

Two Persian Translations of Hamlet by Shakespeare: Analysis of Translation Strategies of Applied Allusion

Amir Ramezani

Master of English Translation, Humanities Department, Tabaran Institute of Higher Education, Mashhad, Iran.

ABSTRACT

*The presence of literary devices is one of the aspects of any literary work which makes it aesthetically pleasing. In this regard, culture-related devices have been focused more thoroughly among translators due to the challenges they cause on translation. One of these culturally constrained literary devices is the allusion. The allusion is like a riddle within a text in which translators have to think hard to find its relation to a person, event, a thing, or any other unrelated text, and then use a proper strategy to translate it. This gets even more difficult in the case of translating a dramatic text, especially William Shakespeare's plays. The present study investigates the translation of applied allusions in two Persian translations of *The Hamlet* by Shakespeare. The design adopted in the present study is considered a corpus-based comparative descriptive approach. The corpus was precisely read word by word to identify allusions. Then, the Persian equivalents of the translations were identified in two translations of the book, followed by exploring the applied translation strategies. In this regard, the identified translation strategies were carefully scrutinized according to the adopted models to identify the strategies that were more frequently and adequately used in translating each translation unit. Regarding all these results, the researcher concluded that there were significant differences in translating allusions by the two translators and, more particularly, the Key-phrase allusions.*

Keywords: Translation, Literary Devices, Allusion, Hamlet, Shakespeare.

1. Introduction

Translation plays an important role in the understanding of different languages and cultures. In addition, it helps nations with diverse cultures reach a compromise to introduce different cultures to different nations. However, the translation of literary texts is one of the biggest challenges in translation as these texts bear notably diverse cultural contexts. Moreover, the relationship between literature and culture requires literary aesthetic values and extra-literary factors, e.g., ideological and sociological factors (Pokrivcak, Hevesiova, Smieskova, Kissova, & Janecova, 2010).

Drama or play has become an important topic for translation scholars as literary texts during the last decades. Further, translating a dramatic text considerably differs from other genres of translation (Landers, 2001). Many studies have been carried out on translating plays from different perspectives. In addition, various approaches and strategies have been proposed for translating literary texts. Similarly, Iranian researchers have performed several Persian translations of plays (Khamisi, 2014). Therefore, it can be stated that this field of translation has drawn great attention. In this regard, one of the most translated individual authors was William Shakespeare. Shakespeare possessed so extensive knowledge of human psychology that he was able to delineate memorable and universal types of flesh and blood in his plays, which could transcend the limits of time and space.

One of the culturally constrained literary devices is 'allusion'. The allusion is an implied reference used particularly in literary works based on the common belief, historical or cultural events, and literary heritages shared with the writer and the readers. In literary works, the allusions can assist in explaining the meaning of the text and signifying the writer's conventions (Ruokonen, 2010). Moreover, Chris Baldick has mentioned that "the technique of allusion is an economical means of calling upon the history or the literary tradition that author and readers are assumed to share" since it can enrich the works without redundant explanation for the implication inferred (Chung, 2008). Most allusions are based on the assumption and knowledge shared by both the author and the reader. In other words, the reader understands the author's intentions and references, and they are supposed to be familiar with all of the meanings behind the words. Allusions help the reader visualize what's happening in writing by evoking a mental picture. However, the reader must be aware of the allusion and familiar with it alludes. As the referents can be culture-specific, allusions often present a cultural challenge to translators, although they are subjects of interest to translation researchers. Leppihalme (1997) stated that "the words of allusion function as a clue to the meaning, but the meaning can usually be understood if the receiver can connect the clue with an earlier use of the same or similar words in another source or the use of a name evokes the referent and some characteristic features linked to the name" (p. 4). Accordingly, one of the problematic issues in this field is how to render allusions to make them intelligible to the target audience. Since allusions may be translated in different ways, their functions may change in a target language (Leppihalme, 1997).

The present study investigates the translation of allusions in two Shamsodin Adib Soltani and Masoud Farzad's Persian translations of *The Hamlet* by William Shakespeare based on Leppihalme's (1997) model for translating allusions.

2. Methods

2.1 Study Design

The research design used in the present study is a corpus-based comparative descriptive approach. This approach was adopted to explain different strategies in the two Persian translations of *Hamlet*. The researchers elaborated on the relationship between English-Farsi language pairs in translation. On the other hand, Adib Soltani (2006) also designed the comparative approach to identify translation strategies present through two Farsi translations: one before the Islamic Revolution of Iran written by Farzad (1958) and the other after the Islamic revolution of Iran. Therefore, this research is encompassed in the Framework of pure translation studies in Holme's "map of translation studies" (Toury, 1995, p. 10), including descriptive translation studies as one of its major branches.

2.2 Instrumentation

2.2.1 Corpus of the Study

The corpus of the present paper includes the English play of *Hamlet* as the primary source and Farzad (1958) and Adib Soltani's (2006) two Persian translations. In addition, the Source Language (SL) and Target Language (TL) are considered English and Persian, respectively.

Hamlet, composed of 5 acts and 20 scenes, is Shakespeare's longest play and is considered among the most powerful and influential works of world literature. The reason it has been chosen is its enormous load of cultural capital. *Hamlet* has been translated into Persian at least seven times during the past century, and each time the translators rendered it using different linguistic, stylistic, and translational choices. This section begins with a description of the first act of the corpus to find allusive words and phrases. It should be noted that other acts of the play are applied in case a rational amount of samples fails to be found.

2.2.2 Model of the Study

In the present study, Leppihalme's (1997) and Newmark's (1988) strategies were adopted as models for translating allusions. In addition, the two translators' strategies were investigated to discover how the translators with two different writing styles translated allusions and whether they maintained their exclusive writing styles in the process of translation. Then, a micro-level analysis was conducted to determine the patterns which might have influenced the motivation behind each translator's linguistic and stylistic choices and the extent of this effect on his habitus.

Leppihalme (1997) introduced a set of strategies to cope with the aforementioned problems, and the translator should decide what translation strategy is appropriate for the allusions.

2.3 Procedure

The procedure of the study included the following:

1. Identification of the allusions in the ST
2. Classification of the identified elements based on Kirillov's (2003) model, which helped the researcher to classify allusions as Historical, Literary, Biblical, Popular, and arts;
3. Identification of the fragments in the TT that correspond to the identified cases in the ST,
4. Identification of the solution in the text that was employed in each case based on Leppihalme's (1992) allusions translation model,
5. Codification of all the extracted data in an Excel spreadsheet analyzes the data from a quantitative point of view.
6. Conclusion.

2.4 Data Analysis

The first step for achieving the purposes of the study was reading the corpus word by word to identify allusions. Identifying Persian equivalents of the translations in two translations of *Hamlet* was the second step, followed by collecting the translation strategies specified in the previous step. Then, the identified translation strategies were carefully scrutinized according to the adopted models to examine which types of strategies were more frequently and more adequately applied in translating each original translation unit.

The researcher dissected the collected data regarding the adequacy in translating literal texts twice to maintain a strategic distance from any missteps in distinguishing translation strategies and meanings in the entire corpus. In addition, two translation experts scrutinized the corpus to enhance the reliability of the strategy classifications. The corpus was disparted into translation units, including clauses, phrases, and even sentences in the present study. Furthermore, all lengths of language were used as units of translation in the course of the analysis with regards to Newmark's (1988) statements that "All lengths of language can, at different moments and also simultaneously, be used as units of translation in the course of the translation activity" (p. 66).

In the next step, different types of strategy were spotted in translation units and compared in two different versions of the Persian translation of *Hamlet*. Finally, the frequency of each type of strategy was submitted as the last step.

3. Results

3.1 What are the most frequent allusion translation strategies in Mir Shamsodin Adib Soltani's translation of *Hamlet*?

Figure 1 shows the number of the allusions in hamlet's novel in three chapters. The blue graph shows the proper name allusions, and the orange one deals with the key-phrase allusions. As the graphs illustrated, based on the obtained results, there were more Proper name allusions with 21 instances and 54% and Key-phrase with 18 instances and 46%.

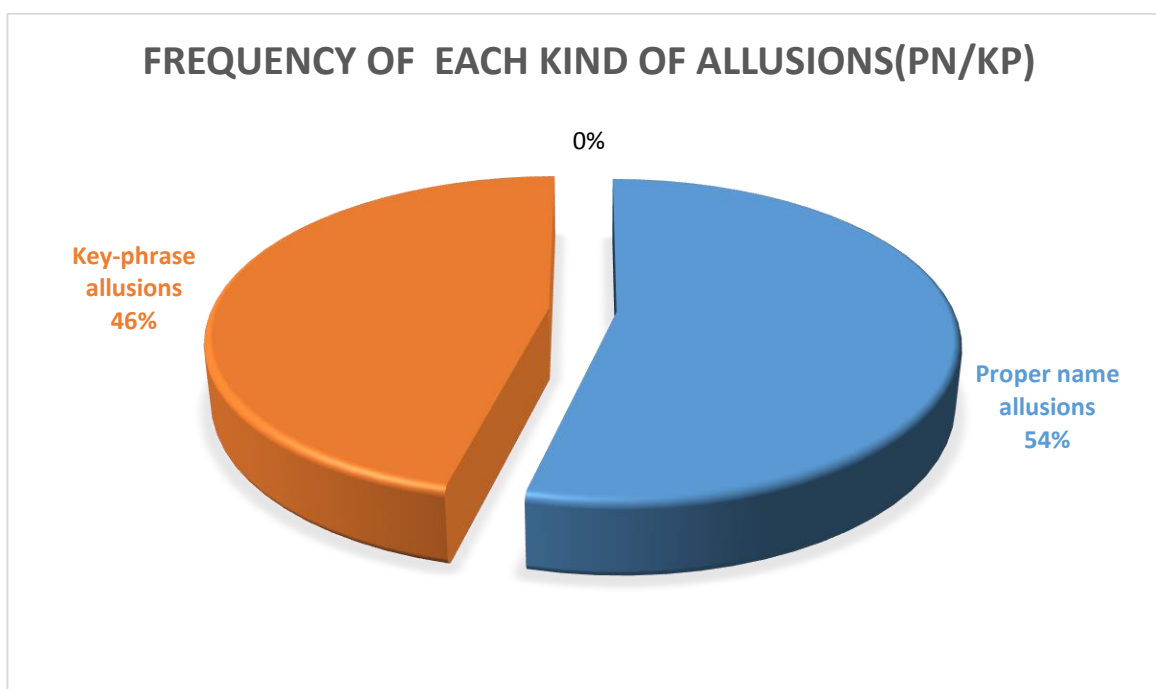


Figure 1. Frequency of each kind of allusion (PN/KP) in Mir Shamsodin Adib Soltani's (2006) translation of *Hamlet*.

Figure 2 indicates the number of strategies dealt with proper name allusions translations in *Hamlet*'s play in three chapters. The black graph (n=18, 90%) shows that the proper name allusions are more transliterated. In addition, the orange graph with 2 instances and 10% demonstrates that the target language has replaced proper name allusions with a name.

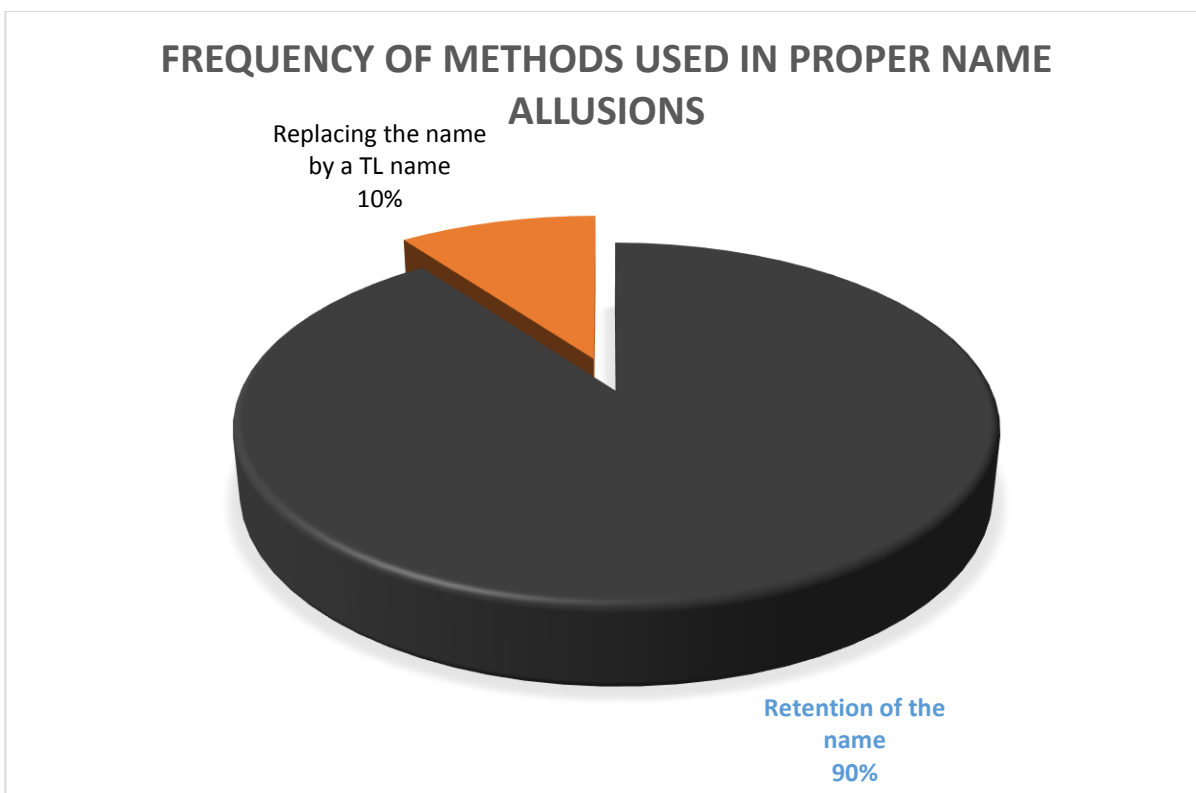


Figure 2. Frequency of methods used in Proper name allusions in Mir Shamsodin Adib Soltani's Translation of Hamlet.

The number of the strategies served for Key-phrase allusions translations in *Hamlet's* play in three acts of it can be seen in Figure 3. Furthermore, the black graph proves that the key-phrase allusions (n=11, 58%) are more provided with additional information, while they are replaced with a name by target language in the blue graph (n=5, 27%).

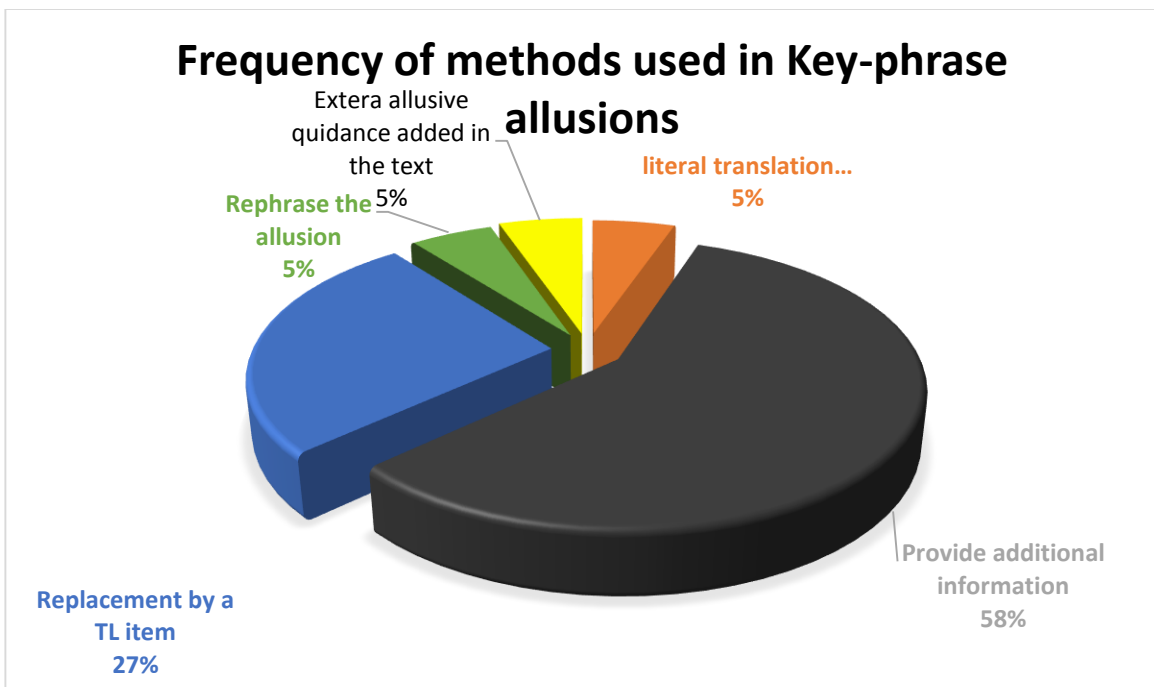


Figure 3. Frequency of methods used in Key-phrase allusions in Mir Shamsodin Adib Soltani's Translation of Hamlet.

As illustrated in Figures 2 and 3, Adib Soltani has attempted to transliterate the proper names in the three acts of *Hamlet*. He also preferred to provide additional information for key-phrase allusion translations and replace them with a name by target language to describe the allusive phrase.

3.2 *What are the most frequent allusion translation strategies in Masoud Farzad's translation of Hamlet?*

Figure 4 indicates the number of allusions in three acts of *Hamlet*, the blue part of which represents the proper name allusions, and the orange one deals with the key-phrase allusions. Based on the obtained results, the proper name allusions with 21 instances and 54% were more than the key-phrase allusions with 18 instances and 46%.

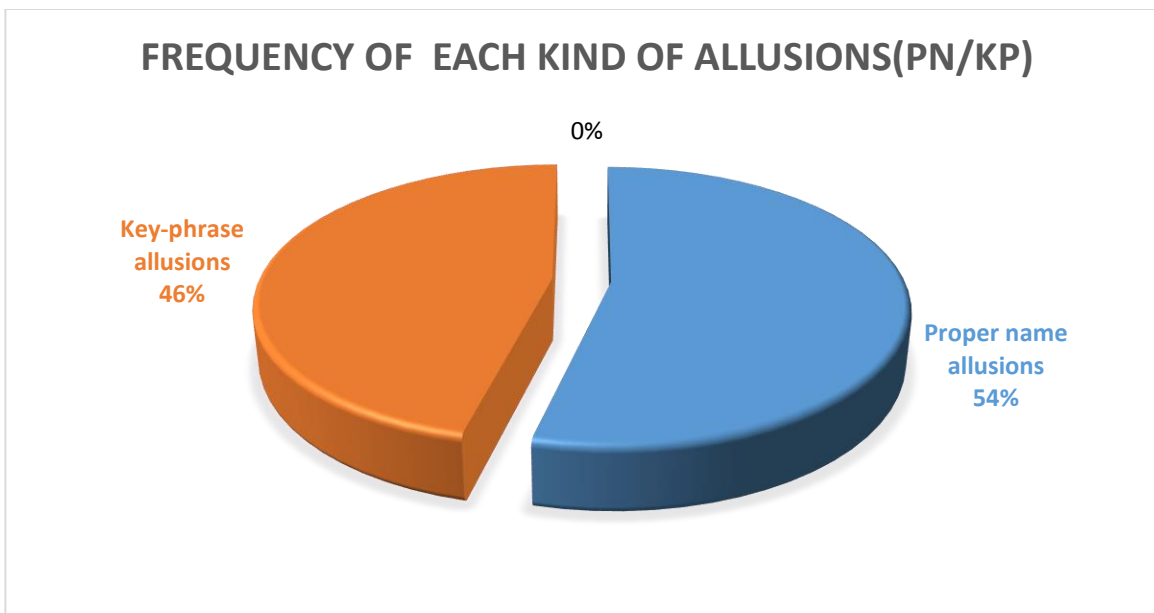


Figure 4. Frequency of each kind of allusion (PN/KP) in Masoud Farzad's Translation of the Hamlet.

The number of the strategies dealt with proper name allusions translations in three acts of the *Hamlet* play is illustrated in Figure 5. In addition, the proper name allusions (blue chart) with 10 instances and 48% are more transliterated than the orange one with 6 instances and 28%, which shows the proper name allusions replaced with a name by the target language. Finally, the yellow chart indicates that the translator has preferred to omit the proper names in 5 instances (28%).

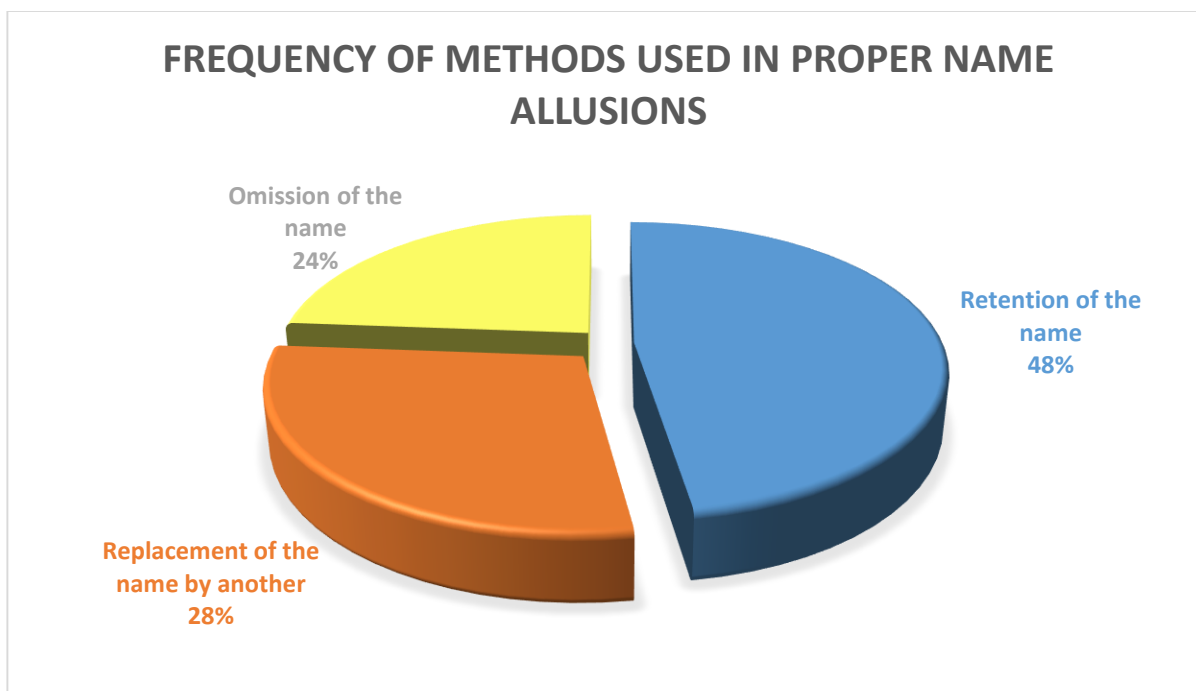


Figure 5. Frequency of methods used in Proper name allusions in Masoud Farzad's Translation of the Hamlet.

The number of the strategies applied for key-phrase allusions translations in three chapters of *Hamlet's* novel are illustrated in Figure 6. The key-phrase allusions with 11 instances and 33% are more replaced with a name by target language (the black graph). At the same time, all the blue, green and orange ones indicate that the key-phrase allusions are recreated, rephrased, and translated literally (n=3, 17%).

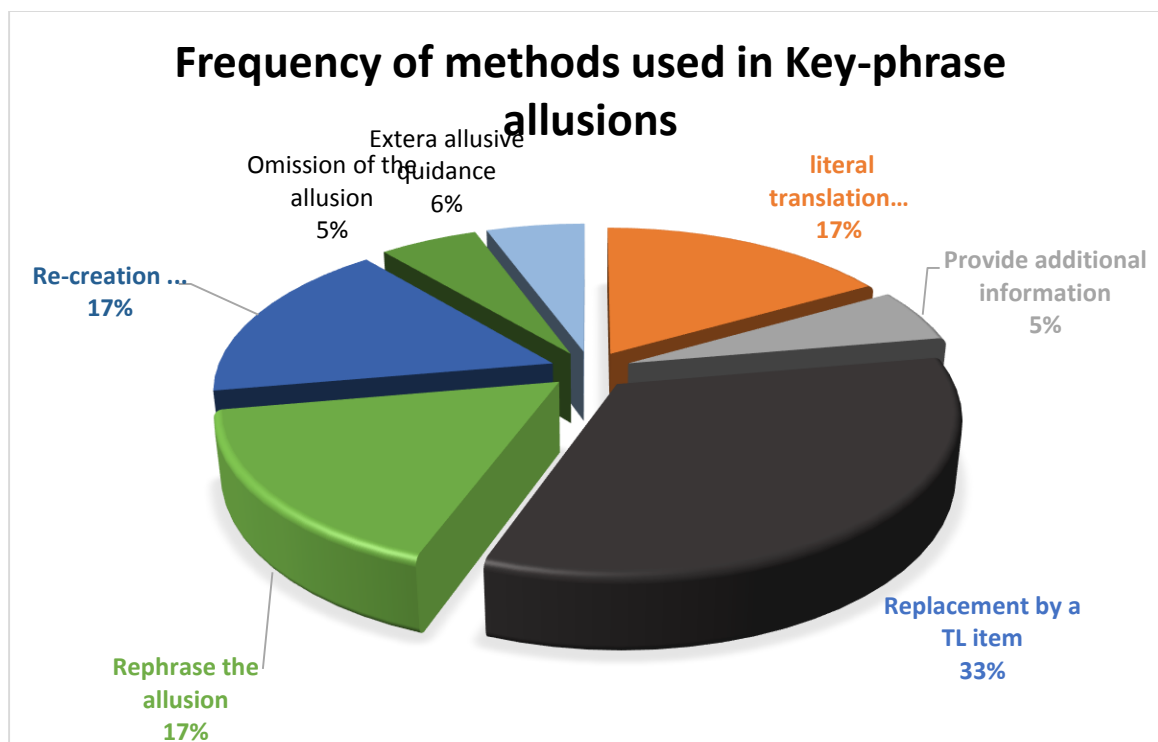


Figure 6. Frequency of methods used in Key-phrase allusions in Masoud Farzad's Translation of the Hamlet.

As illustrated in Figures 5 and 6, Farzad has tried to transliterate the proper names in the three acts of *Hamlet*. In addition, he preferred to replace an allusive key phrase with an item by target language to describe the allusive phrase in confronting key-phrase allusions translations.

3.3 Is there any significant difference between Adib Soltani and Farzad's translation of allusions in *Hamlet*?

As illustrated in Figures 2, 3, 5, and 6, both translators have attempted to transliterate the proper names in three acts of *Hamlet*. For instance, in dealing with Key-phrase allusions translations, Adib Soltani preferred to provide additional information. At the same time, Farzad favored replacing the allusive key phrase with items by target language to describe the allusive phrase.

Figures 2 and 5 prove that both translators transliterated the proper names in three chapters of *Hamlet*; however, it shows a significant difference between them in managing key-phrase allusions translations. As mentioned before, Adib Soltani often chose the providing additional information strategy. Still, Farzad preferred to replace the allusive key phrase with items by target language to describe the allusive phrase. Moreover, the following chart was provided for allusions frequencies in this paper based on Kirillov's categorization.

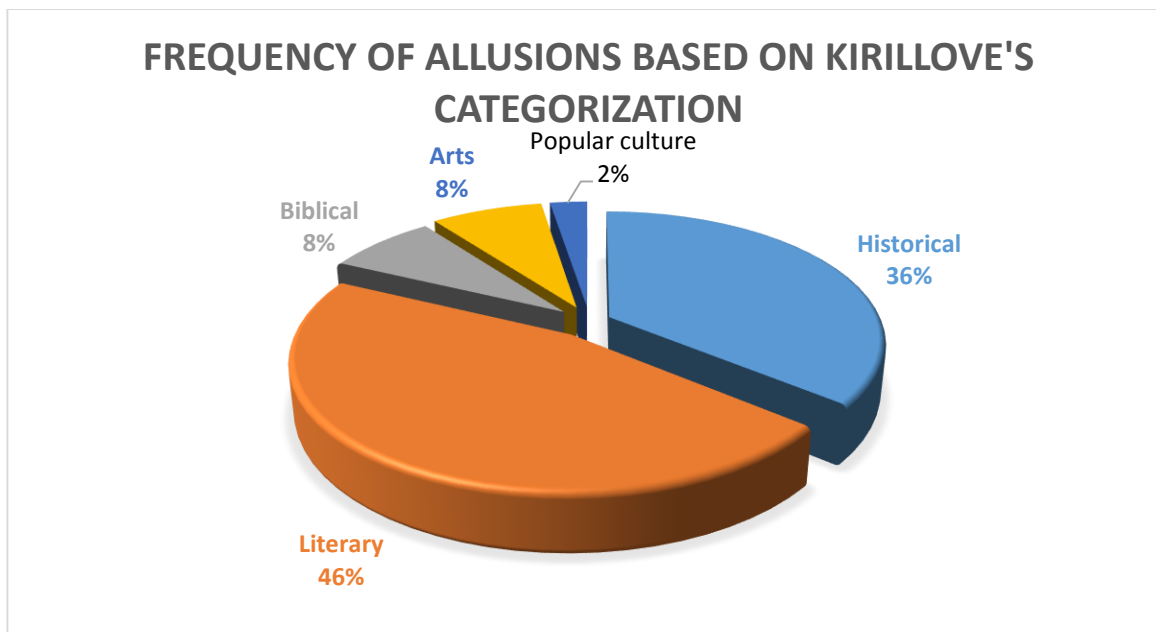


Figure 7. Frequency of Allusions based on Kirillov's categorization.

The number of allusions based on Kirillov's categorization used in key-phrase and proper name allusion translations in three acts of the *Hamlet* play can be observed in Figure 7. Further, it is apparent from the orange chart that allusions were more literary ($n=18$, 46%), while the blue chart with 14 instances 36% indicates that the allusions were historical.

4. Discussion

As stated earlier, the purpose of the study was to analyze particular strategies applied for managing allusions (key-phrase and personal proper nouns) and finding the more frequent strategies. It's possible to state that based on the obtained results, the transliteration strategy was often applied as in proper name allusions, in handling and key-phrase allusions (Figures 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6). In addition, Adib Soltani (2006) preferred to utilize the providing additional information strategy, but Farzad (1958) favored replacing the allusive key phrase with items by target language to describe the allusive phrase.

Furthermore, the number of allusions is apparent from Figure 7 based on Kirillov's (2003) categorization applied in key-phrase and proper name allusions translations in three acts of the *Hamlet* play. On the other hand, literary ($n=18$, 46%) and historical allusions ($n=14$, 36%) formed the majority of allusions, respectively.

As mentioned before, a translator's knowledge is considered a major factor in choosing the best equivalence for each allusion and using appropriate strategies for rendering. However, some translators are unaware of the best translation strategies. In this regard, various scholars have proposed different strategies and specific procedures to translate allusions and other figures of speech applicable to literary texts. Still, some strategies may be inappropriate for translating specific texts and cause problems for those dealing with the texts. On the other hand, a play is written to be performed on the stage, and the concept of *speakingability* makes its translation more complicated than any other genre. Thus, the play translator should regard that their translational choices play a significant role in determining their translation quality. As a result, the implications are likely to remain untransferred if the translator disregards the allusions in literary texts.

TT readers who grew up in a different culture are unable to connect the included names and phrases to comprehend them and the source-cultural allusions of TT passages. In other words, allusive names and

phrases may have connotations only people from the source culture perceive but convey nothing to TT readers.

To sum up, a translator's style of translation influences their selection of strategies of translating allusions, which seemingly play a crucial part in recognizing the connotations of these allusions. For example, both translators favored using the transliteration strategy in translating proper name allusions. However, Adib Soltani provided additional information concerning key-phrase allusions, while Farzad replaced the allusive key phrase with items by target language to describe the allusive phrase.

The aforementioned case studies were chosen for analyzing allusion in the present study. These strategies can be applied to many other cases to see whether the result is consistent with these studies. In addition, the present findings suggest that it would be better to broaden this study and examine a better allusion aspect of this play in case of working on its cinematic aspects of translation.

There were other allusions models, such as Lennon (2012) and Sahebbonar's (2006) categorization of allusions. Hence, researchers can adopt these models instead of Kirillov's (2003) categorization of allusions to see whether their result is similar to this study.

References

- Adib- Soltani, M. S. (2006). *Soognemayesh-e Hamlet, shahpour-e danmark* [The tragedy of Hamlet, prince of Denmark]. Tehran: Negah Publishing House.
- Chung, L. F. (2008). A comparative study of Yu Kuang-chung's and Chang Nam-fung's Chinese translations of *The Importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde [Master's thesis, National Kaohsiung First U of Science and Technology]. Taiwan.
- Farzad, M. (1958). *Hamlet*. Tehran. Iran. Scientific & Cultural Press.
- Farzad, M. (2010). *Hamlet* (17th ed.). Tehran: Elmifarhangi Publications.
- Khamisi, N. (2014). The strategies for translating metaphors and similes in Three Persian translations of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* [Master's thesis Islamic Azad University of Tehran].
- Kirillov, A. (2003). Allusions as a means of political imaging in modern media. *CTIIV*.
- Landers, C. (2001). *Literary Translation A Practical Guide*. New Jersey. Multilingual Matters LTD.
- Leppihalme, R. (1992). Allusions and Their Translation. *A FinLA Yearbook*.
- Leppihalme, R. (1997). *Culture Bumps: An Empirical Approach to the Translation of Allusions*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Newmark, P. (1988). *Approaches to Translation*. London and New York: Prentice Hall.
- Pokrivcak, A. Hevesiova, S. Smieskova, A. Kissova, M., & Janecova, E. (2010). *Literature and Culture*. Nitra: Univerzita Konstantina Filozofa.
- Ruokonen, M. (2010). Cultural and textual properties in the translation and interpretation of allusions: an analysis of allusions in Dorothy L. Sayers' detective novels translated into Finnish in the 1940s and the 1980s [Dissertation, University of Turku], Finland.
- Sahebbonar, S. (2006). An intertextual consideration of proper name allusions in two English
- Toury, G. (1995). *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.