

Culture-Bound Words of the Danube Basin Countries: Translation into English

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Abstract: Any course in linguistic country study or popular text translation is impossible without adequate understanding and presentation of culture-bound elements, which present one of the most difficult topics to deal with, especially in multicultural countries. Our investigation aims to show the problems, which appear when we deal with equivalent-lacking words related to culture. Sometimes equivalent-lacking words are associated with culture-bound words, the Ukrainian equivalent for them is “*peanii*” (derived from Latin *realis*, pl. *realia*). However, the term “culture-bound word” is of narrower meaning than the term “equivalent-lacking word”. A culture-bound word names an object peculiar to this or that ethnic culture. Equivalent-lacking words include, along with culture-bound words, neologisms, i.e. newly coined forms, dialect words, slang, taboo-words, foreign (third language) terms, proper names, misspellings, archaisms. Comparison of languages and cultures reveals the various types of culture-bound words. Reasons for using them can be extralinguistic, lexical or stylistic. When translating culture-bound words a translator should be aware of the receptor’s potential problems, take into account his background knowledge and choose the best means of translation.

Keywords: culture-bound word; equivalent-lacking word; translation

The problem of correct presentation and translation of culture-bound words attracts linguists in different countries. It becomes crucial when we speak about countries united economically, politically and culturally, where people not only travel for pleasure, but migrate to find better job opportunities and higher life standards. Such are the countries of the Danube basin, with their specific cultural traditions, ceremonies and heritage. We may even predict the tendency that many of them tend to become multicultural.

The English language as the language of international communication may play the role of intellectual bridge and become a kind of intercultural guide in better understanding and communication. Different texts containing information about European countries, their traditions, life patterns, achievements in science and engineering are issued in English, which makes their adequate translation vitally important.

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The translator is to facilitate the transfer of cultural elements from one language into another in order to create an equivalent response from the receivers, as differences between cultures may cause more severe complications for the translator than differences in language structure. (Nida, 1964, p. 13) Newmark (1988) classifies cultural words as follows: 1) ecology: flora, fauna, hills, winds, plains; 2) material culture: food, clothes, houses and towns, transport; 3) social culture: work and leisure; 4) organizations, customs, administrative, religious, artistic; 5) gestures and habits.

Then a word or a word-combination of the source text is strongly rooted in the source culture, it may be problematic for the audience to comprehend it. In addition, translators may have to deal not only with lexical expressions, but also with problems of register, syntactic order, non-standard variants and regional varieties.

E.g.: *культурно-історичний пам'ятник* – *national historical site / historical landmark*; *морально-етична проблема* – *moral dilemma / ethical quandary*;

тусоватися – *meet other people and talk with them in a very casual way / tусovatysya*; *гуманізатор* – *cop's baton, nightstick*.

Translation of various texts presents a complicated task, as it deals not only with bilingual, but also with bi-cultural and by-social transference, including the complex of emotions, associations and ideas, which relate different languages to their life styles and traditions. The primary aim of such translation is to enable the target reader understand a translated text, as it was created by some author, and transmits his ideas and views through the row of images, in the perspective of some epoch with its historical and cultural background (Newmark, 1988).

The field of contrastive linguistics gives support to the use of translation as inter-language comparison, and the combination of translation and text-analysis with contrastive linguistics can provide deeper insights into the language pragmatics. Furthermore, by means of translation, there appear certain pragmatic features, which, otherwise, might not be accessible through mere intra-language comparison. Thus, the translation functions unite not only the distribution of knowledge across language boundaries, but also the expansion of knowledge about the source language.

Text translators are to be familiar with and understand the culture and history of the corresponding countries. They need to feel confident of the typical communication patterns, have good educational background and safe grasp of both the mother tongue and the foreign language. Profound specialized training including methodical knowledge to facilitate typical problems of belletristic text translation and analysis are also indispensable.

For example, linguistic culturelogical analysis of legal informativity in Ukrainian ballads shows that pre-marriage relationships reproduce the sign system of folk legal experience and present broad spectrum of verbalizations dealing with folklore ideas, ways of committing crimes and punishment of those, who disrupt the norms of men's co-existence.

Cultural context is obligatory when we have to translate the meaning (information) of the original text. Belletristic or popular-scientific text translation is impossible without cultural context. However, literary translation is not just recording of cultural and semantic elements by means of target language and culture. The important contribution to the development of cultural approach to translation was made by American theorist of literary translation Andre Lefevere (1992), who stated that texts form specific textual grids, which lie outside language aspects of cultures and in some way come before. He stated that textual and conceptual grids regulate the cognitive processes within individual cultures.

Equivalent-lacking words signify notions lacking in the target language and culture. They are sometimes called untranslatable words.

Sometimes equivalent-lacking words are associated with culture-bound words, the Ukrainian equivalent for them is "реалії" (derived from Latin *realis*, pl. *realia*), or culturally loaded words. However, the term "culture-bound word" is of narrower meaning than the term "equivalent-lacking word". A culture-bound word names an object peculiar to this or that ethnic culture (козак, запорожець, гайдамак; wellingtons, bowler, stetson).

Equivalent-lacking words include, along with culture-bound words, neologisms, i.e. newly coined forms, dialect words, slang, taboo-words, foreign (third language) terms, proper names, misspellings, archaisms, etc.

Reasons for using equivalent-lacking words can be various: 1) extralinguistic: lack of a similar thing in the target culture; 2) lexical: lack of a corresponding one-word name for a thing in the target language (exposure – здійснення зовнішнього фізичного впливу); 3) stylistic: difference in connotations (buck – долар (colloquial vs. neutral), beauty sleep – ранній сон до півночі; дівчинка, дівчисько, пацанка – girl, babe).

Comparison of languages and cultures reveals the following types of culture-bound words, as:

- 1) unique culture-bound words: (дедовщина – *hazing*; прописка- *mandatory registration*);
- 2) similar words with different functions (*cuckoo's call (asked for by an American girl to find out how soon she will get married)* – кукування зозулі (*counted to find out how long s/he will live*);

3) language lacunae of similar notions (*clover-leaf* = *автодорожня розв'язка у вигляді листа клевера*).

According to the semantic fields, culture-bound words are classified into:

- 1) toponyms, or geographical terms (*Montenegro, Munich, Говерла, Duna-kanyar* → *the Danube bend - so-called because it falls at the point where the river takes a sharp turn southwards*);
- 2) anthroponyms, or people's names (*Aristophanes, Alexander Hamilton, Victor Hugo, Іван Сірко*);
- 3) zoonyms, or animal names (*kangaroo, grizzly*);
- 4) social terms (*Дума, Верховна Рада, House of Commons*);
- 5) military terms (*есаул, волонтер, lance corporal, blue caps*);
- 6) education terms (*junior high school, eleven-plus, група продовженого дня, репетиторство*);
- 7) tradition and custom terms (*Halloween, Visegrád Castle Games, Late Summer bank holiday, маслениця, сватання*);
- 8) ergonyms, or names of institutions and organizations (*Heinemann, Нафтогаз, санепідемстанція*);
- 9) history terms (*Gulf War, War of Roses, Смутні часи, Велика Вітчизняна війна*);
- 10) words for everyday life (*cuisine, sushi, kilt, trailer, duty free, завісати у компанії, забігайлівка*);
- 11) titles and headlines (*Тарас Бульба, Vanity Fair*) ((Курбанова, 2014, р. 630).

Culture-bound words are characterized by a location and time. Based on the local coloring, their classification includes:

- 1) exoticisms (*chipook, bonsai, галушки, донці*),
- 2) barbarisms, i.e. words partially incorporated into a borrowing language: (*авеню, мерчендайзер*),

Based on the time coloring, culture-bound words classification falls into the following groups:

- 1) neologisms may be not only new, but also old words, which acquire new meaning (*junk food, bio-house i.e. ecologically friendly house, sorority – a*

group of females living together, a kind of society with certain rules, no man is allowed),

- 2) *historisms, or outdated words denoting different realia that no longer exist and having no synonyms in modern language (Beat Generation, кріпак),*
- 3) *archaisms, or out-of-use words having synonyms in the modern language (clime = climate, Куїв-град = місто Куїв).*

An explicatory (explanatory) translation reveals the full meaning of a culture-bound word:

- *тринадцята зарплата – annual bonus payment;*
- *breadline – черга безробітних за безкоштовною їжею,*
- *conservationist – спеціаліст по охороні оточуючого становища,*
- *readership – круг читачів,*
- *glimpse – бігле, поверхнєве знайомство.*

Explication of culture-bound words can be made in commentaries (both in-text and after-text), and in footnotes. The disadvantage of in-text notes is that they distract a receptor's attention from the main text. However, after-text commentaries are not for a "lazy" reader. So, the most convenient, probably, are footnotes which save a reader's time and effort.

Culture-bound words are commonly rendered in the borrowing language through transcription, transliteration and calque translation: As compared with transcription and transliteration, calques are more convenient. But, at the same time, calques can be misinterpreted by a receptor. There are cases when a translator resorts to calque translation without thinking thoroughly of the meaning of a culture-bound word or, worse, without understanding it. E.g. *avenue – авеню, helicopter – гелікоптер (гвинтокрил), mayor – мэр, know how – ноу хау, impeachment – імпичмент, brain-drain – відтік мозгів*. Often such occasional formations are adopted by the members of the target culture and get the status of regular equivalents.

Descriptive or interpreting translation, using explanations or tree-word combinations. is used to translate all sorts of realia, by explaining their meanings. They serve to explain the cultural peculiarities in which the realia is used. (*баба-Яга – an old witch from Russian fairy-tales, landslide – перемога на виборах із значною перевагою, wishful thinking – сприймання бажаного за дійсне*).

Lexical substitutions can be used to have proper impact upon the receptor (*under-Secretary – зам. Міністра*). In literature, for example, the title of the novel "Theatre" by W.S. Maugham is translated as "Лицедій" not as "Театр". This translation calls specific associations with a Ukrainian reader, conveying the main feature of the characters.

Speaking names pose a special problem. Peter Newmark (1988), a well-known translation theorist, suggests the following procedure: first to translate the word that underlies the source language proper name into the target language, and then to naturalize the translated word back into a new source language proper name – but normally only when the character’s name is not yet current amongst an educated target language readership. For example, the names of E. Waugh’s and A. Huxley’s characters are translated as: *Miles Malpractice* – *Злопрактикис*, *Mr. Chatterbox* – *м-р Таратор*, *Mr. Slum* – *м-р Хлам*. However, sometimes, personal name connotations are lost (*Mr. Murdstone in Dickens’ David Copperfield* – *містер Мердстоун*). In case of such a loss, some translators tend to explain the loss in commentaries, but a number of critics consider commentaries to hinder text perception.

When translating toponyms we often use transcription or transliteration. Now the tendency towards transcription prevails over the tendency towards transliteration. E.g. *Paris* – *Париж*, *Odesa* – *Одеса*, *Izmail* – *Ізмаїл*, *Vienna* – *Вена*. But we should take care when translating non-naturalized place-names. E.g. *Munich* – *Мюнхен*. Calques may be used to render transparent local geographical names. E.g. *Ostřiv Světoї Олени* – *Saint Helena Island*. If a toponym is a little-known proper name, it is often rendered (transcribed) with the addition of some generic information (*Kylyja, a small town in the Danube estuary*).

Different people do not have the same symbolic associations. Thus ethnic and cultural differences between peoples interfere with translation and require thorough investigation on the part of the translator and subtle work at conveying all expressive shades of meanings. In translating culture-bound words a translator should be aware of the receptor’s potential problems and, taking into account the receptor’s background knowledge, choose the best means of translation.

Any translation presents linguo-cultural message determined, firstly, by a language, and secondly, by culture. The elements of national culture and cultural experience may be embodied in a text visually – as concrete lingual models (grammatical structure, lexis, situational rules of language use). Though the most difficult for the translation are the cultural elements located above the elementary communication level. They present the so-called extra-lingual reality, not directly connected with the intra-cultural manifestations (language, gestures, behavior, customs, artifacts), but rooted in the inner manifestations (ideas, beliefs, values). These inner cultural sides present the layer of the “invisible” in the text and are implicated on the level of culturally or socially grounded values, standard ways of thinking, behavior and assessments. Thus, the focus of attention during the translation is concentrated on what language means should be used to render the implied in the text. There exist definite cultural stereotypes as to manner of speaking and translating. In some countries (e.g. *Spain*) we may observe the elements of expressive speech even official speeches. So, if we preserve the expressiveness of the original, the target

receiver may have distorted impression about the speaker. In the U.K. pronunciation plays a very important role. They say that the way of speaking says more than the manner of wearing clothes.

The success of a translator as the intermediary between two cultures greatly depends on the way he understands all the implicit meanings of the text and knows how to choose the right means to achieve the same pragmatic effect that is presupposed in the original text.

To make a conclusion we must say that a literary work is a complex cultural artifact. That's why translators should possess broad and deep knowledge of traditions in the translating language and culture and be aware of practical strategies of translation. A translator of English texts should not be only proficient in translation, but learned in literary traditions, capable of imitating and assessing English texts, knowledgeable in translation traditions both in past and present cultures. He should possess self-consciousness and self-criticism, as well as be ready to explain his stylistic repertoire.

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