

The Translation and Appropriation of Chick Lit in Korea

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I. Introduction

This study attempts to provide an examination of the translations of a particular genre of British and American popular literature called Chick lit and its appropriation into the Korean literary scene. Chick lit, as a particular genre has been made popular in recent years by avid female readers who share certain demographic, social and economic characteristics. These young females, usually in their 20s and 30s, are changing consumer patterns and redefining the economy. Women are becoming more and more educated, actively entering the workforce and enjoying the privileges of earning a living. With single young females emerging as a big contributor in consumer buying, significant demographic

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and economic shifts are being recorded not only in the economy but in society in general. These trends, along with rapid urbanization and the dissemination of global media, paved the way for an international lifestyle. These urban professional young women became enthusiastic readers of a particular genre of British and American popular literature written by women writers.

These works have enjoyed tremendous success around the world as well as within Korea. The translations of the early Chick lit bestsellers recorded high sales and Korean publishing houses experienced a translation boom in various additional works of fiction targeted for Korean women also of a certain age and demographics. Books such as *Bridget Jones's Diary*, *The Devil Wears Prada* and *Confessions of a Shopaholic* are the quintessential examples of trendy fiction written by female writers almost exclusively for female readers. These books, self-consciously and insistently associated with urban professional young women were grouped under the heading “Chick lit.” The tremendously loyal following of enthusiastic readers catapulted these works of fiction to be adapted into Hollywood movies which also became successful around the world.

My paper will discuss the characteristics of Chick lit texts and their critical reception within Korea. I will also examine the translations of Chick lit and attempt to highlight the strategies that translators employed in rendering the unique cultural elements that are found in the books and in converting the language used to describe the cultural artifacts that exist in their world for the target readership.

It is rather surprising to observe the ease with which culture-specific terms and artifacts of American and British culture are translated into Korean and received by Korean readers. There is no denying that Chick lit is a highly-marketed genre and very influential in the publishing industry. There have been speculations on whether the Chick lit genre is

pro-feminist in that it reflects the consciousness of contemporary women or anti-feminist that it perpetuates the images of young women as only concerned with the materialistic things. Some critics argue that Chick lit does not have the potential nor the representative features to accurately represent young, modern women's lives and disparage this genre as being too light-weight. Harsh critics belittle this genre as only depicting the superficial lives of women, not touching upon serious matters and principles. However, there are many who insist the Chick lit may be offering women the opportunity to connect with fictional characters that are truly having the same experiences as real people and that the fictionalized stream of consciousness of the female characters in the works of Chick lit attests to a gendered poetics of post-feminism. While Chick lit is not considered to portray deep philosophical thought or ideology, these works nonetheless have inserted themselves into a certain generation's consciousness. Perhaps this is a reflection of the materialistic nature of our existence and the success-oriented outlook of the new younger generation. Nonetheless, these books have been translated into a variety of languages and have been well-received around the world.

The analysis of the Chick lit translations in this paper is largely based on the descriptive model proposed by Jose Lambert and Hendrik Van Gorp. It consists of a preliminary study and a textual study, at the macro- and micro-textual levels, followed by an examination into the systemic context of the translations. The first part will provide a discussion of the nature of genre of Chick lit which will lead to the preliminary phase of the analysis where the publication data and other metatexts are examined. The second part will begin with the macro-structural analysis and discuss the overall translation features of the texts. As part of the micro-structural analysis, the study will focus on the approaches and strategies by the translator that were used to translate the culture-specific items that frequently appear in

the text. Specific examples of translation problems and the strategies that were applied to solve them will be discussed. The last part will focus on the systemic context of chick lit literature as a genre and examine how these texts were translated, consumed and then appropriated into Korean literature in the form of the so-called “Korean-style” Chick lit.

II. Literature Review

As mentioned above, Lambert and Van Gorp’s descriptive model will be used as the primary model for the analysis of these works. In a paper titled “On Describing Translations”, Lambert and Van Gorp provides the following practical procedures for the descriptive analysis of translations:

1. Preliminary data: information of the title page, metatexts (prefaces, etc.) and the general strategy (whether the translation is partial or complete). The results should lead to hypotheses concerning levels 2 and 3.
2. Macro-level: the division of the text, titles and presentation of the chapters, the internal narrative structure and any overt authorial comment. This should generate hypotheses about the micro-level(level 3).
3. Micro-level: the identification of shifts on different linguistic levels. These include the lexical level, the grammatical patterns, narrative, point of view and modality. The results should interact with the macro-level(level 2) and lead to their ‘consideration in terms of the broader systemic context’.
4. Systemic context: here micro- and macro-levels, text and

theory are compared and norms identified. Intertextual relations (relations with other texts including translations) and intersystemic relations (relations with other genres, codes) are also described. (52–3)

Lambert and Van Gorp state that the object of their study is translated literature, especially translational norms, models, behavior and systems and add that specific analysis should be part of a larger research program focusing on all aspects of translation (52).

Rom Heylen, in her examination on the French translated versions of *Hamlet*, identifies at least three kinds of translation and analyzes the ways in which the play was acculturated to meet the needs of the target audiences. Rather than choose between a binary division of foreignization and domestication as expounded by Venuti¹⁾, she proposes a historical–relative, socio–cultural model of three kinds of translation:

- 1) Translations that do not really attempt to acculturate the original work; the translator adheres to the cultural codes that inform the source culture: the translated original is perceived as “exotic” and “bizarre” and will most likely stay on the periphery of the receiving culture;
- 2) Translations that negotiate and introduce a cultural compromise; these translations confront the problem of communication by selecting and balancing characteristics

1) ‘Domestication’ and ‘foreignization’ were first defined in Venuti’s works. Domesticating translation is defined as a replacement of the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text with a text that is intelligible to the target–language reader (Venuti 1995, 4–5; 18). ‘Foreignizing translation indicates the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text, but it can do so only by disrupting the cultural codes that prevail in the domestic language’ (Venuti 2002, 10).

- common to both source and receiving culture: the translator has altered the codes of the receiving culture in such a way that those confronted with the alteration will at the same time recognize the alteration and the code; the translated original may attain a canonized position;
- 3) Translations that completely acculturate the original work: the translator adheres to the codes which inform the receiving culture. Translations that completely acculturate the original work could be expected to “modernize” and “naturalize” linguistic context, linguistic intertext and socio-cultural situation. (Heylen 23-24)

Culture-specific references are generally considered to include “local institutions, streets, historical figures, place names, personal names, periodicals, works of art, etc.” (Aixela 57). Aixela describes culture-specific items as being “textually actualized items whose function and connotations in a source text involve a translation problem in their transference to a target text, whenever this problem is a product of the nonexistence of the referred item or of its different intertextual status in the cultural system of the readers of the target text” (58). He categorizes procedures for translating CSIs into two broad headings: conservation, which includes procedures such as transfer, calquing and glossing; and substitution, which includes procedures such as universalization, deletion, and cultural naturalization.

Newmark who does not particularly designate the term culture-specific items, classifies “foreign” cultural words in: 1) ecology (flora, fauna, winds, plains, hills); 2) material culture or artifacts (food, clothes, houses and towns, transport); 3) social culture (work and leisure); 4) organizations, customs, activities, procedures, concepts (political and

administrative, religious, artistic); and 5) gestures and habits.

The easiest method involving transferring a source language word into the target language text by graphic means (sometimes involving transliteration) is the strategy of 'transcription' or 'transference.' This method works successfully in narrative texts considering that it can be accompanied by a footnote. Newmark states that transcription is mandatory in all the following cases, unless there is already a generally accepted translation likely to be accessible and acceptable to the reader:

- a) proper nouns, particularly names of people and of geographical features;
 - b) addresses;
 - c) names of private firms;
 - d) names of national public and private institutions, unless they are transparent;
 - e) terms peculiar to the institutions, ecology and general culture of the source language countries where there are no equivalents in the target language countries;
 - f) titles of newspapers, periodicals, books, plays, films, articles, papers, works of art, musical compositions
- (Newmark 154)

He further states that in all the above cases, particularly where a cultural reference receives a literal translation, the translator may add a translation or gloss, if he thinks this will assist the reader.

According to Davies, culture-specific words denote physical objects and social realities, specific for a particular nation or country. Davies continues to describe the following strategies of translating culture-specific words:

- 1) preservation – maintaining the source text item in the translation. The initially foreign effect of the culture-specific word may dwindle as the item recurs throughout the text (the process of deforeignization);
- 2) addition – keeping the original item but supplementing the text with whatever information is judged necessary, either in the footnote or in the text;
- 3) omission – leaving out the term altogether and not translating it into the target text;
- 4) globalization – replacing culture-specific references with ones that are more neutral or general, accessible to audiences from a wider range of cultural backgrounds;
- 5) localization – attempting to anchor a reference firmly in the culture of the target audience. (Davies 72–86)

The translation of any text obviously involves a set of cultural features from the source context. Therefore, the translator's task not only consists in the transferring of meanings from one language to another, but s/he is also a mediator between two cultures. S/he is, then, responsible for "bridging the cultural gap between monolingual speakers of different languages" (Hervey and Higgins 22). Culture fulfils a key role in translation. In Lambert's words, "culture has not to be studied as part of the translation phenomenon, since the entire phenomenon is culture-bound: translation has rather to be investigated as part of culture" (quoted in Snell-Hornby 25).

Another common way of dealing with culturally specific items, modern concepts and buzzwords, according to Baker, is using loan words as a strategy(34). The translator uses this strategy to deal with culture-specific items that do not have an immediate counterpart in the

target language e.g. chicken burger and cheeseburger. However, translators cannot always use loan words or borrowings freely because the attitude towards loan words in the target culture may prevent them from doing it.

In the era of globalization, English is the major source of borrowings into many languages since it is widely spoken as a second language in many other countries and has become the source of borrowed words for other languages. When two cultures come into contact and influence each other, lexical borrowings from one language to another are almost inevitable. As Myers–Scotton states, when one language takes in words from another, the process is referred to as borrowing, but the elements taken in are not truly ‘borrowed’ or ‘loaned’ because the recipient language never gives them back (329).

III. Analysis of the translations

1. The preliminary data of the translations

Two representative Chick lit texts, *The Devil Wears Prada* and *Confessions of a Shopaholic* will be examined in this section to determine the translation strategies for culture–specific items. The first step for the researcher is to collect general information about the translation, such as contained in the title and on the title page, as well as regarding the strategy of the translator(s) in the metatexts (e.g., the preface and footnotes). This supplies the initial data from which a provisional hypothesis may be formulated.

(1) The Chick lit phenomena in the publishing industry

Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary*, published in 1996, is generally seen as the first Chick lit novel. In the introduction to the book *Chick lit: The New Woman's Fiction*, Suzanne Ferriss and Mallory Young note Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary* (1996) as the "single urtext" for the genre, stating that "the entire chick-lit phenomenon is invariably traced back to this single novel" (4).

The term Chick lit was first used in the 1995 book, *Chick-Lit: Postfeminist Fiction*, an anthology with twenty-two post-feminist stories by female authors, edited by Cris Mazza and Jeffrey DeShell. Mazza writes that "the fictions we had compiled were simultaneously courageous and playful; frank and wry; honest, intelligent, sophisticated, libidinous, unapologetic, and overwhelmingly emancipated"(18). Although the term was first used ironically to describe fiction written produced and consumed by women, it was used by the British media and book industry after the publication and enormous success of *Bridget Jones's Diary* with a slightly derogatory connotation. However, Chick lit soon became a publishing sensation and a tremendous commercial success. In 2002, Chick lit earned publishers more than \$71 million (Ferriss 2). Many bookstores nowadays display Chick lit books to lure book buyers and devote special sections in their stores to the Chick lit genre.

What was the reason behind this explosion of Chick lit in the market? Mabry points out that as traditional romance readers age (their average age is about forty-five), publishers are honing in on the next generation of female readers. Some of these young readers are looking for something funnier and easier to read than the traditional popular romance fiction. Other critics point out to the consumerism and materialism that can be found in Chick lit books. The protagonists are preoccupied with items of fashion, shopping and mass culture which can be said to be a realistic

reflection of contemporary women's lives. The heroines' love life and the ups and downs of her career are the mainstay the storyline and may offer a realistic look at the life of the single woman in today's society.

The topic of love, marriage, economic and social pressures and the generation gap have been the topic of various books written by female writers since Jane Austen and the genre of Chick lit can claim to be the successor to these writings by women.

The representative works of the Chick lit genre that will be examined in this paper are *Bridget Jones's Diary* (1998) by Helen Fielding, *Confessions of a Shopaholic* (2002) by Sophie Kinsella and Lauren Weisberger's *The Devil Wears Prada* (2003). These books were translated into Korean and were introduced to the Korean readers within a year of their publication.²⁾ These translated books all topped the bestseller lists when they first came out. According to an article in the Chosun Ilbo, the *Shopaholic* series in translation sold more than 20,000 copies in one year and the translated version of *The Devil Wears Prada* sold 16,000 copies within the first three months of its publication.

(2) Chick lit and its intersemiotic translations

Many of these Chick lit works have been adapted into popular films and have multiplied in its influence on mass culture. A film adaptation of a literary text is essentially an interpretation of the original text using a different medium. It can be said that a film adapted from a book is a fundamentally translation, from one medium to another, of a narrative.

In "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation," Jakobson distinguishes three kinds of translation: intralingual (or rewording), interlingual (or translation

2) *Bridget Jones's Diary* was translated as '브리짓 존스의 일기' and was published in April, 1999. The Korean title of *Confessions of a Shopaholic* was '쇼퍼홀릭: 레베카, 쇼핑의 유혹에 빠지다' and was published in June, 2005. *Devil Wears Prada* was published as '악마는 프라다를 입는다' in May, 2006.

proper), and intersemiotic translation (or transmutation), which is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems. In the essay, Jakobson specifically mentions cinema as one of the intersemiotic options for translating the untranslatable and writes that only creative transposition is possible. Jakobson's concept of "intersemiotic transposition – from one system of signs into another, e.g. from verbal art into music, dance, cinema, or painting" (20) allows us to consider film adaptations within the realm of intertextuality as a intersemiotic translation of words into film images.

As Sinyard argues, the art of adapting literature to film concerns "interpretation more than reproduction," and a cinematic adaptation can be considered an interpretive reading of the original literary text, a "critical essay" in which filmmakers adapt the literary material to fit their own approach and thereby cast "new light on the original" (56). Film adaptation, therefore, provides a unique tool for envisioning the critical potential of literature. Analysis of film adaptations is a means of highlighting the elements that had remained embedded within the source text. Thus, this process can further stimulate and renew our understanding of the written text and ascertain the connections between the culture which formed the source text and the various cultures that have appropriated it.

An example of a filmic interpretation of the novel is the depiction of the heroine's boyfriend in the film adaptation of *The Devil Wears Prada* (2006). In the film, the boyfriend takes on the feminine role of the nurturing, sensitive partner who advises the heroine, Andy. He is always seen in a domestic background, cooking for her and waiting for Andy to come home from work. It is the female protagonist who is depicted as taking a firm stand in the professional world with ambition to succeed in it.

For some young contemporary audiences, the film adaptation has become a initial means of experiencing these works. The film version of a novel

could encourage people to go buy the book to read the source novel, and, in many cases, reading the book becomes a way of reliving the experience of watching the film in one's mind.

Translation and adaptation are both the process of transposing a text, rearranging it and reconstituting it in order for it to fit into a new medium. Film adaptation represents the communicative and intertextual relationship between literary sources and its visual transformations. In the case of Chick lit, the film adaptations as intertextual metatexts have to be taken into consideration because they have had a tremendous impact on disseminating the genre to worldwide audiences as translations and therefore escalating its popularity.

2. Macro-level features of Chick lit translations

(1) The common features of the Chick lit translations

The aspect of Chick lit which makes the study of their translation particularly interesting is the amount of culture-specific content that can be found in the source texts. The works are set against a very markedly globalized and materialistic cultural background, reflecting the fact that these books are aimed at a certain readership. In Chick lit literature, the cultural context is not only very strong but sometimes even inseparable from the plot. Indeed, all the female protagonists' experiences are a consequence of a certain social and economic situation, i.e., of a particular cultural context. The texts all feature the female protagonist against a modern urban background and the cultural artifacts and cultural references are mentioned frequently as part of the dialogue and the background of the books.

The translated books of Chick lit genre recorded outstanding sales in Korea and was a big commercial success spawning many other similarly

themed books. It may be the case that these translations restated and perpetuated Western materialism and globalization. Whether the success of these translations has in part been achieved because of their treatment of these culture-specific references, or in spite of it, is one of the issues examined in this paper; but there is no doubt that the works offer a rich source of material for anyone interested in looking at how translators choose to deal with culture specific content.

These cultural references pertain to aspects of modern British/North American life and feature various culture-specific words that are expected to be familiar only to the source text readers, yet they have been successfully transmitted to Korean readers of quite a different cultural background. In this respect, it is necessary to point out that the effects of globalization and standardization have had significant effects on translation. Some artifacts or names of thing or places are as common concepts or items to the source text readers as well as the target text readers that transliteration, rather than translation serve the purpose well.

In some cases, the concepts referred to in the works may simply not have any recognizable meaning for the new audience or the new audience may be able to recognize the entity referred to, but they lack the background knowledge necessary to grasp the significance of this reference in context. And even when they are able to relate the entity to something similar in their own culture, this may not allow them access to the same associations as those made in the source culture.

2) The cultural translation of Chick lit: “deliberate foreignization”?

Readers of chick lit translations will find that the many of the references in the English source texts are frequently just transliterated into Korean. These foreign text elements, which include cultural-specific concepts and phrases, logos and brands, are translated by means of

strategies such as loanwords or borrowing. On the whole, transliterated foreign terms dominate a great part of the translated texts.

The cultural artifacts that appear in the works are not translated into a Korean equivalent but retain their foreignness. This strategy is categorized by Aixela as conservation and called by Davies as preservation. Newmark refers to this strategy as transference or direct transfer and remarks that this is sometimes not even considered a translation strategy at all (Newmark 81). According to Newmark, transference is a strategy when a SL (source language) word is transferred into a TL (target language) text in its original form, for example, in the first chapter of *Confessions of a Shopaholic*, the female protagonist pulls out a list of her credit card purchases. Names of places make up the list; WHSmith, Boots, Specsavers, Oddbins, Our Price, Bella Pasta etc. (7). In the translated version, the names of places are listed as WH 스미스, 부츠, 스펙세이버스, 오드빈스, 아워 프라이스 and 벨라 파스타 without any further explanation or footnotes. It preserves the unfamiliar aspects of the source text and contributes to a foreignized target text. In most of the target text, we can find that the foreignizing tendency is more prominent in the treatment of British and American cultural words.

All in all, as far as the macro-level analysis of translation of culture-bound elements in the Chick lit translations go, it may be assumed that even though some British cultural features (mostly measurement units) have been naturalized, the foreignizing trend is very strong. The translator has used either a foreign loan or literal translation to render them into Korean.

With the arrival of the age of globalization, we have experienced changes in the economic, legal, technological and other areas of life which affect our everyday lives. Social changes entail linguistic transformations. In Korean society, an explosive growth of terms pertaining to the economic

and computer areas can be observed. Korean largely borrows these terms from the languages of countries with a longer capitalistic and technological tradition (like the USA), thus bringing English words and expressions into the language. Though some of these borrowings have corresponding equivalents in Korean, the English terms are being extensively used by the population as further evidence of the social changes that have taken place in the country.

Translation is undoubtedly a social phenomenon. Translators' choices are influenced not only by the source language text and the peculiarities of the target audience, but also by the era to which the translator belongs. When translating for the modern reader, it is necessary to take into consideration creative traditions, literary norms and conventions that are familiar to the reader of a certain society.

As mentioned above, a very noticeable feature in Chick lit is the foreign elements evoking the American or British setting and culture. In *The Devil Wears Prada*, the reader also encounters words and names which would not be familiar with Korean readers, for example in the first chapter place names (Midtown, The Hamptons,) names of artifacts (a convertible sports car in British racing green) which is translated as '브리티시 레이싱 그린 컨버터블 스포츠카.' The translators seem to have used foreignization strategies where the foreign identity of the source text is highlighted. According to Munday, foreignization is an approach to translation which can be described as sending the reader abroad. Foreignization privileges the source culture and it evokes a sense of otherness, emphasizing the foreign elements (147).

Another factor that might affect translators' individual decisions as to whether or not they should borrow words from the source text is the relative prestige or hegemony of the language and culture from which they are translating. For Toury, the tolerance of interference and we can include

the interference of foreign words here is likely to be greater “when translation is carried out from a ‘major’ or highly prestigious language/culture” (278).

Thus, the macro-level strategy for the translation of Chick lit books is the deliberate foreignization of the culture-specific items in the source text in the target culture.

3. Micro-level features of Chick lit translations

(1) Translation Strategies for culture-specific items

The technique frequently employed in these translations is that of using the strategies described by the theorists as transfer, transference, cultural borrowing or preservation. It is essentially preserving the form of the source language. Another strategy frequently used is explanatory footnotes where the meaning of the transferred item then is made clear. This strategy is defined as “the process of taking over a SL expression verbatim from the ST into the TT” (Hervey and Higgins 249). This usually happens when it is not possible to find a suitable equivalent in the TL.

The footnotes fulfill the function of compensating for missing material. Sometimes, the frequent appearance of footnotes in the TT reveals the high occurrence of cultural information. It is worth noting that the profusion of footnotes largely breaks the rhythm of the reading. A text packed full of footnotes may give an overall impression of clumsiness and is not a suitable strategy for mass-produced literature aimed at the mass readership. However, the strategy of using footnotes is employed here perhaps for the lack of another strategy.

a. Translation of social culture

Since the main characters in the novel are professional young women

working in the field of media, publishing or fashion, many examples of lexical terms which refer to women's fashion can be found in the translation of Chick lit. Their systems differ from Korean and the translator and in most translation; the norm is to produce the most acceptable translation, which is finding the closest parallels between the English expressions and the equivalent Korean terms. However, in *The Devil Wears Prada*, the job-title of the protagonist is assistant. In an adequate translation, the Korean equivalent may 비서 (which means secretary) may be used. However, in the Korean translation, the term is transcribed as 어시스턴트 which is not a term that is used frequently in the Korean professional milieu.

b. Translation of leisure and social activities

Different cultures provide different forms of entertainment and social gatherings. Translating the specific customs and social traditions that may have no equivalent in the target culture poses a difficult problem for the translator. However certain parts of the text do not have footnotes and the proper names of artifacts are translated without explanatory footnotes. Accordingly the intended effect embedded in the use of names of products with their cultural and material implications are not properly rendered in Korean. The meaning is not sufficiently rendered, but it is not so damaging as to harm the overall meaning of the passage or the text.

I wondered if she'd gotten drunk but ruled that out immediately: the most I'd ever seen her drink was a sip of this or that, and then only because a social situation demanded it. She preferred Perrier or Pellegrino to champagne and certainly a milkshake or a latte to a cosmo, so the chances that she was actually drunk right now were slim. (391)

그녀가 술에 취한 것 같다는 생각을 잠시 했지만, 곧 그 생각을 지웠다. 지금까지 내가 본 바로는 미란다는 이것저것 한 모금씩 마시는 정도였다. 그것도 사교상의 이유로. 그녀는 샴페인보다 페리어나 펠레그리노를 즐겼고, 코스모보다는 밀크셰이크나 라테를 확실히 더 좋아했다. (272)

She looked so relieved, I instantly wondered what Miranda had said to her. The possibilities were endless, but I imagined it had something to do with Ilana's *Ladies' Home Journal* getup. (318)

날 보며 그녀가 너무 안도하고 있는 것 같아, 순간적으로 나는 미란다가 그녀에게 무슨 말을 했을지 궁금해졌다. 가능성은 다양했지만, 레이디스 홈 저널 류의 일라나의 옷차림과 관계가 있는 말일 것이라는 말을 생각하니 몸이 부르르 떨렸다. (163)

c. Translation of place names

When facing a proper name or a place-name, the possibilities are only two: either keeping it as appears in the ST, or adapting it to the phonic or graphic characteristics of the TL (Hervey and Higgins 29). Translation of place names is a very demanding task because the physical background where the story takes place may have authentic connotations which the target reader may not be able to recognize. Real names of well-known places pose few problems but the name of specific places may have to be substituted for generic terms, wherein the intended meanings are lost. However, in *Devil Wears Prada*, most of the place names are not substituted but transcribed into English.

Newmark (214) notes that people's first and surnames (except the name of the Pope and some royals) must not be translated provided that their names have no connotations in the text. Mostly, the translator employs the strategy of preserving original names in the text, since these names are not

just place names of names of people, they all have a aura of fashion and success attached, which is one of the features that make this genre so popular. It is also common practice not to translate the titles of literary works, plays, films, songs, names of institutions and so on that do not have a recognized translation in the target language culture (Newmark 1988).

d. Translation of material facts

This category deals with objects that are integral parts of our everyday life, such as clothes and food. Every culture, every society is reflected in its material expression in the everyday objects it uses, in the clothes its people wear, in the food they eat. And in most cases, the translator will face a lot of difficulty trying to find counterparts in the target language. In many works of Chick lit, commercial brand items are often mentioned. In a translation strategy specific to the genre of Chick lit, the particular brand names are not changed into their generic names. Zero-translation strategy is sometimes employed; this tendency indicates that it is not always possible to find an equivalent expression in Korean which closely mirrors the meaning and cultural context of the English or American item.

As far as material culture is concerned, words for the food, drink, clothing, medicine and housing belonging to a particular culture are just transferred into the Korean language.

I knew he could manage to turn Miranda's colonial-style living room into a chic downtown lounge (complete with soda bar-in martini glasses, of course-ultra suede, built-in banquettes, and a fully heated, tented balcony dance floor with a Moroccan theme) for ten-year-olds, but this was truly spectacular. (319)

나는 로버트가 열 살짜리 아이들을 위해 식민지 양식의 거실을 현대적이고 세련된 다운타운 라운지(마티니 잔이 갖춰진 바와 최고

급 스웨이드로 만든 불박이 의자, 완벽하게 난방이 되는 모로코 풍의 천막 모양 발코니 댄스장)로 바꿀 수 있을 정도로 능력이 있는 사람이란 건 알고 있었지만, 이곳은 정말이지 눈부실 정도로 호화로웠다. (164)

e. Translation of mass media

The Chick lit works contain various references to TV programs and personalities, films, magazines and newspapers. Mass media, especially those items containing to Hollywood are mentioned frequently and appear in the character's conversations.

f. Translations of words denoting measures

Preserving source-language units of measurement in translation usually makes the translated text sound foreign. Davies, for instance, shows that the preservation of 'inches' in the German translation of Harry Potter represents a case where something banal and everyday in the source culture becomes strange for the target audience. On the other hand, when, in the Korean translation, pounds are converted into kilograms, the translation can come across as 'more meticulously detailed' than the original text. (Davies 74)

e. Translations of brands

Nowadays, one of the most powerful devices for selling a product is its name. There are many corporations, products, services, restaurants and agencies using brand names as means of marketing their product. The brand name is the combination of names, words, symbols and designs that identifies the product and differentiates it from competing products, ensuring that both advertising and product recognition are possible. As the trade of commodities expands, brand names of certain products have

become very famous and some successful ones gradually get recognized by the whole world. In *Devil Wears Prada*, one of the most widely received and most popular Chick lit text, there are frequent references of fashion brands and fashion designers in the narrative. The background of the novel is situated in the New York fashion and media industry. The globalized media which is closely linked to the industries dominates the dissemination of fashion. The translation of the brand name is also crucial to the survival of the commodity in a foreign market.

Fashion items as commodities are complexly embedded in the plot of the novel. And that fashion is spread through personal interactions in complex flows that are related to social status and personal aspirations. Most of the fashion brands in the text are transliterated into Korean and some of the criticism that this book received was that the concept of fashion is perpetuated by the media and contributes to the construction of ‘dream worlds’ of unreality. The micro-level analysis also reveals that transference or strategies that were used in translating culture-specific items. An overall inspection shows that even though most of these terms have been transliterated or just transferred to the Korean language. In many cases, footnotes have been added and the resulting Korean version is accessible to the average reader inasmuch as the footnotes give a great help in order to understand or become acquainted with cultural knowledge specific to the British or American context although, as stated above, they somewhat interrupt the smooth flow of the reading.

According to Heylen’s definition, the translations of Chick lit can be said to be not really attempting to acculturate the original work; the translator adheres to the cultural codes that inform the source culture. The translated work may be perceived as exotic and “bizarre” to some readers (especially to readers who may not be familiar with fashion brands or shopping items). However, since the target readers and consumers of these works are

within the range of a particular demographic group who share common interests, experiences and consciousness, the translations have been enthusiastically received by the Korean readers.

4. The systemic context of Chick lit translations

(1) The Korean appropriation of British and American Chick lit: *My Sweet City, Style and Girl Friends*

Literary studies seldom account for the presence of translated literature and its impact on a national literary production. Citing the polysystems theory of Even-Zohar, this paper aims to provide a short examination on the appropriation of the current British and American Chick lit in Korea.

Polysystems theory, suggested in Itamar Even-Zohar's work, strives to account for larger complexes than literature, regards literature "not as an isolated activity in society, regulated by laws exclusively (and inherently) different from all the rest of the human activities, but as an integral—often central and very powerful—factor among the latter" (2).

When a translated literature comes to occupy a central position in the literary polysystem, it participates actively in shaping the "center" of the polysystem. If we can measure the central elements of a polysystem by indicators such as market sales and media visibility, Chick lit can be said to have occupied such a place in Korean publishing industry within the last few years.

Translated works may exert a strong influence on a culture at a given time. In the case of Chick lit, Korean appropriations have started to appear in the publishing industry and have even received recognition from prestigious institutions. And as Lefevere and Bassnett have noted, "translations are made to respond to the demands of a culture, and of various groups within that culture" (7). Reflecting the reader's demand for

the genre, Korean publishing houses experienced a boom in Chick lit translation boom, taking an avid interest in publishing the works of contemporary British and American female writers.

Lefevere has cited that translation is not just a “window open on another world”, or some such pious platitude. Rather translation is a channel opened, often not without a certain reluctance, through which foreign influences can penetrate the native culture, challenge it, and even contribute to subverting it (2). Shortly thereafter the avid consumption of the Western Chick lit genre in Korea, an interesting phenomenon has been observed. The narratives and frequent mention of cultural references said to be characteristic of this movement began entering contemporary writing by Korean women writers began to appear. Novels such as *My Sweet City*, *Style* and *Girl Friends* became the paradigm of a new generation of female writers. These writers, insistently associated with the writing style of foreign Chick lit authors, are being grouped under the term: “Korean Chick lit.”

The title of a bestselling popular novel, *My Sweet City* by Jung Yi Hyun, is reminiscent of another worldwide bestseller, *Sex and the City*. The female protagonist of the novel, Eun-soo is a thirty-something career woman living in Seoul. The novel presents the story of her love life and career with the relationship with her girlfriends being a main part of the story. As with other best-selling books in this genre, this novel is also being adapted to a TV drama and is expected to pick up the detailed and trendy life of Eun-soo from the book.

Style written by Baek Young-ok received the 4th Segye Ilbo World Literature Award with a prize of 100 million won. It was placed 11th in the bestseller list in the first week it came out. The novel is about a female 31-year-old fashion magazine reporter and portrays the fierce competition in the fashion world as well as office politics at fashion firms, the staff's loving relationships and the role of luxury products. The jury of

the award lauded the novel for describing the world of young people in a dynamic, “talkative” and easy-to-read way as well as portraying the shallow nature and superficiality of today's world.

Lee Hong's *Girl Friends* was awarded the annual Today's Writer Award given out by one of the nation's biggest publishing house, Minumsa. A book review in the Korea Times points out that his book “distinguishes itself from most other Korean novels so far. Without appearing too undignified, the novel lightly and frankly illustrates diverse sexual scenes and desires of young women in their late 20s and early 30s.” The review goes further to assert that other elements of chick-lit abound, as the novel unfolds against the backgrounds of contemporary city life in Seoul, with all of its familiar brand names and locations. In the novel, the characters go shopping at Kosney's, have a date at the COEX mall, have to choose between Starbucks and Coffee Bean and eat doughnuts at Krispy Kreme. Influences from Foreign Chick lit abound.

IV. Conclusion

The translations of a particular genre of British and American popular literature called the Chick lit was examined in this study and concluded with an examination of its appropriation into a Korean version of Chick lit. An analysis into the macro-level features of the translations revealed that the cultural references in the English source texts frequently were mostly just transferred into Korean. These foreign text elements, which are include in the translation of cultural-specific concept and phrases, logos and brands, are translated by means of strategies such as loanwords and transliteration dominate a great part of the translated texts. In some cases, an explanatory footnote is added to make the meaning of the borrowed

item clearer. On the whole, the translation problems are successfully solved and the resulting Korean version is accessible to the average reader inasmuch as the footnotes give a great help in order to understand or become acquainted with cultural knowledge specific to the British or American context.

The study also attempts to provide an examination of its appropriation into a Korean version of Chick lit. The Polysystem theory formulated by Even-Zohar is based on the premise that a translated text is not an isolated entity but functions within a literary system which, in turn, interrelates with a set of other systems which may be literary or extra-literary, such as political or historical, and they together make up a hierarchical cultural system. They may be some turning points, crises, or literary vacuums in a literature where established models are no longer tenable for a younger generation. At such moments, even in central literatures, translated literature may assume a central position. And when a translated literature comes to occupy a central position in the literary polysystem, it participates actively in shaping the “center” of the polysystem.

There are visible new trends in the recent works that are being published by Korean women writers. A new genre has been introduced to a country in so definitive a manner and its initial influence is traceable to the Korean translations of Chick lit. Although unmistakably Korean in description of physical and material environments, the literary and cultural paradigms it shares with its Western counterparts are peculiar to the genre of Chick lit. It may be too modest to exert any measurable cultural impact on Korean fiction or society in general, but this new trend invites further critical approaches that differ from the traditional methods of evaluating works of fiction.

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Abstract

The Translation and Appropriation of Chick Lit in Korea

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The translations of a particular genre of British and American popular literature called the Chick lit are examined in this study. An analysis into the macro-level features of the translations revealed that the cultural references in the English source texts frequently were mostly transliterated into Korean. These foreign text elements, which include in the translation of cultural-specific concepts, artifacts and brands, are translated by means of strategies such as borrowing and transference and transliteration dominate a great part of the translated texts. In some cases, an explanatory footnote is added to make the meaning of the borrowed item clearer. However, on the whole, the translation problems were more or less successfully solved and the resulting Korean version is accessible to the average reader inasmuch as the footnotes give a great help in order to understand or become acquainted with cultural knowledge specific to the British or American context. The study also attempts to provide an examination of the appropriation of this genre into a Korean version of Chick lit using the polysystem theory formulated by Even-Zohar. There are visible new trends in the recent works that are being published by Korean women writers that a new genre has been introduced to a country in a definitive manner and its initial influence may be said to be traceable to the Korean translations of British and American Chick lit.

Key words : Translation Studies, Popular Culture, Women Fiction, Chick

Lit, Culture in Translation

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