reflect a certain nation especially the cultural parts (Sun & Wang, 2007).

1.5 Research Objectives

This study examined idioms translated into English based on the selected translation strategies suggested by different scholars. It also examined the presentation of repeated idioms found in the novel using transitivity system under systemic functional linguistics (SFL). The objectives are as follow:

1. To identify the translation strategies used for *Three Kingdoms* (San Guo Yan Yi).
2. To compare both the source text and target text by analyzing the process types of transitivity system influencing the translation of the idioms.

1.6 Research Questions

The research questions of this study are as follow:

1. What translation strategies are used for *Three Kingdoms* (San Guo Yan Yi)?
2. What process types of transitivity system are represented in the source text and target text for the translated idioms?

1.7 Significance of the Study

This study aimed to analyze the selected and repeated idioms used in the translated version of *Three Kingdoms*. Furthermore, it aimed to reveal the

translation strategies used by Roberts based on the translation strategies suggested by different scholars. The data can provide suggestions or guidelines on translation strategies that are suitable for translating cultural works which do not exist in the target language. The suggestions or guidelines are to ensure that the culture elements can be expressed appropriately for non-Chinese readers. Therefore, appropriate translation of cultural views in the target text is necessary according to Baker (1992), culture is one of the hardest parts for translators, whether translating by using domestication or foreignization.

This study further analyzed the idioms and their translations using the process types in the transitivity system based on the theory of SFL by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014). The results can help translators to gain clearer ideas about the process types of transitivity system when comprehending and interpreting the source text with idioms before translation. They then know how to analyze the context using suitable ways and translate according to the particular contexts. The findings from the novel by Roberts can provide an overview on how he translated his work by ensuring that the messages conveyed in the target text matched those expressed in the source text.

1.8 Scope of the Study

This study was limited to the translated and repeated idioms used in *Three Kingdoms*. This study examined the selected idioms to identify the translation strategies used in translating them into the target text. It also compared how the selected idioms in classical Chinese had been translated into modern English, based on the process types of the transitivity system in the theory of SFL.

1.9 Theoretical Framework

This study used SFL as the theoretical framework and selected translation strategies from several scholars. This framework was used to investigate, compare, and analyze how the different contexts affected the different representations of idioms in the target text. Therefore, this study employed the transitivity system in SFL and translation strategies to reveal the factors influencing the translation of idiomatic expressions from classical Chinese into modern English.

1.9.1 Selected Translation Strategies

The translation strategies used by translators can reveal how they translate the source text into the target text effectively and appropriately. They make choices from the strategies and employ them during translation by ensuring that their

translation work is readable and makes sense. For this study, the translation strategies from two scholars were selected for analyzing the translated text.

The translation strategies used in this study were from Vinay and Darbelnet (2004) and Baker (1992). Vinay and Darbelnet's translation strategies are designed for comparing the source and target texts. They categorize the translation strategies into two categories: direct translation strategies and oblique translation strategies. The direct translation strategies include borrowing, calque, and literal translation. For oblique translation strategies, they include transposition, modulation, equivalence, and adaptation. Baker's (1992) translation strategies focus on translating idioms for analyzing the translated idioms in both the source and target texts. Her translation strategies include using an idiom of similar meaning and form, using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form, translating by paraphrase, and translating by omission. Baker (1992) also proposed using literal with annotation and literal with amplification in the translation that were also applied in this study. Both these strategies were adapted as the subordinate under literal translation by Vinay and Darbelnet (2004) to show the detailed translation strategies employed by Moss Roberts. Both of their theories will be further discussed in Chapter 2.

1.9.2 Transitivity System under Systemic Functional Linguistics

Halliday's (1994) systemic functional linguistics (SFL) examines the components found in a clause. This theory has been proven to be an influential theory for studying texts (Adetomokun, 2012). It analyzes the context as a whole by including both literally and embedded ideas expressed in a text. Readers can apply this theory when reading the text to gain a better understanding of the grammatical elements and functions of the language found (Adetomokun, 2012). Halliday indicates that the fundamental characteristics of this theory are seen by inspecting a language from the social semiotic point of view. This theory can help in discovering how the text is formed to make meanings (Halliday, 1978; Adetomokun, 2012).

The language used in a text is normally structured to suit the requirements of the public. This way is to fulfill the metafunctions in a language, according to SFL. There are three metafunctions in SFL: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. The ideational metafunction represents ideas. Transitivity is a system of the interpersonal metafunctions which represent interaction and exchange ideas. The textual metafunction examines how someone organizes the experiences by writing about them in a text through thematic structures (Alfiana, 2012; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). Analyzing the metafunctions in a text can help the readers to comprehend the conveyed ideas in a context, particularly on how the information expands.

The theory of SFL is a theory which concerns the occurrences of ungrammatical language problems used in a context. It traces the tiny constituents that are applied in a sentence. The function of the components traced in a clause during text analysis can help translators to reveal the function of the language in a context. Then the context can be translated in an understandable manner and with less grammatical errors (Alfiana, 2012). Burns and Coffin (2001) think that Halliday's SFL can enlighten the inter-relationship between society, culture, and language use (Adetomokun, 2012). The important principles that are related in the theory of SFL are religious belief, social practices, and one's behavior that can affect the language system when used in everyday interactions. When applying this theory in the analysis of a context, the concern is to discover how these elements operate and shape the language. For this study, the source text that was written in Chinese language was analyzed using Li's (2007) SFL whereas the target text in English was analyzed using SFL by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014).

Transitivity system is one of the sub-topics in SFL for analyzing a language and one of the focus points in this study. It is a useful tool in using the grammatical patterns in clauses to represent the experiences in the world. It concerns the ideational experiential metafunction (Halliday, 1994, p106). Based on transitivity system (Halliday, 1994; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, 2014), human experiences of the world consist of sensing meanings and other ideas of doing, happening, being, and becoming. These on-going processes are sorted out in the grammar of clauses. Transitivity system construes a few areas of experiences into six different process types, namely material, mental, relational, behavioral, verbal, and existential processes. Each of them has its own typical properties.

The material, mental, and relational processes are three primary processes in English transitivity system. They are referred to as the processes of doing-and-happening, sensing, and being-and having (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, 2014). The other three processes, namely, behavioral, verbal, and existential processes are found at the boundaries of other processes that cannot be clearly set apart (Halliday, 1994; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, 2014). These processes have similar characteristics but are distinctive in terms of grammar rules as they have different identities. To be specific, behavioral and existential processes are rare and normally have less implications (Huang, 2011).

As a sum, the theories, translation strategies and transitivity system were employed in this study because an analysis of the translation strategies can show how Roberts translated the idioms using different strategies at the macro level especially when he needed to deal with cultural elements to ensure that his readers could understand the target text well. Transitivity system revealed the reasons he used uncommon words or phrases in his translation or when he tried to present a different point of view in the target text. Transitivity system could reveal the tiny elements found in the sentences to explain the reasons for Roberts to select different words or phrases to represent the idioms at the micro level. Therefore, this study incorporated both theories to explain how

Roberts translated the idioms to make his text understandable for his target readers.

1.10 Definition of Terms

This section gives the brief definition of terms that were used in the discussion of this study.

1.10.1 Translation Strategies

Translation strategies are the strategies that are applied by the translator in translating the idioms found in the source text. Idioms contain the knowledge from ancient China and are rich with Chinese cultural features different from others. These features can be difficult for westerners to understand. Therefore, translation strategies can help to convey the messages especially the cultural features and daily practices mentioned in the idioms for the understanding of the target readers. Furthermore, translation strategies reveal the procedures employed by the translator during the translation. For the purpose of this study, the translation strategies from Vinay and Darbelnet (2004), and Baker (1992) were selected for the investigation.

1.10.2 Source Text

The source text used in this study was a novel named *Three Kingdoms* (*San Guo Yan Yi*) written by Luo Guanzhong. This version was written using classical Chinese that was different from modern Chinese language used nowadays. The grammar rules and the words employed to form a sentence are distinct from modern Chinese language. A source text in Chinese is challenging for translators from western countries to understand, interpret, and transform into a comprehensible target text.

1.10.3 Target Text

The target text used in this study is the fully translated novel entitled *Three Kingdoms* translated by Roberts (1995). The target text is the translated English version based on the novel *San Guo Yan Yi* written by Luo Guanzhong in mid-14th century. This translated version was translated using modern English.

1.10.4 Repeated Idioms

Chengyu is an idiom, one of the fixed expressions in Chinese language. It is normally formed by using four words and used for formal occasions. The idioms that were selected for this study were those repeatedly used in the novel entitled *San Guo Yan Yi*. The idioms were extracted from the source text written in classical Chinese and from the translated text written in modern English.

For the purpose of this study, the idioms that were repeated six times or more in the source text were the targeted data. Such frequency of use was considered enough to reveal the situations affecting the translation manner and choice of words used by the translator. In other words, investigating the idioms repeated six times or more in the source text could help in exposing how the translator dealt with these repeated idioms in different contexts. His choice of applying different translation strategies or words during the translation could result in diverse effects for the target readers.

1.10.5 Transitivity System

Transitivity system, as a part of SFL, was used as a theory in this study. This system describes the components found in the entire clause instead of focusing on the verb and object only. It reports on how meanings are expressed using verbs to express ideas involving participants, circumstances, or prepositional phrases (Alfiana, 2012). This system is concerned with detailed categorization and named processes which involve different participants by showing how things are described in a clause.

1.10.6 Processes

Processes are essential in transitivity system. They focalize on verbs used in the clause and can be viewed as the 'goings-on' represented in the whole clause (Bloor and Bloor, 1995). There are six process types acknowledged by Halliday 1994; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, 2014: material, mental, relational, behavioral, verbal, and existential. These processes identify the verbs used in the contexts that are suitable for the ideas conveyed or circumstances found in the contexts by classifying them into different processes. They will be further discussed in Chapter 3.

1.11 Structures of the Thesis

This study is divided into 5 chapters. The first chapter introduces this study and discusses the statement of the problem. When translating a novel, the translator has to break through cultural, language, timeline, and regional barriers from the classical text to the modern text. The problem includes

ensuring that the translated work is understandable to the readers. Chapter 2 covers the review of the previous studies done especially on translation theories, cultural elements, SFL, and translation strategies related to this study. Chapter 3 outlines the design of this study and research method used during the analysis. Chapter 4 presents the detailed results found and discussions of the investigation. Chapter 5 is the conclusion of this study and suggestions for future research.



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