

The role of translating culturally-specific words for transferring presuppositions in poetry translation

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Poetry is rigorous selection process of words in conveying information for people, usually speaking in one language. Many outstanding translated poems have made a great contribution to cultural exchange and understanding and have become an inseparable part of the world civilization. The poetic translation could be considered as interlanguage and intercultural communication because poetry reflects many of the common pursuits, general feelings, and emotions of humankind. Also, people with different cultural backgrounds touch each other deeply through understanding and appreciation of poetry. That is why the aim of the translator is to reproduce poem in a way as to achieve the same effect on the readers in the target language as it did on the readers in the source language. The good translation of poems cannot be isolated from culture. So, cultural understanding during the process of translation is essential. However, such culture-oriented translation is known to be one of the most challenging aspects of translation. Nida and Reyburn point out that: “In fact, difficulties arising out of differences of culture constitute the most serious problems for translators and have produced the most far-reaching misunderstandings among readers” [Nida and Reyburn: 2]. To cope with a difficulty, caused by differences in cultures, as a help for the translator to come over the difficulties in translation the pragmatics could be a powerful tool due to the fact that it accounts for elements that are not present ‘on the face’ of the utterance but have to be inferred. Translators need to analyze in depth what the text is trying to convey from the communicative point of view and in order to do that they need to pay special attention to an area that will determine the success of their work and that is meant to fill the ‘pragmatic gap’ between source text and translation. This area is presupposition [Sanchez: 114].

About presupposition Stalnaker states “a person’s presuppositions are the propositions whose truth he takes for granted, often unconsciously, in a conversation, an inquiry, or a deliberation. They are the background assumptions that may be used without being spoken” [Stalnaker: 447]. Defining presupposition has been a matter of controversy among specialists, its (shades of) meaning differing according to the field in which this category is used and even within the area of the same discipline. Presupposition involves logical (the truth value of utterances), philosophical (the necessary conditions for having utterances), linguistic (it is triggered by linguistic items in an oral or written text) and extralinguistic (social, cultural) aspects. Presupposition, which will be discussed according to translation refers to the last two aspects that are directly related to the situation of communication [Dimitriu: 92].

Fawcett has focused on presupposition as a sub-element of pragmatics and has defined two types of presuppositions: a) linguistic presuppositions: those which are perceivable by the language used; b) nonlinguistic presuppositions: those which are perceivable by context, knowledge and culture [Fawcett: 123-124].

Linguistic presuppositions usually come out in translation as clearly as in the original. It is clear that presupposition is such a fundamental component of linguistic communication that no successful translation can occur without an awareness of what it means [Sanchez: 117].

Nonlinguistic presuppositions that are the real touchstones for the translators, eliciting their world knowledge and cultural competence. In the case of extralinguistic presuppositions there might be frequent gaps between what the authors/senders assume to be knowledge that they share with their readership and the socio-cultural background of the readers of the translated texts. It is up to translators to explicate, adapt or omit the opaque presupposition of the source. Presuppositions posing translation problems generally refer to cultural terms - common and proper nouns or intertextual instances - allusions, unmarked quotations, parodies, etc. [Dimitriu: 93].

By analyzing English translations of Kazakh poetry, we can say that the presupposition of the target and source language poetry differ greatly according to the way translators used cultural specific words and it affected how the presuppositions of original poems were transferred. According to the analysis the translators mostly used the explanation of culturally specific words by adding their own information or sometimes omitting certain elements in the process of translation. This analysis helped to determine that while translating poetry translators need to become fully aware of culturally specific words for correct interpretation of the source text presupposition. If the source and target cultures differ significantly, the source message may be wrongly deciphered. Furthermore, presuppositions merit attention from translators because the communicative errors they give rise to are usually more covert and harder to detect than grammatical errors and may, therefore, cause serious misunderstanding in the target reader.

Источники и литература

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