

The Role of Cultural Context in Translation Accuracy

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Abstract. *Language is a proportion of culture, and culture is an element of an accurate translation. An accurate translation always requires cultural awareness between two languages: Source Language (SL) and Target Language (TL). This article presents the meaning of culture, definition of realia and translating them, most difficulties that translators face, some methods and strategies for translation, how to work with proverbs, idioms and realia when there is not an equivalence of them in Target Language. This paper also shows the results of a survey taken by people about their viewpoints of the importance of cultural context in a professional translation and their strategies to translate.*

Key words: *Cultural Context, Translation Fidelity, Common Challenges, Idioms, Proverbs, Equivalents, Realia, Translation Methods, Loanwords, Cross-Culture*

1. Introduction

Discourse Language is a main part of a culture, culture is the core of translation. Translation does not only require words, it requires culture, belief and tradition of different languages. A good translator should consider everything while translating the texts: the purpose of the author, the audience, type of the text, terms, stylistic devices and fidelity of the text. Cultural context plays a huge role, it can clarify the meaning or distort the meaning. Realia, local proverbs, idioms, anecdotes, myth, legends, religious points, historical lifestyle, heros, and holidays may often lose the meaning when translated without cultural background. In order to keep the meaning it is better to understand the point and give an equivalent of every unfamiliar idiom, proverb and realia. Dadajanova (2025) argues that cultural context profoundly influences the interpretation and rendering of meaning. Cultural realia has various types and each of them specifies different meanings. Here are some common types: Material based, traditions and customs, geographical and historical concepts, local proverbs and idioms, abstract concepts, and national meals. This article argues that translation is a process that mostly requires cultural context and finding their equivalent in target language appropriately and accurately.

2. Methods

This article descriptive analysis, Mixed-method, comparative analysis methods are used. In addition, to collect data, online questionnaire were organized among students whose major are theory and practice of translation studies.

Based on textual analysis, cultural realias were divided into 5 subgroups as: material based

Realias, realias representing traditions and customs, idioms and proverbs, realias expressing abstract concepts and national cuisine.

3. Results

Realias are the most challenging issue in translation as it mostly depend on uniqueness of each language. To illustrate, national clothes of each nations is really hard to translate. In this cases, translators should be careful to find equivalent or give footnote definition to make them clear to the reader. In order to collect data about the preferable solutions to the issue of translating realias, online questionnaire was organized among students of “Silk Road” International University of Tourism and Cultural Heritage whose major is translation theory and practice. In the first question we wanted to analyze if the culture plays a significant role in accurate translation. In these questionnaires 108 students participated in which most of them answered positively.

Does culture plays a huge role in accurate translation?

108 ОТВЕТОВ

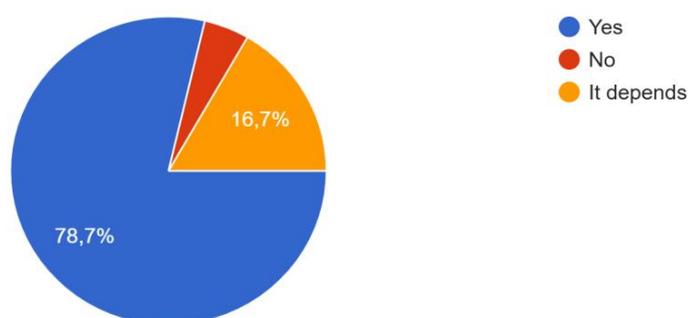


Figure 1.

According to the survey, which was carried out between university students whose field is Translation, more than half 78.7% students answered that culture plays a huge role in accurate translation, 16.7% said that it depends on the context and only 4.6% said No. It is clear from this that the role of culture in text fidelity is really high.

How do you translate realia that doesn't have an equivalent meaning in Target Language?

108 ОТВЕТОВ



Figure 2.

Students were also asked about their translation methods when there is not an equivalent meaning of the realia and it's clear from the chart that 75.9% of students use in-text descriptive method, while 13.9% of them translate word by word and 10.2% use footnotes.

Material based realia

Cultural context is the heart of the translation, and it requires awareness for fidelity. In this realia all types of cultural materials and traditional dresses which are not common in other nations are included. For instance: "Atlas/adras" are most common and popular dresses in Central Asia, mainly Uzbeks and Tajiks used to wear and still wear in traditional holidays, like Navruz, Independence day, and Ramadan. These fabrics have colorful ornaments and different shapes which is really unique and symbol of delicate women. Composition of Atlas is entire silk, whereas Adras consists of the mixture of silk and cotton. Korean traditional dress "Hanbok", Japanese "Kimono", Indian "Sari", Arab "Abaya", Uzbek "Do'ppi", Kashmir "Pashmina" are also included in this type of realia.

Traditions and customs

As mentioned above, "Navruz" is traditional holiday in Central Asia. This word is taken from Persian language and it means New day ("Nav"- New, "Ruz"-Day). Navruz is celebrated in 21st of March, and it is also called New year in Central Asia. "Thanksgiving day" is a national of the USA and it is celebrated on fourth Thursday of November, in this holiday people gather with their family members and close people and focus on gratitude. In Korea "Chuseok" is a type of national thanksgiving day. In Japan "Midori no Hi" is a greenery day and Japanese people celebrate this holiday on 4th of May to appreciate the nature. In Uzbek "Beshik to'yi" is celebrated for welcoming a new born baby and giving a new "Beshik" (uzbek national cradle) to that child. On this day people give gifts, sweets and money to the guests. Azerbaijan's national dance called "Yalli" is also the type of custom, this dance is performed by a group of people and it shows the harmony, power and unity of that nation.

Local proverbs and idioms

The English idiom "A friend in need is a friend indeed" can be an equivalent of Uzbek idiom "Yaxshi do'st kulfatda bilinadi" these two idioms are closely connected by meaning and culture. "Erni er qiladigan ham, qaro yer qiladigan ham xotin" this unusual Uzbek proverb means that wife can make her husband like a real husband, a real man and vice versa, wife can despise her husband. It means that the condition of a man depends on his wife.

Abstract concepts

Cultural realia can be classified into several types, including material objects, traditions and customs, idioms and proverbs, abstract concepts, and national meals. Abstract concepts can also be realia, there are some examples in the following. "Karma" this term came from the religions like Buddhism and Hinduism, and it means that everything you do, your behaviour, attitude, thoughts, actions return to you one day, whether you did good things or bad things, all will return to you. "Taqwa" this is islamic term and it means to have a belief in God, to trust the plans of God without having any doubts. "Mahalla" this Uzbek word means the community of a specific zone like neighbourhood, "Deja vu" (translated "already seen") this French term expresses the strange feeling like people felt the situation has happened before but they don't know when or where, it feels like they saw it on their dream or in the past but actually they know that it has not happened before. This situation called *deja vu* which most people regularly come across.

National meals

Uzbek "Palov", "Norin", "Mastava", "Manti", Tajik "Qurutob", "Kalapocha", "Shir-birinj", "Siyolaf", "Sumalak", Korean "Kimchi", "Japchae", "Kimpab", Japanese "Sushi", "Mochi", Italian "Lasagna", "Tiramisu".

Actually there variety types of realia and here are written only famous ones. As there many realia in each field, it's highly recommended to the translators to learn Cross-culture in order to do not confuse.

4. Discussion

“Naturally, language is a part of culture, and it is seen to be one of the greatest achievements in human social history. But all languages has their specific features which reflect not only in language structure, grammar, vocabulary, but also in cultural mentality and customs” (Khalimova, N. A. 2024).

There are different ways of translating and transferring realia. In the following there are some structures to transfer them more accurately. First of all, it is better to search for any equivalent of realia in Target Language (TL) if there is any equivalent of the term; the translator should use that word, in case if there is not any equivalent, then using Domestication method is a good way.

Translation strategies always help translators to translate the cultural context appropriately, in the following there are types of strategies that translators should know.

1. Domestication method is replacing unfamiliar word with more similar and familiar word in TL to make a sense to the audience. The use of cultural equivalents involves finding terms or expressions in the TL that convey similar cultural significance as those in the SL. This strategy is crucial for translation proverbs, idioms, humour, or cultural words (Le, 2024). For example, scarf instead of Pashmina. However this method not always helps, because it can lose cultural tone.
2. Descriptive method is to give the meaning of the term inside of the text after the SL term explaining the meaning of it in TL in parentheses or giving it as a foot note. Like, do'ppi (Uzbek traditional skullcap, decorated with patterns).
3. Loan word method is not changing the realia with equivalents, it works with popular, worldwide words which many nations already know the meaning. Sushi, Ramen, and Tiramisu are more common in almost every country, so in this case it is better to leave them like that, because it gives cultural effect to the text.
4. Omission. Sometimes it is required to omit the words which do not change the meaning. For example, “She ate dessert mochi and went to buy some new books” we can omit mochi here, nothing changes in the meaning if it is not so important in the text (Mushtariy Akhmedova, 2025).

5. Conclusion

The importance of culture in context is really high. There are different types of new words, terms, realia which are unknown to many countries and nations. To keep the balance and not to lose the meaning translators should be aware of transferring them. This paper also mentioned about the techniques for translating realia without losing the meaning. The survey conducted among students also shows that knowing culture is really necessary to translate the texts accurately. And the technique most of the students use to translate idioms was in-text Descriptive method which is really convenient both to show the cultural vibe and give the meaning in TL to make a better vision to the audience. In translating a cultural text, translators always struggle to choose to translate the text literally or freely. Both ways have their advantages and disadvantages depending on the text and the meaning of it. Translators should decide to follow the formula that put source language culture in priority or TL culture and some translators try their best to stay in the middle (Safarzadeh, 2020). Thus, a good translator should take into the consideration the culture, the audience and of course the purpose of the author to keep the balance, cultural meaning and sense.

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