

TRANSLATION PROBLEMS OF CULTURE-SPECIFIC UNITS IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBALIZATION

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Abstract: This article examines the challenges associated with the translation of culture-specific units in the context of globalization. As intercultural communication becomes more frequent and complex, the need for accurate and culturally sensitive translation has increased significantly. Culture-specific units, including realia, idiomatic expressions, and culturally bound concepts, often lack direct equivalents in the target language, which creates difficulties in achieving both semantic accuracy and cultural adequacy. The study analyzes major translation strategies such as equivalence, borrowing, transliteration, descriptive translation, and cultural adaptation. Special attention is given to the role of the translator in preserving the cultural identity of the source text while ensuring comprehensibility for the target audience. The research is based on a linguocultural approach and supported by practical examples from English and Uzbek languages.

Keywords: *culture-specific units, translation strategies, globalization, realia, equivalence, descriptive translation, intercultural communication*

Introduction: In the contemporary era of globalization, the intensity of intercultural communication has grown exponentially, resulting in increased interaction among languages, societies, and cultural systems. This process has elevated the role of translation as a key instrument for ensuring mutual understanding across linguistic and cultural boundaries. However, translation is no longer viewed merely as a linguistic operation involving the substitution of words and structures; rather, it is recognized as a complex communicative activity that entails the transfer of meaning, cultural values, and conceptual frameworks embedded in the source language.

One of the most challenging aspects of translation within this global context is the rendering of culture-specific units. These units, commonly referred to as realia, idiomatic expressions, and culturally bound concepts, are deeply rooted in the historical, social, and cultural experience of a particular community. Their semantic structure often includes implicit cultural references that are not easily accessible to speakers of other languages. Consequently, the absence of direct lexical or conceptual equivalents in the target language creates significant difficulties for translators.

From a theoretical perspective, the problem of translating culture-specific units has been extensively discussed in translation studies. Scholars such as Eugene Nida emphasize the concept of dynamic equivalence, which focuses on achieving a similar effect on the target audience as the original text produces on its readers. Similarly, Peter Newmark distinguishes between semantic and communicative translation, highlighting the importance of preserving meaning while adapting to the cultural context of the target language. Furthermore, Mona Baker addresses the issue of non-equivalence at different linguistic levels, particularly in relation to culture-bound terms and expressions.

In practice, translators employ a range of strategies to deal with such challenges, including borrowing, transliteration, cultural substitution, descriptive translation, and adaptation. Each of these methods reflects a different approach to balancing fidelity to the source text with

acceptability in the target culture. The choice of strategy depends on various factors, such as the type of text, communicative purpose, and the background knowledge of the target audience.

The relevance of this study is обусловлена (motivated by) the growing need for accurate and culturally sensitive translation in a globalized world, where misinterpretation of cultural elements may lead to misunderstandings or loss of meaning. Therefore, the aim of this article is to analyze the main translation problems associated with culture-specific units and to examine effective strategies for their adequate rendering. The research adopts a linguocultural approach, which considers language as an integral component of culture and underscores the importance of cultural competence in translation practice.

Main Body: The translation of culture-specific units represents one of the most intricate challenges in modern translation studies, particularly in the context of globalization, where texts are increasingly intended for diverse and multicultural audiences. Culture-specific units are linguistic elements that carry information about the traditions, customs, institutions, and everyday life of a particular society. These units include realia, idiomatic expressions, proper names, historical references, and culturally bound metaphors. Their translation requires not only linguistic competence but also a deep understanding of the cultural context in which they function.

One of the primary difficulties in translating culture-specific units lies in the phenomenon of non-equivalence. Non-equivalence occurs when a concept present in the source language does not exist in the target language or differs significantly in its cultural implications. For instance, English terms such as “pub,” “Thanksgiving,” or “double-decker” reflect specific aspects of British and American culture and lack direct equivalents in Uzbek. In such cases, the translator must decide how to convey the meaning without distorting the cultural significance of the original term.

From a theoretical standpoint, the issue of non-equivalence has been thoroughly examined by scholars such as Mona Baker, who identifies different levels at which non-equivalence can occur, including lexical, semantic, and pragmatic levels. Similarly, Eugene Nida emphasizes that the goal of translation is not formal correspondence but functional equivalence, meaning that the translated text should evoke a similar response in the target audience. These theoretical frameworks provide a foundation for understanding the strategies used in translating culture-specific units.

In practical translation, several strategies are commonly employed to address these challenges:

First, borrowing (or loan translation) involves transferring the source language term directly into the target language, often with minimal phonetic or orthographic adaptation. This strategy is useful when the cultural concept is unfamiliar but important to preserve. For example, the word “pub” may be transliterated as “pab” in Uzbek. However, this method may require additional explanation to ensure comprehension.

Second, descriptive (or explanatory) translation is used when the translator provides a detailed explanation of the concept. For instance, “Thanksgiving” can be translated as “a traditional American holiday celebrated to give thanks for the harvest.” While this strategy ensures clarity, it may increase the length of the text and reduce stylistic conciseness.

Third, cultural substitution (adaptation) involves replacing the source culture element with a roughly equivalent concept from the target culture. This approach enhances readability

and accessibility but may lead to the loss of cultural specificity. For example, substituting “Christmas” with “New Year celebration” in certain contexts may help the target audience understand the general idea, though it does not fully preserve the original meaning.

Fourth, functional equivalence focuses on conveying the function or purpose of the original term rather than its literal form. This strategy is particularly effective in translating idiomatic expressions. For example, the English idiom “kick the bucket” should be translated as “to die” rather than literally, in order to preserve its intended meaning.

In addition to these strategies, the role of context is crucial in determining the appropriate translation approach. The same culture-specific unit may require different strategies depending on the type of text—whether it is literary, technical, or journalistic—as well as the intended audience. Literary texts, for example, often prioritize the preservation of cultural color and stylistic features, while technical texts emphasize clarity and precision.

Furthermore, globalization has introduced new challenges and opportunities for translators. On the one hand, increased cultural exchange has made certain culture-specific terms more widely recognized, reducing the need for explanation. On the other hand, the diversity of audiences requires translators to be more flexible and adaptive in their approach. This highlights the importance of intercultural competence, which involves not only knowledge of languages but also an understanding of cultural norms, values, and communicative practices.

In summary, the translation of culture-specific units is a dynamic and context-dependent process that requires the careful selection of strategies based on linguistic, cultural, and pragmatic factors. The effectiveness of translation depends on the translator’s ability to balance fidelity to the source text with the needs and expectations of the target audience, thereby ensuring successful intercultural communication.

Conclusion: The present study has demonstrated that the translation of culture-specific units in the context of globalization is a complex and multifaceted process that goes beyond simple linguistic substitution. Such units, deeply embedded in the cultural and social realities of the source language, often lack direct equivalents in the target language, which creates significant challenges for translators. As a result, achieving both semantic accuracy and cultural adequacy becomes a central task in translation practice.

The analysis shows that there is no single universal strategy for translating culture-specific elements. Instead, translators must rely on a range of methods, including borrowing, descriptive translation, cultural substitution, and functional equivalence. The effectiveness of these strategies largely depends on the context, the type of text, and the expectations of the target audience. Therefore, the translator’s ability to make informed and flexible decisions plays a crucial role in ensuring the quality of the translation.

Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of a linguocultural approach, which emphasizes the inseparable relationship between language and culture. In the era of globalization, where intercultural communication is increasingly important, translators are required to possess not only linguistic competence but also a high level of cultural awareness and sensitivity. Misinterpretation or inadequate rendering of culture-specific units may lead to misunderstandings and reduce the communicative value of the translated text.

In conclusion, the successful translation of culture-specific units requires a balanced approach that preserves the cultural identity of the source text while making it accessible and meaningful for the target audience. Future research in this field may focus on developing more

systematic models and practical guidelines for handling culture-bound elements, thereby contributing to the advancement of translation studies and the enhancement of intercultural communication.

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