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## **Recreation of ethno-cultural markers in the translations of “Blood and Sweat”**

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### **Abstract**

Associated with the globalization of cultural space, the problem of understanding, functioning, and development of ethno-cultural identity is becoming one of the most urgent today, all over the world. The purpose of the research is to carry out a complex analysis of ethno-cultural components contained in the literary work and to study the mechanisms of their transformation during translation, to establish their adequacy. The wide spectrum of lexical units, reflecting ethno-cultural specificity of the Kazakh people is not typical for either Russian or English speaking audiences.

**Keywords:** Ethno-cultural markers, Domestication, Foreignization, Pragmatic adaptation, Functional analogue.

## **Recreación de marcadores etno-culturales en las traducciones de "Sangre y Sudor"**

### **Resumen**

Asociado con la globalización del espacio cultural, el problema de la comprensión, el funcionamiento y el desarrollo de la identidad etnocultural se está convirtiendo en uno de los más urgentes en la actualidad, en todo el mundo. El objetivo de la investigación es llevar a cabo un análisis complejo de etno -componentes culturales contenidos en la obra literaria y para estudiar los mecanismos de su

transformación durante la traducción, para establecer su adecuación. El amplio espectro de unidades léxicas, que reflejan la especificidad etnocultural del pueblo kazajo, no es típico para el público de habla rusa o inglesa.

**Palabras clave:** Marcadores etnoculturales, Domesticación, Exteriorización, Adaptación pragmática, Análogo funcional.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

While translating a literary text, two important tasks have to be fulfilled by the translators: first, they should convey to the readers all the literary merits of the original (aesthetic functions), and secondly, convey the features of the foreign culture reflected in the original text. The peculiar consistency of a literary text is that it almost always contains markers that indicate its relevance to foreign culture. The ethno-cultural markers reflected in literary texts including peculiarities of speech and mentality form the national portrait of described ethnos and act as ethno-cultural identifier. It is worth noting that a literary text is a mirror, which reflects the spiritual development of the Society of different epochs and embodies the mentality of a certain ethnos, its cultural traditions, life-living realities and customs.

According to Yu.M. Lotman, literary texts have “cultural memory” (LOTMAN, YU. M, 1997). Thanks to this fact a reader acts as a participant of a dialogue between different cultures, and intercultural communication is carried out through the texts: readers get acquainted with cultures of other peoples and learn it.

The trilogy “Blood and Sweat” analyzed by us in this article differs with the breadth of social generalizations, subtlety of psychological analysis and brightness of national characters. The individual originality of A. Nurpeisov's creativity was manifested in this. Nationally-marked units of the trilogy are used as means of nomination of various phenomena; reflect ethno-cultural peculiarities of Kazakh people and certain author concept. National verbal images are expressed in the novels by a variety of language tools: from units of phonetic and morphological levels to words, phrases and idioms. Along with the verbalized national-marked units, the non-verbal cultural elements play a significant role in the trilogy.

The problem of translation of the literary texts such as “Blood and Sweat” with high ethno-cultural identity is considered to be the most urgent and complex one in translation activity. The following translation strategies are usually applied for ethno-cultural markers: translators are guided by the cultural norms and values of the recipient or are guided by the norms and values of the sender of the source language message. In translation research these strategies were formulated in the second half of the 90s by the American theoretician Lawrence Venuti. The scientist referred to these tendencies using the terms “domestication” and “foreignization”. It should be noted that the opposition of these two terms was based on the ideas of Friedrich Schleiermacher, who contrasted two types of translation:

Either the translator leaves the author in peace, as much as possible and moves the reader towards him; or he leaves the

reader in peace, as much as possible, and moves the author towards him (SNELL-HORNBY, 2006, p. 145).

According to the first approach, the translator tries to reproduce the source text as accurately as possible by means of the target language. At the same time, he does not resort to adaptation and other forms of simplification to the detriment of the author's intent. As far as the second approach is concerned, the translator orients the translation to the reader. Complex elements of the source text are neutralized. Starting from these ideas, Venuti wrote that translation is “the process of transferring a foreign text in incomplete and modified form”. The text, from the scientist point of view, is always supplemented with specific elements for the target language, and the communicative goal is reached only in the case when the foreign language text ceases to be incomprehensible. (VENUTI, 1995, p. 91).

The researcher also touched upon the following issues: to what extent translation was a tool for assimilation in the target culture and to what extent the readers were informed about the elements of the source culture. According to Venuti, the translator should consider translation as a process, exposing the source language and culture to strong distortions and refraction, which occurs under the influence of the target culture. Opposition to this influence ought to be the main task of each translator, who should by all possible means preserve and transmit in translation the peculiarities of the culture of the source text and designate a greater or lesser alienation (foreignness) of translation from the culture of the recipient (VENUTI, 1998).

According to our point of view, "domestication" and "foreignization" should be balancing processes in translation. We cannot disagree with the theory of A.D. Schweitzer that excessive foreignization can complicate the reception of the text. The text in this case becomes obscure and does not fully meet the requirements of the translation (SCHWEITZER, 1999, p. 183). Excessive domestication leads to the loss of the ethno-cultural nuances of the source text, and to some extent, to the distortion of the original meaning.

The cultural peculiarities of the text in the translation process were also considered by the American scientist Eugene Nida. The researcher was predominantly engaged in Bible translations and approached translations mainly from the linguistic position, at the same time he stressed the importance of its cultural and ethnographic aspects depending on the nature and purposes of the translation process (KOMISSAROV, 1991, p. 127). He underlined that it is very important to understand the close connection between language and culture, because words cannot be adequately perceived without the knowledge of cultural peculiarities. In this regard, he emphasized the productivity of the ethno-linguistic approach in solving the semantic problems of any language (NIDA, 1964, p. 97). The concept of untranslatability is believed to be the central issue in translation process of cultural markers. John Catford, a Scottish specialist in the field of linguistic translation theory was one of the scientists that considered the translation concept of untranslatability based on two aspects: linguistic and cultural.

From the linguist's point of view, translation difficulties associated with the cultural differences of source and target texts can be reduced to purely linguistic difficulties. According to the scientist, in most cases the reason for “cultural untranslatability” is the fact that the use of the most suitable equivalent in the target text can give a combination, which is not common for target language. The researcher gives the definition of translation and considers its problems mainly from a linguistic position: “translation is the replacement of textual material in source language (SL) by equivalent textual material in translation language (TL)”. The scientist uses the term “textual material”, as some elements of the source text can be directly transferred to the text of translation (due to untranslatability or for preserving national colour) (CATFORD, 1965, p. 20).

Comprehension is the most important problem in the translation of the texts with high ethno-cultural identity. Difficulties, associated with comprehension arise, as a rule, due to insufficient knowledge of the source language or the essence of the subject described by the author. The problem of comprehension is not limited only to the linguistic aspects of translation. According to the French linguist J. Moonen, “In order to translate well, it is not enough to study the language; one must also study the culture associated with this language” (J. MOONEN, 1987, p.137). A prerequisite for an adequate perception of the text is the presence of background knowledge, extra linguistic information, which is owned by representatives of one linguistic culture.



All the issues discussed above were insufficiently or only partly considered in the researched translations of the trilogy “Blood and Sweat”. Comparative analysis of the novels with their translations into Russian and English, allowed us to find out that the predominant methods used in translation of cultural peculiarities of the Kazakh ethnicity were transliteration, functional analogue, descriptive translation and the method of pragmatic adaptation. These methods contributed to the adequate transfer of information during the translation. However, it should be noted that the specificity of a certain part of ethno-cultural markers in the process of translation was inevitably lost, and some of them were replaced by markers belonging to the cultures of recipients. Translation errors in the trilogy were mainly caused by misinterpreting the meaning of the source language collocations and by the wrong choice of signs in the translation language. Errors occurred due to the following factors:

- Lack of proficiency in the source language;
- Lack of cognitive experience;
- Insufficient knowledge of reality described in the source text.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

The material of the research is the trilogy of A. Nurpeisov “Blood and Sweat” and its translations in Russian (Y. Kazakov) and English (C. Fitzpatrick) languages, as well as data of bilingual and

special dictionaries. The research work was carried out in the course of translation traditions. The methodological basis of the research were the works covering general questions on the theory and practice of translation (Y.I. RETSKER, 2010; V. N. KOMISSAROV, 1991; N. K. GARBOVSKY, 2004; E. A. NIDA, 1964; M. SNELL-HORNBY, 2006; L. VENUTI, 1995; A.D. SCHWEITZER, 1999, etc.).

Depending on research objectives, the main method applied by us was comparative method of analysis. We have compared the texts of translation with the original one to identify the methods of transmission of ethno-cultural lexical units. At the same time, the following methods were used:

- Contextual method (to determine the peculiarities of functioning of the analyzed units in the Kazakh text and in Russian, English translations);

Component analysis (to determine the degree of correspondence between the target and source languages).

### **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

One of the peculiarities of the Kazakh speech behavior is the logical development of the word. Very often the forms and relationships of the real world of nature and a man are prompted by nature itself. The most revealing in this regard is the tendency of the

Kazakh people to approximate account. So, Kazakhs can answer the question about the distance as “иек астында” (under the chin, that means close), “сүт пісірімдей уақытта жетесін” (you’ll get there within the time you have the milk boiled), “таяқ тастамдай жерде” (at a distance of a thrown stick). In the Kazakh culture the counting has national signs (ASHIMKHANOVA, 1999, p. 37). These phenomena are described in the trilogy, and in some cases the adequacy of translation is achieved by the method of pragmatic adaptation.

Original:

Жігіт қыздан көз жазбады. Сүт пісірімнен асты, бұл әлі тырп етпей, табанынан сарсылып тұр. Бір орында сарсылып тұратұра, әрі-берідесін аяғы талды (NURPEISOV, 2004, p. 135).

Translation of Y. Kazakov:

“Жених не спускал с нее глаз. Бобек не шевелилась. Прошло довольно много времени. У жениха стали затекать ноги” (NURPEISOV, 2010, p. 134).

Translation of C. Fitzpatrick:

“The groom did not take his eyes off her. Bobek didn’t move. A long time passed. The groom’s legs began to grow numb” (NURPEISOV, 2013, p. 147).

In translation of the expression “Сүт пісірімнен асты” (literary, milk boiling time has passed), translators, applying the method of functional analogue, conveyed the pragmatic task of the original. The equivalence of translation is provided not at the level of individual words, but at the level of the whole translated text. However, the ethno-cultural and national feature of the source text disappears. Mentality and culture of the Kazakh people is also reflected in the symbolism of colour. Different colours have various connotations depending on context and culture. Kazakh language is rich in phraseological units, revealing the life, traditions and customs of the Kazakhs, which are connected with different colours and the most dominant of them, are “ақ” – white, “қара” – black and “көк” – blue. The latter in the Kazakh culture has sacred value (ZHARKYNBEKOVA, 2011).

In his works A. Nurpeisov attaches special importance to colour symbolism. The above mentioned colours are predominantly used by the author. In the trilogy “Blood and Sweat” there are about two thousand lexical units combined with these colours.

The symbolic content of black colour expresses numerous semantic shades. Black colour has both negative and positive traits. Black signifies not only death, darkness, hardship, poverty and unhappiness, but it is also associated with beauty, abundance, reverence and strength. For example, the black colour with negative connotation is observed in the following idioms: “қара жермен тең болды” (literally, leveled to the black ground). It is used for

description of a person who lost his authority, became non-respected. The word combinations “қара жау” is used in the meaning of “the worst enemy”; “қараң қалғыр” – in the meaning “bad luck for you”; “қара суық” – in the meaning of “strong frost”; “қаранғы адам” – in meaning of “uneducated man”; “қара терге түсті” in the meaning of “sweat a lot”.

On the other hand, the colour “қара” (black) combined with such Kazakh national realities as “қазан” (cauldron) and “шанырақ” (an arched cross-shaped top of the yurt) are used in the meaning of “sacred cauldron”, “revered father's house” (Yurt – is a portable, round tent covered with felt and used as a dwelling by nomadic Kazakhs in the steppes). The color “ақ” (white) is a symbol of purity, integrity, fairness and kindness. Stable expressions, which contain white color, symbolize good undertakings: “ақ жол” (light road), “ақ ниет” (good wishes of happiness). The word “ақ” in word combinations is used for the description of a good person: “ақ көңіл” (light soul); “ақ жүрек” (a kind heart); “ақ сүйек” (white bone) is used for characterizing nobility); “сүттен ақ” (whiter than milk) testifies innocence of a person. Having achieved something good the Kazakhs use the expression “ерніміз аққа тиді” (literally, touched our lips white). The colour “ақ” (white) in this case is associated with dairy products.

Original:

-Үйге де береке келді десейші...

Ие, ерніміз аққа тиді. Балалар балыққа тойып оңып қалды (NURPEISOV, 2004, p. 142).

Translation of Y. Kazakov:

-Слава богу, дожили! И ребята на рыбе отъелись (NURPEISOV, 2010, p. 140).

Translation of C. Fitzpatrick:

“Thank God, we survived. And the children have eaten their fill of fish.” (NURPEISOV, 2013, p. 153).

Translators used the method of pragmatic adaptation, replacing the expression “ерніміз аққа” with other components: “Слава богу, дожили”, “Thank God, we survived”. The strategy, undertaken by translators, ensures the preservation of not only a pragmatic analogy, but also describes the same situation (Denotation – translation of a sign to its meaning less like dictionaries try to define it). The colour “көк” (blue) in the minds of the Kazakhs is associated with the Creator, Lord. The word combination “көк Тәңір” personified the blue sky, the God who awarded for good deeds and punished for sins. Later, this worldview of Kazakhs was reflected in phraseology “көк жарылқасын” (Let us be rewarded by the Almighty).

In the Kazakh culture, the colour “көк” (blue) in combination with such words as grass and tea are used in the meaning of “young

grass” and “green tea”. Depending on the context this colour may have other meanings: “көк бет” (literary, blue face, is used for description of a grumpy, scandalous man); “көк ала қойдай сабау” (Beat to Death).

Original:

Сол түні Алдаберген софы ақ тоқалды да көк ала торғайдай ғып, ауыл айналдыра қуып жүріп сабап, Кішікүм бойындағы төркін жұртына қуып жіберді (NURPEISOV, 1973, p. 603)

Translation of Y. Kazakov:

Отдохнув немного, Алдаберген-софы власть отодрал камчой свою белую токал, погонял ее по аулу и прогнал в Кишикум к родственникам. (NURPEISOV, 2012, p. 558).

Translation of C. Fitzpatrick:

“Resting a little, Aldabergen-sofy lashed his white-skinned tokal with his whip, chased her through the streets of the aul, and then drove her away to Kishi-Kum to her relatives” (NURPEISOV, 2013, p. 568).

Phraseology “көк ала қойдай сабау” is successfully replaced by translators with the following options: “отодрать камчой” in the Russian translation and “to lash with whip” in the English one.

Translators retaining the denotative meaning of the utterance change its significative value. In the trilogy color code together with the direct naming of colors perform different stylistic functions. They are defined by lexical-semantic meanings as well as contextual and linguocultural relations. Their revealing and transmission in another language require a variety of translation techniques and strategies, including translation solutions that transcend dictionary matches.

The interaction of the Kazakh culture and language is reflected in the use of zoomorphic images for human characteristics. S.K. Sanzybaeva opines that the metaphors of the theme “animal-man” are widely used for description of humans. They allow us to distinguish universal and ethno-specific signs in cultural and linguistic world of the Kazakh Ethnos (SANSYZBAEVA, 2001). In the Kazakh culture a special attention is given to a sheep (“қой” in the Kazakh language) in connection with its economic significance. There are a large number of idioms with the lexical unit “қой” in the Kazakh language. This animal is a symbol of prosperity and well-being. Thus all phraseological units containing the name of this animal have positive meaning.

The word “қой” in the minds of the Kazakhs is firmly entrenched with the characteristic of a calm, conflict-free and serene person. The expression “қой мінезді” (literally, with the character of a sheep) is used to characterize a person with a compliant behavior. The word combination “Қой көзді” (literally, resembling a ram eyes) is used in describing a person with good, beautiful eyes. Phraseological



unit “қой аузынан шөп алмайтын” (literally, does not take the grass out of a sheep’s mouth) is applied to a person who is not capable of hurting anyone.

While creating the trilogy, A. Nurpeisov relied on thorough knowledge of ethno-cultural features of his people. The word “қой” is used by the author as a part of the phraseological unit “қой аузынан шөп алмайтын”.

#### Original:

Еламан комиссардың көңілді кескініне қызыға қарап. Түрік соғысында байқағаны бар: жайбарақат кезде көзге түсе қоймайтын қайсыбір қарапайым жуас кісілерді қызыл қырғын соғыста танымай қаласың. Екі иығын жұлып жеп жүрген кісілерден көрі қайта осындай момын жандар ержүрек боп шығатын. Әншейінде қой аузынан шөп алмайтын жуас болғанмен, ұрыс үстінде бір түрлі желік пайда боп делебесі қозып шыға келетін (NURPEISOV, 1973, p. 538).

#### Translation of Y. Kazakov:

Еламан с любопытством глядел на взволнованно дышавшего, веселого комиссара. Он еще в Турции заметил, что в бою, как ни странно, больше всех выделяются обычно тихие, незаметные люди. Казалось бы, что с него возьмешь – мухи не обидит, - а в тяжелую минуту самый стойкий и смелый человек! (NURPEISOV, 2012, p. 501).

#### Translation of C. Fitzpatrick:

Elaman glanced curiously at the commissar, agitated, happy and breathing hard. He had noticed in Turkey that in the battle, as odd as it was, the people who were usually quiet and not noticed were the ones who stood out the most. It would seem looking at him that he couldn't hurt a fly, but in a difficult moment, he was the most solid and bold of them all! (NURPEISOV, 2013, p. 508).

The translators apply the pragmatic transformations in target languages to achieve the communicative effect, equivalent to the text of the source language. As a result of this strategy, translators managed to preserve the pragmatic value of the original, completely changing the semantic and syntactic values. Thus, the idiomatic expression “қой аузынан шөп алмайтын”, is replaced by its Russian and English equivalents “мухи не обидит”, “he couldn't hurt a fly”. As we can see there is a substitution of the ethno-cultural marker of the source language for the marker belonging to the languages of the recipients. Elimination of ethno-cultural specifics of the source text occurred in the process of translation, but the meaning and spirit of the utterance are preserved in both cases.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

Due to literary texts we learn the information about the culture, the life of a certain people. Any national literary text as an expression of mentality of ethnic groups includes not only linguistic but also extra linguistic factors that determine national originality of literatures.

While reading the novel receptors in any cases should not have the idea that the alien culture does not differ from their own. Therefore, while working on the texts with high ethno-cultural identity, a translator should prevent the national and cultural assimilation of translation by all means so that the source text does not lose its national and cultural identity. Translators are obliged to neutralize the linguo-ethnic barrier and to prevent the infringement of semantic perception. In order to perform all these tasks successfully, they must utilize a certain set of translation tools and methods, and examine additional explanatory information. Notes justifying the target text should be added.

When translating the texts with high ethno-cultural identity from one language to another, not only different language systems are compared, but also different cultures. In the translation theory a number of techniques and methods aimed at conveying ethno-cultural lexical units have been developed. Applying them, translators in one way or another overcome the arising problems. Ethno-cultural lexical units (realities, idioms, metaphors, dialects) and their translation pose significant challenges, as they are characterized by complicated semantics.

The trilogy "Blood and Sweat" is proved to be of great value in the study of ethno-cultural identity of the Kazakh people, as it reflects the characteristics of the national mentality, which is considered to be the core of the national culture of the described period. The wide spectrum of lexical units reflecting ethno-cultural specificity of the

Kazakh people in the trilogy is not typical for the Russian and English speaking audience. In this regard, there is a lack of equivalence between the source and target languages in the translation of phraseological units, realities, ethno-cultural emotional expression, elements of non-verbal behavior and national-cultural features of the color designation.

Translation errors of the trilogy were mainly caused by such factors as ignorance of the original language (translation into Russian was done from the footnote of G. Belger, translation into English was done from Russian), lack of cognitive experience and lack of knowledge about the environment described in the source text. Translation errors were due to incorrect decoding of the signs as well as incorrect selection of lexical units. In some cases translators made linguostylistic errors, disphemization of meanings (the usage of more expressively-painted vulgar language instead of less expressive ones).

Based on the above arguments and obtained results, we emphasize the importance and necessity of applying a whole complex set of cognitive-communicative methods while translating the texts with high ethno-cultural identity. First of all, in the analysis of such texts translators should take into consideration the cultural and linguistic features of the source text. Mentality should be considered as the object of research. Knowing ethno-cultural specificity of the literary text is necessary for adequate interpretation, its consideration is important in translation practice. Misinterpretation of the ethno-cultural characteristics may lead to a complete distortion of the whole

meaning of the original text during translation. Without understanding the mentality of the people it is impossible to reflect specificity of ethno-cultural identity.

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