A CORPUS-BASED STUDY OF THE TRANSLATION OF CULTURE-SPECIFIC ITEMS IN HARRY POTTER SERIES INTOVIETNAMESE

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Abstract - Written by British author J. K. Rowling, the Harry Potter series has become such a global publishing success and captures the interest of millions of readers from children to adults. With its widespread popularity and international appeal, the Harry Potter series undoubtedly deserves to be a significant subject for researchers and scholars to explore. In the meanwhile, the fact that the Harry Potter stories have been translated into over 65 languages has also made the stories an amusing case for exploration, especially for those involved in translation studies. The objective of this study was to examine the treatment of cultural issues in the Vietnamese translation of Harry Potter by Translator Lý Lan, in terms of the translation of culture-specific items. From the perspective of linguistics, this study focused on the proper names and common expressions to express the cultural items. The common strategies used in translating proper names and other cultural items were found such as transference, omission, naturalisation, cultural substitution, etc. The findings indicate the importance of translating cultural issues into Vietnamese to make the Harry Potter series universal and thus provoke more interests in researching this phenomenal series and provide the foundation for future related study in corpus linguistics field.

Keywords - Harry Potter series, culture-specific items,Vietnamese translation of the Harry Potter series, translator Lý Lan.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Harry Potter series by British writer J.K.Rowling has become such a global phenomenon with countless honorable awards and constantly appeared on numerous best-selling book lists.One of the reasons why the Harry Potter series can capture the hearts of a large number of readers is that Rowling invented a great number of words and phrases for the books such as spells, incantations, magical words, items, and place names which are involve wordplay, rhyming, and historical references.British scholar Peter Hunt (2006) emphasized the importanceof thoroughly studying novels read by the greatest number of children as these literary works are highly influential in readers' conciousness.

However, there are some puns and wordplays that obmitted or mistranslated in the translation of Harry Potter of translator Lý Lan which causes the misunderstanding for Vietnamese readers.In the meanwhile, the fact that the Harry Potter stories have been translated into over 65 languages has also made the stories an amusing case for exploration, especially for those involved in translation studies.

Additionally, the translation of the typical British culture-specific items has been great challenges to the Vietnamese translators, as they not only need to consider the two different cultural systems involved in thetranslation process, namely the English cultural system and the Vietnamese cultural system, but also they have had to consider the popular type of readers at whom the translation is primarilyaimed, namely, children and adolescent readers. The aim of this research paperthus is to examine the treatment of cultural elements in the Vietnamese translation of Harry Potter series and discuss the questions on 1/ How the culture-specific items in a Harry Potter volume were translated into Vietnamese?and 2/What are the strategies used?

II. BACKGROUND

A. Translation and Culture

It has been long taken for granted that translation deals only with language. Cultural perspective, however, has never been brought into discussion. It has to be until Nida (1969) in Hartono (2009:1)have stated that "Translating consists of reproducing the receptor language to the closest natural equivalent of the source language message, first in the term of meaning and secondly in the term of style".

According to this definition, the meaning and message are rendered in the TL, and the translator has an obligation to seek for the closet equivalent in the TL. Yet, there is still no indication that culture is taken into account.

Though Nida does not mention this matter very explicitly, we can infer from Nida's explanation on "closetnaturalequivalent" that cultural consideration is noticed.

As the content addresses all walks of life and cultureplays an important role in human's life, therefore, culture elements should be considered. If the translator cannot get the right meaning from source language, the result of the translation will be misleaded.

B. Translation Methods and Translation Strategies

In translation, the two terms "translation methods" and "translation procedure" (translation strategies) although being often inter-changeable, should be clearly distinguished. As Newmark (1988) indicated that " While translation methods relate to the whole text, translation procedures are used for sentences and smaller units of language".

He meant some common methods of translation like literal translation, word-for-word translation, semantic translation, faithful translation, free translation, adaption, communicative translation and idiomatic translation. Hence, if anyone cares about translation the whole text, he/she should use these methods to his/her translation.

But if the translation is being dealed with words, phrases or sentences, translation strategies should be applied. Therefore, it can be understood that translation methods are related to whole text, whereas the translation procedures are used for the translation of sentences and the other smaller units of language. In the translation of text, the translator can use only one method, either free or literal or adaptation. But in the translation of the same text, the translator may use any translation procedure as per one's necessity.

In my exploration of culture-specific items in translating Harry Potter series into Vietnamese, translation strategies was obviously applied when analysing the words and phrases as the culture-specific items are the small units which need some detailedfindingsof the cultural elements.

C. Translation of Culture-specific Items

The culture-specific items(CSIs) of a source text constitude a connotative semantic variable which the translator cannot ignore. To demonstrate this idea, it is imperative to clarify the concept of culture and to agree on a definition that will guide the comparative analysis. Culture has many definitions, and it affects everything people do in their society because of their ideas, values, attitudes, and normative or expected patterns of behaviour.

In 1988, Newmark defined culture as "the way of life and its manifestations that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular languge as its means of expressions". Therefore, out of the many possible definitions examined, Newmark definition guides this study as his definition is quite as close as the culture-specific items which need exloring in this paper.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

Initially, I used corpus as my research instrument. Based on the result of the corpus data compiled, I was able to determine the details of this study. Tables and other figures were also used to provide clearer understanding of the data presented as answers to the problem of the study.

The first culture-specific item that I want to explore is the proper names and in particular, firstly, the proper names for characters was being explored in my research.Secondly, I want to mention the proper names for magical creatures.Thirdly, I continued to explore the proper names for locations including those proper names denoting real, existent locations in the world of 'muggles' and those names referring to non-existent locations that have been created by the author to indicate places that could only be mapped in the magical world of wizards. The last item in proper names that I want to explore is the proper names of some magical objects.

The second culture-specific item in my research is the common expressions in the Harry Potter books. The list below collects some common expressions used most frequently by members of the wizarding world together with their Vietnamese translations for comparison.

Table 1: Terms referring to wizards or non-wizards

ST	TT
Animagus	Phù thủy Hóa Thú
Deatheaters	Tử thần Thực tử
Muggles	dân Muggle
Squib	phù thủy Pháo-xịt

B. Research Instrumentand Data

Under the instruction of professor A at College of Foreign Languages, Hue University, Vietnam, together with the cooperation with the director B of Computational Linguistics Center of Ho Chi Minh University of Science, a team of 4 people including me joined in the process ofbuilding the parallel English-Vietnamese corpus of Harry Potter Series.

First of all, Mr. B has already had the corpus, which yet has notbeen paralleled which mean they are two different versions (English and Vietnamese). Mr. C - his assistant works with the author directly by sending the corpus in Vietnamese as well as English version. Our work is making alignment of two corpora into a parallel corpus consisting of 7 volumes. In the process of carrying out this parallel corpus, we received before hand an alignment guideline to know how to combine the two different kinds of texts. At the same time, two samples of work done are given so that the work can be easily understood.I combine English and Vietnamese versions of the book in matched version into one final file by cutting the Vietnamese sentence and put it under the English sentence. The important rule is that each sentence has to be simple.

* Chapter 1
+ Chương 1

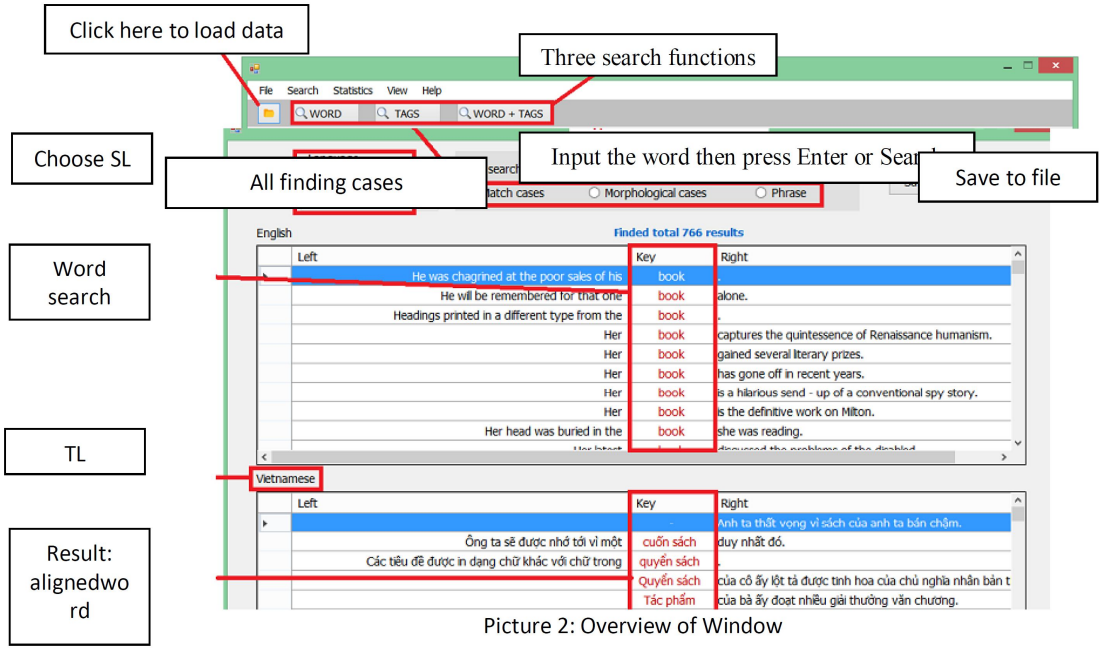
* The Worst Birthday
+ SINH NHẬT BUỒN NHẤT

* Not for the first time, an argument had broken out over breakfast at number four, Privet Drive.
+ Đây không phải là vụ cãi vã đầu tiên nổ ra trong buổi điểm tâm ở nhà số 4 đường Privet Drive.

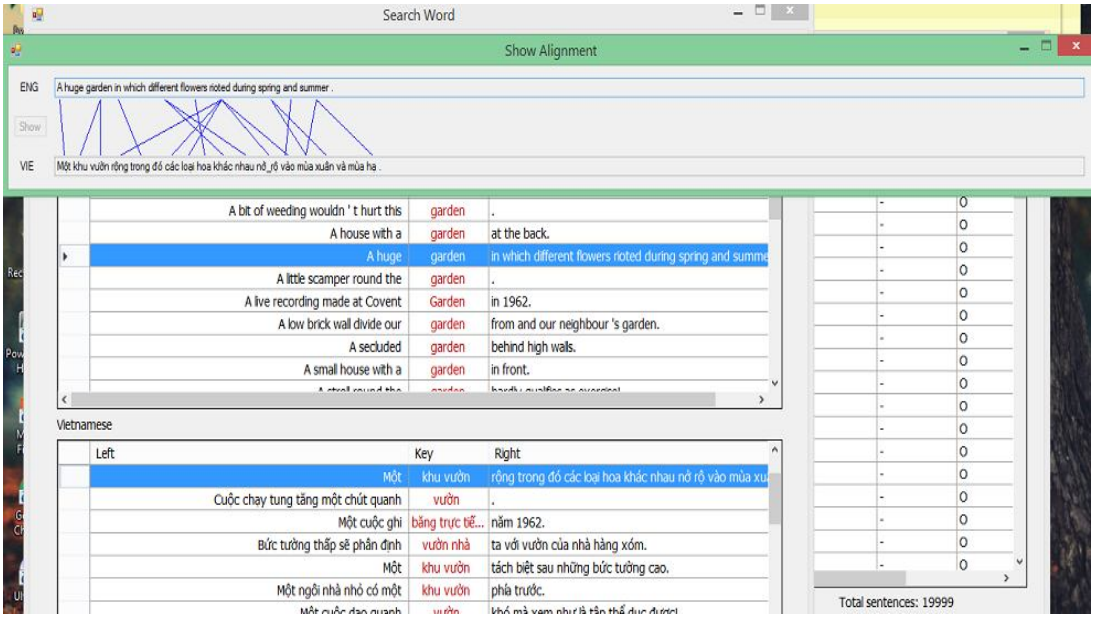
* Mr. Vernon Dursley had been woken in the early hours of the morning by a loud, hooting noise from his nephew Harry's room.
+ Hồi sáng sớm tinh sương này, ông Vernon Dursley đã bị đánh thức vì một tiếng cú rúc inh tai phát ra từ căn phòng thằng cháu Harry của ông.

Picture 1: An example of the finished alignment

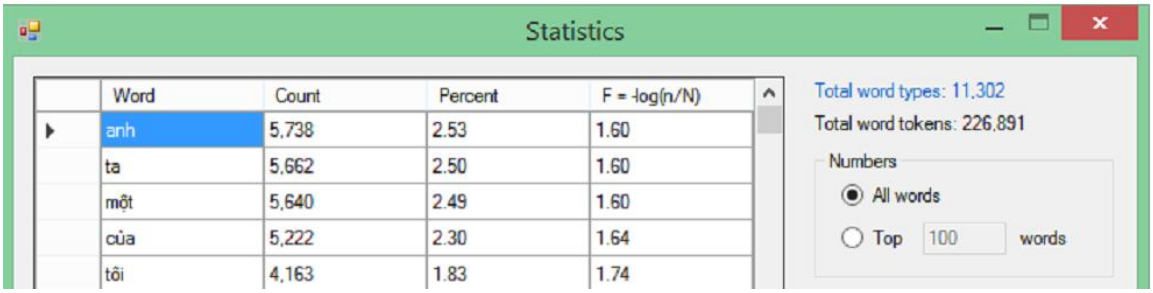
After I finish a chapter, my product will be sent via email to the group(Mr. A, Mr. B, Mr. C together with the me to create the parallel corpus). Then, Mr. C gives the feedback to improve the product in the best way. It took us nearly three months to finish building the parallel corpus of the two books and a third of Harry Potter series. When the parallel corpus are done completely, Mr. B with his assistant- Mr. Cused the CLC EV Parallel Corpus Tool 2.0 for data creation and sent it to me together with the instruction manual afterwards for doing some research and collect data.



Picture 2: Overview of Window



Picture 3: The detail of the alignment



Picture 4: The example of the Statistics

By creating the parallel corpus, the work of collecting data become more correct and efficient than search manually.

C. Research Procedures

Firstly, the paper is carried out through the contrastive method which isessential to the aim and the objectives of the study.

Secondly, due to the data collection and description, I focus on describing the process of collection, the kinds of data collected, the number of data collected from translated works both Vietnamese and English versions of Harry Potter Series.

Finally, the procedures of the study are clearly mentioned, which lay a good foundation to carry out investigation according to a proper direction.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

A. Strategies Used by Vietnamese Translators

After examining the parallel corpus of Vietnamese and English versions of thecollection of Harry Potter Series, containing 1494879 Vietnamese words and 1369225 English words, 7 strategies were found. In this part, each strategy with an example will be presented and discussed due to the limited space of the paper.

1)**Transference/Loan Word**

The proper names here were “transferred” to the Vietnamese language with the original form.

Example 1: Snapedidn'tdislikeHarry–hehatedhim.

Khôngphải giáo sưSnapekhôngưanó,màông ta ghétnó.

Snape is Head of Slytherin House. The translator Lý Lan, maintains his name as the ST most of the time. His name appears 1788 times in the ST, but 1743 times in the TT. There are 45 times that his name is translated differently such as: “thầy”, “lão”, “ông” or “ổng”.

Table2: Proper names for major characters (* T--- Transference)

ST	Count	Percent	TT	Count	Percent
Snape Hermione Harry Potter	1788 5255 365	0,13 0,38 0,03	T T T	1743 5394 385	0,12 0,36 0,03

Besides, the British boarding school system is introduced into the Vietnamese text without any major cultural transformation. These proper names are not mention often in the stories, so its frequency is low.

Table2: Proper names for boarding school system

ST	Count	Percent	TT	Count	Percent
Beauxbatons	54	0,00394	Trường Beauxbatons	48	0,0032
Durmstrang	65	0,00475	trường Durmstrang	65	0,00475

2) Translation By a More General Word (Superordinate)

In this strategy, the translator tries to fulfill the meaning of source text a more general word that helps readers understand the general meaning.

Example2: HelaidHarry gently on the door step, took a letter out of his cloak.

Ông ta nhẹ nhàngđặtđứa béxuốngbậtcửa,lấytrongáotrùmramộtláthư.

In this example, the name “Harry” is translated into “đứa bé” (baby) - a more general meaning for Harry because in that situation, Harry is just a baby. Therefore, the translator cleverly translates the name by using superordinate.

3) Translation by Descriptive Equivalent

This is also one of the commonest ways to set the equivalence between two languages by redering words from ST to TT.

Example 3: ItspropernameisPigwidgeon."

Tên thực sự chính xácủanólàHeo-Vịt-trời."

In this example, the magical creature “Pigwidgeon” is translated into “Heo-vịt-trời” so that Vietnamese reader feel easier to understand the meaning.

Table 3: Proper names for major magical creatures

ST	Count	Percent	TT	Count	Percent
Buckbeak Wormtail	122 186	0,01 0,01	Bằng mã Đuôi trùn	14 158	0,00 0,01

What is familiar to the English readers could be totally alien to the Vietnamese readers due to a lack of cross-cultural knowledge. Therefore, thetranslation of these proper names, obviously, has fulfilled the task of bridging the cultural gaps. Moreover, the names of the place are also rendered into Vietnamese by means of descriptive equivalent.

Table 4: Proper names for locations

ST	Count	Percent	TT	Count	Percent
Diagon Alley The Leaky Cauldron	58 37	0,00424 0,0027	Hẻm Xéo Quán Cái Vạc Lủng	33 4	0,0022 0,0003

The exception for the use of the descriptive equivalent is the name “London”. It was translated as“Luân Đôn”, which is a form of naturalisation, i.e., putting the SL item into the phonetic and transcription form of the TL language.

4) Translation by Cultural Substitution

This strategy involves replacing a culture-specific item or expression with a target-language item which does not have the same propositional meaning but is likely to have a similar impact on the target reader.

Example4: Dobbymoppedhisbulgingeyesandsaidsuddenly,

Con gia tinhđụihaiconmắtlồicủanóvàđột ngộtnói:

In the above example, the name of the elf “Dobby” absolutely disappeares in its translation version. It turns to the other word “con gia tinh” in the Vietnameseversion which means “elf” in back-translation in ST.

ST	TT	Back translation
Dobby	con gia tinh	Elf

5) Translation by Using Naturalisation

This strategy is rather similar to transference and adapts the SL word first to the normal pronunciation, then to the normal word-forms of the TL.

Example 5: "It'sgottobeIreland,"

"Ắt làđộiÁi Nhĩ Lansẽ vô địch.

Table 5: Proper names for some countries appeared in the HP Series

ST	Count	Percent	TT	Count	Percent
Ireland Britain	30 22	0,0022 0,0016	Ái Nhĩ Lan Anh-Cát- Lợi	29 1	0,0019 0,00

6) Translation by Using Metonymy

In this case, the translator uses Part – Whole relationship to set the Vietnamese equivalent for source text in English.

Example6: HarrynoticedatoncethatSnapewaslimping.

Harryđể ýthấychân thầyđi cà nhắc.

In this example, “Snape” is translated into “chân thầy” which means “his leg”.

However, the Vietnamese translator understands the aim of J.K.Rowling as she means the leg of Snape, so Lý Lan use a particular part of the body for her translation.

7) Translation by Omission

If the meaning convey by a particular item or expression is not vital enough to the development of the text to justify distracting the reader with lengthy explanations,

translators can and often do simply omit translating the word or expression in question.

Example 7: And Aunt Petunia and Uncle Vernon had had to pay for its removal at a private hospital in London.

Rồi dượng Vernon cùng dì Petunia đã phải đem nó tới bệnh viện, tốn khối tiền để giải phẫu cắt bỏ cái đuôi đóđi.

In this example, the name “London” is obmitted as the setting of the story is in Britain, and the house of Aunt Petunia and Uncle Vernon is in London.

Therefore, it is unneccessary to repeat the name to make it complete.

Table 6: Proper names for some popular magical objects

ST	Count	Percent	TT	Count	Percent
Howler	17	0,00	Thư Sấm	15	0,00
Ordinary Wizarding Level	12	0,00	Bằng Phù thủy Thường đẳng	8	0,00
Deathly Hallows	32	0,00	Bảo bối tử thần	4	0,00

B. Frequency of Translation Strategies

After studying through the series both in Vietnamese and their English translational versions, using translation strategies suggested by Newmark and Baker, we found that there are 7 strategies most used and their frequency is illustrated in the table below:

Table 7: The percentage of strategies

Strategy	Percentage
Translation by omission	48.5%
Translation by transference	21.6%
Translation by descriptive equivalent	11. 1%
Translation by cultural substitution	6.4%
Translation by a more general word (superordinate)	5.8%
Translation by using metonymy	4.1%
Translation by using naturalization	2.5%
	100%

By examining the frequency of those 7 strategies, the strategy "Translation by omission" is most used with nearly a haft of proportion.

C. Cultural Loss in Translations Cultural Items into Vietnamese

It is generally accepted that there are some translation losses with the translation of culture-specific items from the source text into the target text and the translation of the translator Lý Lan is not an exception.

Table 8: Some wordplays in the HP Series

Original text	Vietnamese translation
Diagon Alley	Hẻm Xéo
Floo powder	Bột Floo
Tom Marvolo Riddle	Tom Marvolo Riddle

However, we need to bear in mind that there are two major aspects with the treatment of culture-specific items that have caused substantial translation losses in the Vietnamese version of Harry Potter. First, there is a certain level of contradictory with the translation of proper names in the Vietnamese text: While some proper names are translated, others are simply remained unchanged in the target text. The translator Lý Lan does not seem to follow any clear standard in terms of the translation or the preservation of such names. As a result, this contradictory may lead to some confusion of Vietnamese readers when they read all the Harry Potter series.

Table 9: Cases of confusion of Vietnamese readers when they read allthe Harry Potter series

ST	TT
Hermione Granger	Hermione Granger
You-Know-Who	Kẻ-mà-ai-cũng-biết-là-ai-đấy
Bludger	trái Bludger

Secondly, many culture-specific items that were chosen or created by the author, which carry important implicatory meanings in the source text are not translated in the target text.

D. Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

Due to the time limit and the shortage of materials for reference, mistakes and shortcomings are certainly not unavoidable. One possible limitation to the study is the inability to contact the publisher or the translators of the Vietnamese translations despite several attempts. Interviews with either the translators or publishers would have reduced the probabilities of the deductions in the analysis. Although data give a solid basis for the deductions, there is no way of being totally sure unless supported by clear statements from the translators or publishers themselves on the translation choices and strategies.

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