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Semantics and pragmatics of realia in the original and translation
of Abai Kunanbayev's "Book of Words" into English

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ABSTRACT

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This article is devoted to semantic and pragmatic problems of translation, in particular, analysis of translation of realia of Kazakh culture into English. As a practical material of the study, a classic of Kazakh literature "Book of Words" by Abai Kunanbayev in translation into English was used. The object of the study is realia of Kazakh culture, reflecting the conceptual basis of the Kazakh picture of the world through the prism of the author's vision of Abai. To implement the proposed problem, methods of component and semantic analysis of realia, as well as translation analysis, were used. These methods are based on comparative analysis of the original and English translation. The analysis of the practical material using the chosen methods led to the conclusion that the translator must comprehend the deep cultural semantics of realia that require special kinds of pragmatic adaptation in translation. A comparative analysis of the original and the translation showed that the English language means are not able to convey the conceptual content of the Kazakh reality, and the translation techniques used by the translator limit the receptor's understanding of realia deep semantics.

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Introduction

The issues of cultural implications in translation are in the focus of research in modern linguistics. It is the task of the translator to make the proper translation of culture-bound words, which vary in semantic and pragmatic specifics. M. Tymoczko defines the role of the translator in transmitting culture in the translation in the following way: “A translator must not only unpack the embodied and situated knowledge related to cultural configurations and practices in the source text, the source culture, the author or speaker, and so forth, but be able to interpret the embodied and situated cultural practices and dispositions of the translator’s own culture and the culture of the receiving audience.” (Tymoczko, 2014: 227).

Important questions that arise when considering the relationship between translation and culture are how the culture and national identity of the language function in the text and how the language reflects the national picture of the world. The system of signs in each language reflects the worldview of native speakers in the context of cultural traditions. Culture has a special symbolic system that allows representatives of this culture to communicate. (Torop, 2002: 593). The linguocultural content of the text is transmitted by various cultural and tagged means of language, including: the realities of different types, figurative means of language, phraseology, proverbs and sayings.

Artistic texts are a special literary style that deeply reflects the figurative thinking of an ethnic group, which is reflected in artistic images, special literary forms, the author’s style, a special cultural picture of the author’s world. All this constitutes problems in translation, since the task of the translator is to achieve an adequate perception by the reader of explicit and implicit information and to implement a pragmatic balance. The translator’s task is also to create his own picture of the world, aimed at the desire to convey the features of the national worldview and mentality.

There exist researches on the role of the translator in transmitting culture. D. Katan says: Cultural interpreting is defined as “communication of conceptual and cultural factors that are relevant to the given interaction as part of the lingual transmission”. (Katan, 2004: 16). Katan underlines the idea that cultural interpreter refers to the “term for something that is more than a linguistic mediation” (Katan, 2004: 16).

It should be noted that the explication of meanings affects the processes of decoding and the degree of translation optimality is determined by the translator’s skill in revealing cultural meanings, understanding the author’s intentions. Incorrect interpretation of cultural values, symbols, culture-specific vocabulary can lead to a violation of the holistic perception of the text, a distorted representation of culture, a superficial understanding of national and cultural specifics. It is necessary to note the problem of the existence of language gaps, the transmission of which in translation requires the use of translation techniques aimed at filling in the missing concepts in the target language with the maximum possible filling of cultural “gaps” and maintaining semantic and pragmatic equivalence.

At the linguo-cognitive level, the work of a translator to preserve cultural characteristics is determined by a set of transformations that are used to adequately convey the genre features of the text, the cultural realia of the language, and the figurative means of the language that imply a system of values. The use of transformations often causes inaccuracies in translation.

Thus, the aim of the given article is to investigate how semantic, cultural and pragmatic aspects are reflected in realia and the ways they can be represented in translation.

Materials and research methods

The practical material of the study is the work of Abay Kunanbayev “Book of Words”, written in the style of philosophical speculations and edification. For a comparative analysis of the original and the translation, the English translation by Richard McCain was selected. The research methodology is based on the comparative analysis of the original and translation, including a semantic and component analysis of cultural realia of the Kazakh language and their translation correspondences in English. The semantic analysis of realia of the Kazakh language comprises the study of the plan of the content of realia and semantic information. The analysis of the pragmatic aspects of translation is aimed at a critical understanding of the degree of adequacy of the translation and the preservation of semantic and communicative functions, as well as the substantiation of the translation techniques used by the translator.

Research background

Problems of translation pragmatics and taking into account cultural peculiarities of the language have been studied by many linguists. P.Newmark (1988), M.Baker (1992), S.Bassnett (2007), M.Snell-Hornby (2006), C.Kramersch (1998), D.Katan (2014) have made notable contributions to the development of the problems of national-cultural specificity in translation. The research of translators of the late 20th century on the relationship of language and culture, and, accordingly, translation problems and culture, began to be considered in the context of the cognitive and conceptual features of the national language, national identity and special world idea. In this sense, translation has become an important means of intercultural communication. Modern linguoculture actively studies such layers of vocabulary as: informational-regulatory vocabulary - calls, announcements, bans; advertising texts, discursive markers reflecting the cultural features of the language. (Ter-Minasova, 2004: 324). The typological and translation issues of realia were studied by V.Vinogradov (2004), S.Vlakhov and S. Florin (2009). V.Komissarov (2002) made a stress on pragmatic aspects in the problem of translatability. The given article is aimed at enhancing knowledge of the specifics of Kazakh realia, which should be taken into account in the process of Kazakh-English translation.

Analysis

The study of the problem of the connection between language and culture is based on the anthropological approach to language, which embodies the originality of the whole people, the spirit of the nation. Many domestic and foreign researchers (Katan, 2014; Жусупова, 2020¹; Аккалиева, 2021²) recognize the existence of a connection between language and

¹ Жусупова А.У., 2020. Проблема перевода этнокультурной идентичности в трилогии А.Нурпеисова “Кровь и пот”: дис. ...док философии PhD: 6D020700. Алматы. 162 с.

² Аккалиева А.Ф. Перевод романа –трилогии С.Елубаева “Ақ боз ұй” на русский и английский языки: дис. ...док. философии PhD: 6D020700. Нур-Султан, 2021. 188 с.

culture and turn to the lexical-semantic level of the language, the units of which directly respond to changes in all spheres of human activity.

Words with special culturally specific meanings reflect not only the way of life typical for the language community, but also the way of thinking. The semantic systems of different languages are based on conceptual systems formed in the minds of representatives of the linguacultural community. In linguistic studies, the importance of universal factors for the formation of conceptual systems is often noted: the unity of the material world, the universality of human life, the unity of the mechanisms of human perception of the surrounding world. All these realia are reflected in the language, first, in the form of linguistic designations of these specific elements of civilization, bearing a cultural imprint. Culturally specific words are conceptual tools that reflect the past experience of the nation regarding actions and thinking about various things in certain ways, they contribute to the perpetuation of these methods.

In the work “Book of Words» Abai uses a variety of realia and culturally specific words that emphasize the originality of the Kazakh way of life, traditions, way of life, administrative management of that time and social life. Such realia as: *zhigit, bai, batyr, zhan, birlik, iman, dunie, zhyt, rahat, kazhy* are carriers of conceptual information and are filled with internal semantics, implying cultural connotations and meanings. (Аймухамбет, Миразова, 2021: 7-18). The problem of translatability of realia remains a controversial issue, from the point of view of achieving absolute equivalence. K. James (2002) speaks about the inevitability of transmission losses, the so-called culturally conditioned texts. That is the impossibility to speak of complete dynamic equivalence. J. Dickins, putting forward models of metaphor translation, offers models aimed at achieving a balance between neutralization and pragmatic goals of translation. (Dickins, 2005: 269).

The traditional methods of translating realia are the following: transliteration, the use of calque, descriptive translation, selection of an analogue in the target language, generalization of meaning. P. Newmark put forward the following techniques in his research: selection of a cultural equivalent, transfer, localization, selection of a functional equivalent, descriptive translation, component analysis, selection of a synonym, modulation, compensation, paraphrase, transposition and translation commentary. (Newmark, 1988).

Analyzing examples of cultural realia, in the translation of which various translation transformations are used to achieve relative equivalence. The technique of modulation is often used by translators to explain the semantics of a cultural realia or concept. In the following example, Abai reflects on such human traits of character as cordiality and warm-heartedness. The word combination *жүректі кісі* (a warm-hearted man) is translated as *brave man*. The combination *brave man* in the translation characterizes the best features of *batyrs* and conveys the metaphor of *жүректі кісі*. In order to make a stress on the described situation the translator uses the method of modulation (See ex. 1):

(1) Тірі адамның жүректен аяулы жері бола ма? Біздің қазақтың *жүректі кісі* дегені – *батыр* кісі дегені. Онан басқа жүректің қасиеттерін анықтап біле алмайды. (Abai: 14th word)

Has man anything more precious than his heart? Calling someone a man of *brave heart*, people respect him as *a batyr*. They have but a poor idea of any other virtues of the human heart. (Abai, 2005: 105)

In the following context, the phrase “*айда, батырлан!*” performs the function of a call, the realia *батырлан* (*batyrlap*) means courage, the intention to demonstrate courage and determination (See ex.2). In translation, the omission of realia and replacement using the generalized verb *to ape* led to the loss of the cultural connotation of the realia *batyr*. The phrase *dare-devil capers* is used to enhance the connotation of the bravery of the *batyrs* and is descriptive by the form. This version of the translation neutralized the realia “*батырлан*”, which conceptually semantizes the courage and bravery inherent only to *batyrs*. The neutralization of the semantics of reality has led to the loss of the cultural connotation of the phrase, symbolizing the call for courage.

(2) Осы жұрттың көбінің айтып жүрген мықты жігіт, ер жігіт, пысық жігіт деп ат қойып жүрген кісілерінің бәрі – пәлеге, жаманшылыққа еліртпек үшін, бірін-бірі “*айда, батырлан!*” қыздырып алады да, артын ойлатпай, азғыратұғын сөздері. (Abai: 14th word).

Those who are praised as stout dzhighits, brave and clever, will more often than not put each other up to dark, sordid deeds. Their blind *aping of one another* and *dare-devil capers* are a frequent cause of misfortunes. (Abai, 2005: 106).

The following example illustrates the use of colloquial realia – a special form of address expressing special respect for the interlocutor *Әке-үке* (*Ake-uke*) (See ex.3). It should be noted the tradition of using a respectful form of abbreviation of male names in Kazakh culture when addressing, when the stem *әке* or *өке* is added to the first syllable of the name. This form of address, like many other forms of politeness expressing family ties, the relationship of the younger in relation to the older ones, has an important cultural and conceptual content. In the translation, this realia is replaced by the phrase *you bow and scrape*, which expresses the semantics of the Kazakh realia through the use of the generalization of meaning. This replacement neutralized the deep semantics expressed in the specifics of addresses in the Kazakh culture.

(3) Мен бала күнімде естуші едім, біздің қазақ сартты көрсе, күлуші еді «енеңді ұрайын, кең қолтық, шүлдіреген тәжік, Арқадан үй төбесіне саламын деп, қамыс артқан, бұтадан қорыққан, көз көргенде “*әке-үке*” десіп, шығып кетсе, қызын боқтасқан, “сарт-сұрт деген осы” деп (Abai: 2nd word).

In my childhood I used to hear the Kazakhs jeering at the Uzbeks: “You Sarts in wide skirts, you bring your rushes from afar to thatch your roofs! *You bow and scrape* when you meet someone, but you insult him behind his back”. (Abai, 2005: 80).

Pragmatic adaptation consists in the use of additions in translation that replenish the background knowledge of the receptor. Types of pragmatic adaptation are aimed at interpreting realia and culture-specific words. In the following example, the translator uses the addition to the realia *болыс* (*volost chief*), explaining that we are talking about the manager of the *volost* (See ex.4). In the original, the realia *болыс* (*bolys*) is used – a distorted Russian word for *volost*.

(4) *Болыс* пен биді құрметтейін десең, құдайдың өзі берген *болыстық* пен билік елде жоқ. (Abai: 22nd word).

I would have respected *a volost chief* and a *biy*, but on our steppe there is neither divine nor human justice. (Abai, 2005: 119).

Explication or descriptive translation is one of the ways to convey non-equivalent vocabulary. This method is aimed at finding a match in the target language that has semantic similarity and is achieved using description or explanation techniques. The following example illustrates the use of pragmatic adaptation to explain the described situation (See ex.5). The disadvantage of this technique is the loss of national color. In this context *мал* underlines the role of livestock in the life of the Kazakhs of that time, which served not only as food, but also as a means of subsistence. The translator neutralizes the phrase and explores the method of explication:

(5) Құдайдан қорық, пендеден ұял, балаң бала болсын десең – оқыт, *мал аяма!* (Abai: 25word).

If you honour God and have any shame, if you want your son to be a real man, send him to school! *Don't begrudge the expense!* (Abai, 2005: 126).

The use of the analogue in translation also causes problems in the context of pragmatic equivalence. The absence in another language of a direct equivalent of cultural realities, including names, concepts of the language, makes it necessary to replace it with a word or phrase with the close meaning. The following example illustrates the use of the functional equivalent in translation:

(6) Бұған бұрынғы “Қасым ханның қасқа жолын, Есім ханның ескі жолын”, Әз Тәуке ханның Күлтөбенің басындағы күнде кеңес болғанда “*Жеті жарғысын*” білмек керек. (Abai:3 word)

In order to hold a council “on the top of Mount Kultobe” as we say, it is essential to know all the laws passed down from our forefathers: Kasym -khan’s “Radiant pathway”, Esim -khan’s “Ancient pathway” and Az Tauke-khan’s “*Seven Canons*”. (Abai,2005: 84).

The term *Жеті жарғы* (Zheti zhargy) in the Kazakh language means a set of customary laws of the Kazakhs, adopted in the Kazakh Khanate under Khan Tauke, which regulated the administration, military affairs, the court of biys, land law. That is, Zheti zhargy is a unique set of laws that regulated the law in the Kazakh steppe, which was important in the life of the Kazakhs of that time. The word *canon* used in the translation means «a set of church rules or laws» in English. Comparison of semantics shows that these words do not match in conceptual content, Kazakh *Жеті жарғы* is wider in semantics, is not limited by religious rules.

The conceptual content of realities is important from the point of view of understanding the meaning, which is filled with ethno-cultural specifics. The concept of the word includes a set of information about the mental, spiritual and material spheres, which are manifested in the context of culture. In the “Book of Words” Abai reflects on the moral qualities of a person and philosophical categories. In the 17th word, Abay talks about the categories expressed by the concepts *қайрат* (kayrat), *тақыл* (akyl), *жүрек* (zhurek) (See ex.7). The semantic field of the concept *қайрат* in the Kazakh language includes the following meanings: energy, strength, power, perseverance, bravery, courage, valor. This concept is used in the following context:

(7) *Қайрат, ақыл, жүрек* үшеуі өнерлерін айтысып, таласып келіп, ғылымға жүгініпті. (Abai: 17th word).

Will, Reason and Heart once asked Knowledge to settle their argument about who was the most important among them. (Abai, 2005: 110)

The concept *will* is used as the variant of translation, which in the English linguistic culture in terms of semantics actualizes the meanings: purposefulness, determination. Comparison of semantic fields shows a non-coincidence in terms of expression of such a characteristic as *bravery*. The concept of *ақыл* in the Kazakh linguoculture includes semantic characteristics: mind, reason, advice, instruction, reasonable and correct decision. The English version of the translation of *reason*, coincides only in the meaning of *cleverness* but is not a complete equivalent of the Kazakh concept *ақыл*. The translator used the semantic method of translation. Thus, comparison of the conceptual content is an important stage in the work of a translator, which involves a linguocultural analysis to find a semantic equivalent.

Results

Thus, the translation and component analysis of the selected material made it possible to obtain the following results. The realia words of Kazakh culture in the *Book of Words* require a thorough cultural analysis, as they reflect the deep meanings of the national picture of the world in general, and the author's picture of the world in particular. Analysis of the original and translation revealed the strategies used by the translator to convey the specific culture-bound words of Kazakh culture, as well as the degree of functional and pragmatic equivalence of the compared texts. The main methods of transferring realia are the methods of content explication, generalization, semantic translation, transcription and transliteration, addition. The use of these techniques contributed to the achievement of semantic equivalence of the original and translation, but, on the other hand, has led to the loss of pragmatic equivalence in terms of transmitting elements of the national cultural identity and values of Kazakh culture. When interpreting the text, the translator must also take into account such an important factor as the author's individual style and a special picture of the world. Abai Kunanbayev in the *Book of Words* performs as propagandist of the spiritual values of the Kazakh people. Undoubtedly, the lexical originality of Abai's artistic style requires a deep rethinking and taking into account the culturally determined features of the text in translation. The loss of functional and pragmatic equivalence can negatively affect the adequate perception of deep meanings and understanding of the semantics of the text as a whole. The cognitive information contained in the original is the result of the processing of cultural and historical experience. The comprehension of cognitive models and structures presupposes a conceptual comprehension of the linguistic picture of the world of an ethnos. Cognitive problems of translation are related to the divergences of social, cultural and historical experience. The conceptual structure of the language is the result of the processing of the language picture of the world, which constitutes the conceptual sphere of the language. The translator should act as an interpreter of the deep meaning and perform a conceptual translation.

Conclusion

The article raised the actual problems of translation of realia of the language, which is especially important at the present stage of development of translation studies in Kazakhstan.

Translation of fiction requires a deep rethinking of the cognitive semantics of vocabulary layers containing culture-specific words, including culture-bound words of the language. The translation of *Book of Words* of the great Abai into English requires thorough analysis and knowledge of the mentality of the Kazakh people, the deep philosophical reasoning of the author, postulating human values and virtues. *Book of Words* is a work written in the genre of philosophical discourse and parable. This genre is unique in structure, content, composition, author's style and special organization of the text. Abai Kunanbayev skillfully combines narration, reasoning about the virtues of man with instructive edifications intended for the Kazakh people. Abai uses religious postulates, wise proverbs and sayings, historical references and philosophical dogmas in the text of edification. Translators of this work must capture all of the above subtleties of the author's style and shades of cultural connotations. The realia of Kazakh culture, used by Abai, perform a special function, they create a national picture of the world, reflect the originality of Kazakh culture, serve as a means of creating a special flavor. Translation analysis showed that the use of the generalization technique, semantic translation, descriptive method, modulation leads to the neutralization of cultural connotations and the loss of semantic and pragmatic equivalence. The conceptual analysis is an important phase in the pre-translation process, since it involves a deep semantic and cultural interpretation of the source word. The search for translation techniques that would reduce the degree of such discrepancies is one of the main tasks of the translator. It is also the task of the translator to render the text on the part of such aspects, as author's intentions, cultural implications, stylistic connotations, specifics of colloquial speech. The main goal of translation is to achieve the goals of communication and preserve the national and cultural specifics of the original.

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**Абай Құнанбаевтың «Қара сөздерінің» түпнұсқасы мен ағылшын тіліне аудармасындағы
реалиялардың семантикасы мен прагматикасы**

Аннотация. Бұл мақала аударманың семантикалық және прагматикалық мәселелеріне, атап айтқанда, қазақ мәдениетінің реалияларын ағылшын тіліне аударуды талдауға арналған. Зерттеудің практикалық материалы ретінде қазақ әдебиетінің классигі – ұлы Абай Құнанбаевтың ағылшын тіліне аударылған «Қара сөздері» қолданылды. Зерттеу пәні – Абайдың авторлық көзқарасының призмасы арқылы әлемнің қазақ бейнесінің тұжырымдамалық негізін бейнелейтін қазақ мәдениетінің реалиялары. Бұл шығармадағы қазақ мәдениетінің реалиялары мәдени кодты, ұлттық және көркемдік ерекшелікті түсіну үшін өте маңызды. Көркем мәтіндегі реалияларды пайдалану көркем бейнелерді көрсетеді. Реалиялар – мәдени ақпараттың сақтаушылары. Тарихи реалиялар этнографиялық ақпарат береді. Алға қойылған міндетті іске асыру үшін реалиялардың компоненттік және семантикалық талдау әдістері, сондай-ақ аударма талдауы қолданылды. Бұл әдістер түпнұсқа мәтіндерін және ағылшын тіліне аудармасын салыстырмалы талдауға негізделген. Таңдалған әдістерді қолдана отырып, практикалық материалды талдау аудармашы аудармада прагматикалық бейімделудің ерекше түрлерін қажет ететін реалия терең мәдени семантикасын түсінуі керек деген қорытынды жасауға мүмкіндік берді. Аударма талдауы аударма стратегияларын анықтауға, оларды прагматикалық және семантикалық эквиваленттілікке қол жеткізу тұрғысынан талдауға бағытталған. Түпнұсқа мен аударманың салыстырмалы талдауы көрсеткендей, ағылшын тілінің тілдік құралдары қазақ реалиялардың концептуалдық мазмұнын жеткізе алмайды, ал аудармашы қолданған аударма әдістері рецептордың реалиялардың терең семантикасын түсінуін шектейді.

Кілт сөздер: реалия, аударма, мәдениет, семантика, прагматика, концепт, аударма әдістері, жалпылау, сипаттамалық аударма.

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**Семантика и прагматика реалий в оригинале и переводе на английский язык
«Слов назиданий» Абая Кунанбаева**

Аннотация. Данная статья посвящена анализу семантических и прагматических проблем перевода, в частности, особенностям перевода реалий казахской культуры на английский язык. В качестве практического материала исследования и критического анализа использована классика казахской литературы: «Слова назидания» великого Абая Кунанбаева в переводе на английский

язык. Предмет исследования – реалии казахской культуры, отражающие концептуальную основу казахской картины мира сквозь призму авторского видения Абая. Реалии казахской культуры в данном произведении важны для понимания культурного кода, национального колорита и художественного своеобразия. Для реализации выдвинутой задачи использованы методы компонентного и семантического анализа реалий, а также переводческий анализ. Данные методы основаны на сравнительно-сопоставительном анализе текстов оригинала и перевода на английский язык. Анализ практического материала с использованием выбранных методов позволил сделать выводы о том, что переводчик должен осмысливать глубинную культурную семантику реалий, требующих особых видов прагматической адаптации при переводе. Переводческий анализ направлен на выявление переводческих стратегий, их анализ с точки зрения достижения прагматической и семантической эквивалентности. Сравнительный анализ оригинала и перевода показал, что языковые средства английского языка не способны передать концептуальное и культурологическое содержание казахских реалий, а приемы перевода, использованные переводчиком, ограничивают понимание рецептором глубинной семантики реалий.

Ключевые слова: реалия, перевод, культура, семантика, прагматика, концепт, приемы перевода, генерализация, описательный перевод.

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