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CULTURAL ISSUES IN TRANSLATION

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Abstract: Translation is recognized as an act of culture-specific communication. A translator is the ‘first reader’ of the other culture as is shown in the foreign language text and, consequently, has to present the other in a primary process. For him learning to translate means ‘learning to read’, i.e., to produce meanings which are acceptable for the cultural community the reader belongs to. Each translated text for a target public that has no access to the original, is the source for a different and new way of reading, which implies a major responsibility for the translator. As it has been observed, such interaction between two or more cultures in the process of translation results in a creation of a ‘hybrid’ text, which appears in the target culture by adopting some of the features of the text in the source culture. As a matter of fact, a hybrid text can be described as a product of a compromise between two or more cultures. The paper will concentrate on the kinds of the interaction and intercultural activity, which refer to ‘translating between cultures. The basis for discussion will be literary texts by Vladimir Nabokov as well as Helen Fielding and lyrics of songs presented in different language versions of the musical Metro.

Key words:cultural differences, cultural aspects, dictionary, language, cultural concepts, communication, issues, culture norms’.

Introduction. The objective of this paper is to discuss the problem of cultural differences and cultural aspects in a literary text as well as the ways of their translation by means of some specific strategies. I intend to compare selected English and Uzbek materials with their Russian, Uzbek and English equivalents in order to delineate three different approaches to the art of translation. As we shall see, it is extremely difficult to find a text in which all cultural issues would be translated by means of the same strategy. However, it would be worth observing how some translators resolve the problems that arise when the elements of one culture should be transposed to the environment of another. Primarily, I wish to present the theoretical background concerned with cultural elements and the ways of their translation. I depict the issues from the standpoint of the theory of translation and linguistics. Further on, I will briefly analyse the selected examples of cultural aspects and their equivalents in translated texts, concentrating on the strategies of their translation and on the role which they play in conveying information referred to the presented events and characters.

The culture as a perspective is defined in the dictionary language teaching and applied linguistics as: "[culture] the total set of beliefs, attitudes, customs, behavior, and social habits etc., of the members of a particular society". For many people culture is considered as a gateway to a given society heart, to have a close insight about its identity. In spite of its crucial role in conveying cultures through history; demonstrating and introducing cultures of different people, old nations, ancient civilizations, and even prehistoric events, thoughts, and achievements. A few writers, translation theorists, and linguists have fully discussed the problems of translating cultures in the various departments of thought; fewer members have dealt with translating what is culturally specific either from Arabic into English or vice versa. This may be due to several reasons. On one hand, it is always difficult to make generalizations […] On the other hand, interest in translation has been subservient to other ends.

www.wordlyknowledge.uz Volume: 3, Issue: 1, 2023

The problem is that, some languages are loaded with cultural terms and expressions called (culturally specific). The culturally specific expressions are somehow difficult to translate, even professional translators find it difficult to deal with them. That is because the cultural context is too vague, it represents the world view of a society, its beliefs, emotions and values. Thus, it comprises some important factors which help in building up the information necessary to interpret the message; enable for the translator to translate easily and effectively. That's why, any term; one word or an expression is said to be culturally specific when it denotes concrete objects or abstract aspects that may be related to religious beliefs, social habits, customs and traditions or social situations, moral values, a type of cloth or a life style, kind of food, economical principle, political ideology…that are specific to the culture in question. Henceforth, when translating cultures linguistic element should be related to the cultural context they belong to. For E. Nida (1964: 90) "the person who is engaged in translating from one language into another ought to be constantly aware of the contrast in the entire range of culture represented by the two languages". Meaning that, language is considered as a part of culture and the society's identity. For instance, according the Maya Indians who lives in the tropical countries, there is no place without vegetation unless it has been cleared for Maize-field. However, a cleared field is not the appropriate equivalent of the desert of Palestine. The word desert then represents a feature of the SC which is not found in the TC. For that reason, E. Nida argued that "words are fundamentally symbols for features of the cultures". So, any lexical item can't be understood apart from the culture of which is a symbol that belongs to.

Though some cultural concepts seem to be universal, however; they are not interpreted in the same way; each language has its own interpretation according to its peoples' way of thinking, living style, and even their geographic position. Since as said before that languages are equipped and lexicalized differently. The interpretations may be completely different as they may just slightly different, subtle overlaps. The differences between cultures and life perceptions from a society into another may cause a lot of problems to translators. They create a lot of gaps which lead to plenty of overlaps between language pairs. Hence the translation task is going to be too complicated.

The concept of culture is fundamental to any approach to translation. If translation is defined as source text induced text production, translation into a foreign language will always be an instance of intercultural communication. Bearing in mind that culture plays the undeniable role in the process of translation, theorists propose new definitions of this term, revising the previous opinions. The most appropriate and relevant to the cultural approach to translation seems to be the definition worked out by Olgierd Wojtasiewicz, a Polish linguist and the author of the first Polish monograph concerned with the theory of translation. According to Wojtasiewicz, 'the mechanism of translating a text a formulated in the language A into the language B means formulating the text b in the language B so that the reader would have the same or similar associations as the reader of the text. Hence, the translator will have to bridge the gap, small or large, between two cultures. Culture is to be understood not only in the narrower sense of man's advanced intellectual development as reflected in the arts, but also in the broader anthropological sense of all socially conditioned aspects of human life, as a totality of knowledge, proficiency and perception. Culture has thus to do with common factual knowledge, usually including political institutions, education, history and current affairs as well as religion and customs.

Since translation is recognized as an act of culture-specific communication, a translator is the 'first reader' of the other culture as is shown in the foreign language text and he is expected to present the other in a primary process. It should be also mentioned that for the translator

www.wordlyknowledge.uz Volume: 3, Issue: 1, 2023

learning to translate means 'learning to read', i.e. to produce meanings which are acceptable for the cultural community the reader belongs to (cf. Wolf, 1997:128). Each translated text for a target public that has no access to the original, is the source for a different and new way of reading. All this implies a major responsibility for the translator. The main problem for the translator is how to comply with cultural issues, i.e., to decide which issues take priority: the cultural aspects of the source language community, the cultural aspects of the target language community, or perhaps a combination of the two, a compromise between two or more cultures? The choice of cultural strategy may result in source-culture bound translation (the translation stays within the source language culture – so called foreignization), target-culture bound translation (the translation stays within the target language culture – so called domestication) or in a 'hybrid', where the translation is a product of a compromise between two or more cultures

Even though the concept of hybrid texts applies mainly to political texts or legal documents, some of its aspects refer also to the majority of literary texts which come to existence as a compromise between various cultures and 'are arrived at as an outcome of negotiations between different languages and cultures and may involve features which are contradictory to target language and target culture norms'. As an example, it would be worth considering one of Nabokov's techniques of translation.

Conclusion. The examples discussed in the article show that all translated texts are to some degree hybrids since each of them can be viewed as a transplant of the source text into an alien, target culture environment. In the process of translation, the form-content unity of the source text is disrupted. Inevitably some pressure is exerted upon the target language, as the transfer of foreign elements is impossible without a certain 'violence'. The translator, as it has been proved, should be an 'intercultural mediator'. As Michaela Wolf writes in her study of aspects of cultural anthropology in translation, 'translating between cultures' means that 'other' meanings are transferred to (con) texts of the industrialized world which is coined by its institutions, traditions, and its history (1997:128). Such intercultural activity requires a carefully considered choice of cultural strategy. The choice, however, should be subject to the purpose of translation and the message of the source language text. Thus, a creative translator should be always mindful of the best solution available.

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