

## CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF LANGUAGE AND CULTURE IN THE FIELD OF TRANSLATION

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of the article is to illustrate the characteristics of language and culture in translation. Moreover, it demonstrates some characteristics and peculiarities of translating language.

**Keywords:** language, translation, peculiarities, characteristic, translational problems, hypothesis

### INTRODUCTION

The process of translation is a kind of activity which inevitably involves at least two languages and two cultural traditions. As this statement implies, translators are permanently faced with the problem of how to treat the cultural aspects implicit in a source text (ST) and of finding the most appropriate technique of successfully conveying these aspects in the target language (TL). These problems may vary in scope depending on the cultural and linguistic gap between the two (or more) languages concerned. [1.130]

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

One of the problems a translator can face arises from the fact that some words or phrases denoting objects, facts, phenomena, etc... are so deeply rooted in their source culture (SC) and so specific (and perhaps exclusive or unique) to the culture that produced them that they have no equivalent in the target culture (TC). When discussing the problems of correspondence in translation, "differences between cultures may cause more severe complications for the translator than do differences in language structure.

The power of language to reflect culture and influence thinking was first proposed by an American linguist and anthropologist, Edward Sapir (1884-1939), and his student, Benjamin Whorf (1897-1941). The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis stated that the way we think and view the world is determined by our language [2.98]). Instances of cultural language differences are evidenced in that some languages have specific words for concepts whereas other languages use several words to represent a specific concept. For example, the Arabic language includes many specific words for designating a certain type of horse or camel. To make such distinctions in English, where specific words do not exist, adjectives would be used preceding the concept label, such as quarter horse or dray horse.

Cultural differences have also been noted in the ways in which language is used pragmatically. In our culture, new language skills are typically taught and learned through verbal instruction, while in some cultures, these skills are learned through nonverbal observation. A distinction has also been made between cultures that encourage independent learning and those that encourage cooperative learning.

Differences in the social roles of adults and children also influence how language is used. Home and school contexts may represent different cultures, subcultures, or both and may influence language acquisition in noticeable ways. Nonverbal cues (e.g. facial expression) and contextual cues (e.g. shared experience) have different communicative roles in different cultures.[3.8] Children may be expected, and thus taught, to speak only when an adult addresses them. They are not encouraged to initiate conversations with adults or to join spontaneously in ongoing adult conversations. Additionally, in some cultures, children who enthusiastically volunteer answers at school are considered show-offs. In some cultural settings, children are not asked recitational questions. Instead, they are asked only questions of clarification or for new information. Thus, when these children experience recitational questions in a school setting, they may be confused as to the purpose of the questioning and the expected response.

Further awareness of the role of cultural environments in the acquisition of language was influenced in the 1980s by ethnographic research techniques that were used by language researchers. Ethnographic studies have contributed significantly to our understanding of linguistic diversity. Ethnography uses participant observation in real-life settings and focuses on individuals within their social and cultural contexts. In all cases, when cultural differences exist between the two languages, it is extremely difficult to achieve a successful transfer, if not impossible (whatever the competence of the translator in the two languages involved). And even the slightest variation from the source language (SL) cultural term can be taken as an act of subversion against the culture it represents. Literary translation itself can even be regarded as an act of subversion, or a means of providing an alternative or sub-version of reality. As Levine affirms, "the literary translator can be considered a subversive scribe can exist unless it is steeped in the context of culture; and no culture can exist which does not have at its centre, the structure of natural language" [4.1]

Bassnett underlines the importance of this double consideration when translating by stating that language is "the heart within the body of culture," the survival of both aspects being interdependent. Linguistic notions of transferring meaning are seen as being only part of the translation process; "a whole set of extra-linguistic criteria" must also be considered. As Bassnett further points out, "the translator must tackle the SL text in such a way that the TL version will correspond to the SL version. To attempt to impose the value system of the SL culture onto the TL culture is dangerous ground" [5.23] Thus, when translating, it is important to consider not only the lexical impact on the TL reader, but also the manner in which cultural aspects may be perceived and make translating decisions accordingly. Translation services link one language to another by taking careful consideration of the social groups involved, this is very difficult and can be done wrong if one is not careful. As cultures are increasingly brought into larger connection one with another, multicultural considerations are brought to tolerance to an ever-increasing degree. We are not just dealing with words written in a certain time, but with the aspect of the text as well.

## RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

All speakers, including Native English speakers, should be aware of their audience and adapt their use of cultural references accordingly. Sometimes it is difficult to understand a foreign language because of the cultural references. For example, if a Korean were to say, "I had a pig

**dream last night,”** an American might think that it was a dirty, disgusting dream, since to Americans pigs are thought to be dirty animals. And yet, every Korean would understand that a pig dream is a fortunate dream, since pigs are fed very well by their masters. To live a pig’s life is good and a symbol of opulence. Some examples of Cultural references in English:

**Foxy woman:** a beautiful woman (in Korea a foxy woman would be a cunning woman)

**To be on Cloud Nine:** to be in a heavenly, God-like, joyous state, (because in cultures, there are nine levels in heaven and the ninth level, Cloud Nine, is where God resides, and where one can experience the ultimate rapture)

**A buck:** a dollar bill (because as Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary points out: “archaic : a deerskin regarded as a unit of exchange in early dealings with American Indians;”<sup>1</sup>- And so, a “buck” is used metaphorically to mean a dollar bill, the unit of exchange for Americans)

**To be down to earth:** to be practical (as opposed to having lofty ideas or ideals, which can never be realized) because in some cultures is a prized virtue to be sensible and being practical is part of being sensible, and being practical to keeps ones goals and expectations within reach, and we cannot reach far off of the earth.

**Scrooge:** Scrooge was a fictitious character in a Charles Dicken’s book who was a miser. Hence the word scrooge has come to mean miser.

**Quixotic:** Quixotic comes from the fiction novel Don Quixote . Don Quixote was idealistic and utterly impractical; he was especially full of rash lofty romantic ideas. He was chivalrous, but his chivalrous actions were always doomed to fail. He was rash and exotic in his romantic life. So, to be quixotic means to be like Don Quixote.

**Pecksniffian:** the word originated from Charles Dickens’s novel, Martin Chuzzlewit. In the book, Seth Pecksniff, put on airs of being a respectable and moral businessman. Yet, in reality, he was a despicable and immoral person; So, to be pecksniffian means to be like Seth Pecksniff. As can be frequently found in literary texts, lexical features present cultural implications for translation. A variety of different approaches have been examined in relation to the cultural implications for translation. It is necessary to examine these approaches bearing in mind the inevitability of translation loss when the text is, as here, culture bound. Considering the nature of the text and the similarities between the ideal ST and TT reader, an important aspect is to determine how much missing background information should be provided by the translator using these methods. It has been recognised that in order to preserve specific cultural references certain additions need to be brought to the TT. This implies that formal equivalence should not be sought as this is not justified when considering the expectations of the ideal TT reader. On the other hand Nida’s scale, complete dynamic equivalence does not seem totally desirable either as cultural elements have been kept in order to preserve the original aim of the text.

It is true that translating cultural terms, such as the clothing or wearing items, their types mentioned above, causes many translation difficulties, but this does not mean that they cannot be translated. The translator can coin or borrow the term from the SL into the TL, or adapt it to suit the TL. It is also possible to explain the conceptual differences in a footnote or in the text

<sup>1</sup> Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary

itself. It is up to the translator to choose the most suitable way to render it in the TL, and for the TT, depending on the aim, the time available, and the potential readers, etc.

## CONCLUSION

Vast cultural differences play a role, because it has had an impact on nearly all the people worldwide, as well as on the international relations rising from the present new world order. Also, as technology develops and grows at a fast pace, nations and their cultures have started merging. Boundaries are becoming more unclear, when they once were sharply outlined. Translators offering translation services today are faced with many different cultures. They are required to provide translation services that relay messages from one culture to another, and make it a smooth and solidly understood translation. The idiosyncrasies and cultural expressions must be known first hand. We are not talking about a minimum knowledge of having studied the language, but about a vast and thorough understanding of having the language as a native tongue. It's referred to as cross-cultural translation and it's relied upon heavily by organizations around the globe. It is their task to focus primarily on the source culture and target culture, but this is not cut and dry. The answer is not clear-cut. Nevertheless, the dominant criterion is the communicative function of the target text. Attention is drawn to the fact that among the assortment of translation methodology, the use of the integrated approaches. This approach follows the model in which having a global vision of the text, at hand, is of primary importance.

Finally, it can be concluded that theoretically a text which is embedded in its culture is both possible and impossible to translate into other languages. If practicality is considered first, however, every translation is possible. The degree of its closeness to its source culture and the extent to which the meaning of its source text to be retained is very much determined by the purpose of the translation. To close, it is suggested that in the translator considered the procedures explained above to translate culturally-bound words or expressions.

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