

Holubenko N.I.

## Approaches to Reproducing Nominative Representatives of Cultural Concepts

Holubenko Natalia Ivanivna, postgraduate student  
at the Department of English Philology and Translation, Faculty of Translators/Interpreters  
Kyiv National Linguistic University, Kyiv, Ukraine

**Abstract.** The article focuses on the study of ontological categories of the language, the resolving or partial interpretation of which can bring us closer to better understanding the mechanism of translation. It concerns the ways and methods of reproducing in translation basic conceptual notions which are the results of human cognitive activity and reflect some linguocultural values of a specific area. The paper outlines an overview of different approaches and strategies of reproducing the concept that represents conceptual and lingual picture of the world. Concepts are understood as linguo-cognitive and linguo-culturological mechanisms, the translation of which requires culture-specific knowledge and methods for organizing information in different cultures. Present-day linguists have different views as to the main approaches applied by translators in conveying ethnocultural concepts. Thus, two different approaches of reproducing a concept – cultural and cognitive – are analyzed in the article. Divergences of linguists according to definition and interpretation of the notion ‘translation strategy’ are examined in the article. Strategy is one of the main notions in contemporary translation studies. Basic translation strategies applied by translators in the process of the adequate transfer of ethnocultural concept are analyzed. Two opposite strategies – translation dispersion and translation convergence – are placed in a wide context.

**Keywords:** adequate translation, concept, cultural and cognitive approach, translation strategies, translation dispersion, translation convergence

Nowadays translation, both theoretical and practical, has undeniably interdisciplinary character, being studied by scholars of various linguistic branches: S. Halverson [10], V. Khairulin [6], D. Kiraly [12], V. Komissarov [1], H.P. Krings [13], G. Toury [16], L. Venuti [17]. Literary translation is considered to be one of the most difficult types of translation, which can unite cultures. The translation of a literary text is a reproduction of the source picture of the world that represents a nation’s ethnocultural specificity. Researchers point out that translation introduces new meanings in the original text which help to determine the life of a work of literature in a cultural tradition. The challenges of translation include the cultural background, the connotative and expressive characteristics of language units, the discursive-communicative as well as generic and stylistic features of the source text. This is particularly important when we deal with works of literature that depict conceptual picture of the world. So, among the difficulties of the literary translation one can name these: the abundance of expressive means and concepts, high emotional load, obsolete expressions and archaisms, a large number of stylistic devices. This kind of study is impossible without defining the essence of ethno-specific concepts. In representing concepts the translators either employ the descriptive method or draw upon dictionary correspondences, which can only roughly convey the meaning of a language unit. According to researches, lexemes that denominate a non-equivalent concept are subject in translation to considerable transformation. The adequate translation of a concept calls for special linguistic and cultural knowledge. These problems and challenges in reproducing ethnocultural concepts have to be thoroughly analyzed.

In the last decades the development of translation theory has been moving towards a larger scope of aspects in comparison with the investigation into purely language problems and formal relations between a source language text and a target language text, taking into account the innovative achievements in linguistics, the study of culture, the advent of cognitive linguistics and discourse analysis. A lot of attention is being paid to cultural, cognitive and ethnic problems. There are different interpretations and definitions of the notion of ‘concept’, which is

considered, on one hand, as a cluster of culture in the consciousness of a person and, on the other hand, as a mental phenomenon of categorization of consciousness. Ethnocultural concept is defined as a system of historical, cultural, social and traditional values of a nation determined by ethnocultural matters.

Concepts are verbalized, thus entering the semantic sphere of language. They can represent information acquired by a person throughout their whole life, as well as the experience of one nation. That is why there is such a notion as a ‘cognitive function of translation’ in the theory and practice of translation, which is closely connected with its communicative function, because the aim of this communication is to transfer information and broaden the background knowledge of a recipient. Ethnospecific fragments of conceptual picture of the world which reflect mental and cultural specificity of a nation through translations become available for readers of other languages and cultures.

At the pre-translation stage the literary translator should study and analyze the cultural concepts of the source nation, explore the ways they are presented in the given work of literature, and determine the set of strategies for adequate reproducing these concepts in translation. It is very important because the analysis of concepts affords the opportunity to interpret the inimitability of the lingual picture of the world that is embodied in a person’s perception of reality and forms the basis of the general spiritual picture of the world.

For translators it is important to know that concepts may be either simple, that is, represented by one language sign, or complex, that is, represented by several language signs. However, it can’t be presented in full scope by one marker only because it includes the person’s entire knowledge of reality, the way of life and the type of mentality that make the task of the translator considerably more difficult. It is necessary firstly to examine the models and structure of concepts for their adequate transfer into other languages and then to interpret and reproduce them.

A rigid structure of a concept, which includes the kernel and the periphery, appears to be of special importance for the theory and practice of translation. The kernel of concept is a certain image surrounded by the basic cognitive layer,

which reflects features of the object. The periphery consists of less rigidly structured conceptual layers, which interpret particular features in the form of statements and instructions of consciousness encoded in the culture through the mentality of various nations. This layer is known as 'an interpretative field of concept' which includes opinions of different groups of people. This field of concept, though loosely structured, is extremely important for the understanding of a national mentality, thus it has to be adequately reproduced in translation.

Moreover, translators have to know that the concept is a multidimensional organization of meaning which has its evaluative, image-bearing and notional aspects, the reproduction of which requires both culture-specific and cognitive knowledge. There are two different approaches to reproducing in translation ethnocultural concepts: one is cultural and the other is cognitive.

#### **The cultural approach to reproducing concepts.**

Ethnocultural concepts are of great importance for translation theory because this interdisciplinary branch of philology is based on culture knowledge and helps to make a dialogue not only between languages but also between cultures. Sometimes people ask one and the same question: What is culture? Nowadays the notion of culture has been moved to the centre of investigations of linguists who study the cultural specificity of languages and communication. Present-day scholars (O. Orishak, A. Chesterman) acknowledge the importance of the cultural aspect in translation practice, seeing culturological problems as a lot more serious than lexical and syntactical ones. It is proved by the fact that culture is determined as a complex of various kinds of a nation's activities, it is a bank of information which includes material and spiritual ethnic values and traditions. Language is inseparably linked with that reality in which people live as well as with the activity they perform. The culture of every nation has its own conceptual sphere represented in the national picture of the world. So, when we speak about the conceptual sphere of a language we mean the conceptual sphere of its culture. For, example, D. Lykhachev considers the Russian language as a 'substitute' of Russian culture in the minds of Russian language speakers, a special concentrated product of the nation's culture and its embodiment in various strata of population [3, p. 283].

Indeed, in order to translate a literary text adequately the translator has to master a special scope of culture knowledge because the author builds his/her communication with the reader only on the basis of cultural, historical, aesthetic and ideological awareness of a specific ethnos. The translation practice proves that for all the divergences between languages and cultures it is possible to adequately reproduce the information encoded by the author in the source text. According to I. Shevchenko, the activity of translator lies in the paraphrasing, reinterpreting certain linguistic and cultural gaps in the original text and using the tactics which allow either to complement or omit lacunas by resorting to various signs in the target text [8, p. 304]. Moreover, in the process of translation the two languages as well as the two cultures, which have both universal and ethno-specific character, are in close interaction. Particular conditions of existence of a certain ethnos (geographical and anthropological features, cultural traditions) form some specific conceptions that deter-

mine the basis of the national conceptual picture of the world and the national lingual picture of the world. No one doubts today that languages reflect the reality differently, asymmetrically. Not only some elements, present in one culture, can be absent in another but their application in different cultures may vary. It results in different associations in the receiving culture. As O. Orishak points out, much attention should be paid both to universal and national cultural norms and values [4, p. 12].

Every culture is sure to have its own assortment of concepts and their meanings can also vary in register. Social and cultural experience that finds its reflection in the general picture of the world is fixed in the denotative meaning of nomination as well as in its connotative area. Since the process of communication is a creative endeavour, all ethnocultural concepts embody cultural values and analogies specific to the area from which they come. Connotations are culturally and socially determined evaluative statements, which find their expression in semantics. They are not embedded in words but can be interpreted according to specific individual and culturally conditioned values. That is why different strategies for cultural transformation have to be taken into consideration.

#### **The cognitive approach to reproducing concepts.**

The investigation of concept as an object of cognitive linguistics, the language and culture study as an integral part of translation presupposes the analysis of the text on semantic as well as cognitive level. In the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century a new framework of research was formed which is called Cognitive Translatology in Halverson's terminology [10], or Cognitive Translation Studies in Munoz's terminology [14]. The present article uses the term Cognitive Translatology that refers to a recently established linguistic discipline combining the translation theory with cognitive linguistics, psychology and neurophysiology.

Donald Kiraly offers the cognitive model of translation process in which the translator's mind is seen as "an information-processing system in which translation comes from the interaction of intuitive and controlled processes using linguistic and extralinguistic information" [12, p. 102]. R. Pavilenis in his study of the process of conceptualization reveals that the results of cognitive activity can be linked with the formation of a system of matters or concepts due to the information about actual or possible arrangement of phenomena in the world around in the consciousness of an individual [5]. This prompts us to agree with the assumption of G. Shreve and E. Angelone that "verbalizations reliably indicate cognitive behavior" [15, p. 6]. Verbalizations in the article are understood as verbalized cultural concepts. As the translation practice shows, the efficiency of intercultural communication is determined, to a large degree, by unanimity of knowledge of communicants belonging to different linguocultural societies. Investigating the nature of relations between cultural and cognitive factors of translation, V. Khairulin comes to the conclusion that utterances in the process of translation are structured within framework of definite cognitive schemes. He also adds that it is of primary importance for solving translation challenges to have a system of structured knowledge, which reflect the interrelations between vital cognitive categories. These categories are cultural and national-specific concepts, reproduction

of which from one language and culture into another is quite urgent today because it is one of the most difficult translation problems – the problem of transferring culture-specific information in the source text by means of another language and another culture [6, p. 10].

It is not enough to translate just language units of a literary text for the adequate perception of the source literary text by readers from other cultures. At that case the extralingual information, the experience and knowledge of a nation are not fully rendered. This, in turn, does not evoke the desired emotions, sufferings and ideas in the target audience.

**Translation strategies applied in reproducing ethno-cultural concepts.** Translation strategies refers to a way applied by the translator to solve the problems occurring in the translation process. In translation theory the notion of strategy is studied by many scholars: A. Chesterman [9], R. Jääskeläinen [11], V. Komissarov [1], Krings [13], O. Schweizer [7], G. Toury [16], L. Venuti [17] – and it has a narrow and broad meaning. R. Jääskeläinen gives a broad definition to the term ‘strategy’ and determines it as “a set of rules or principles which a translator uses to reach the goals determined by the translating situation in the most effective way” [11, p. 76]. It is useful in pre-translation analysis when the translator faces the problem of translating the original text faithfully to meet the requirements and expectations of the recipients. In other words, the focus is not on a single situation but on the translation of literary text as a whole, so global or macro-strategies are also to be taken into account.

Macro-strategies are divided into standardization and adaptation. Standardization is defined by G. Toury as “a translation strategy when a translator uses the standard variant of the language not conveying the peculiarities of the original text” [16, p. 57]. Another strategy which is commonly used in translating is adaptation. It is seen as a set of procedures to convey the source text preserving the pragmatic effect of the original together with linguistic, social and cultural originality of the target identity.

Translators also put emphasis on micro-strategies: domestication and foreignization (L. Venuti). The strategy of domestication correlates with the translation technique based on the most adequate linguistic and stylistic transfer of the ST author’s meaning. L. Venuti sees domestication as a way of reproducing the elements of the source text in a mode peculiar to the target text values, and opposes it to foreignization. This term refers to a translation strategy aimed at rendering the source text in target language with highlighting and maintaining the national specific features of foreign identity. Foreignizing translation is considered to be as “a kind of resistant translation that partly or wholly eliminates the ‘otherness’ of the source text” [17]. It should be pointed out that in reproducing ethno-cultural concepts in works of literature foreignization is a less effective way of adequate rendering culture-specific notions. It depends on difference in cultures and conceptualizations of the world which are unfamiliar for readers from other cultures.

Among other reasons that influence greatly the translation quality one can mention un-observance of principle of minimization of translation dispersion, on the one hand, and realization of the principle of translation convergence, on the other hand. The term ‘translation dispersion’ was

suggested by O. Lysenkova. It means the scattering of the original text in translation process that results in the so called ‘bundle of correspondences’ of the source word [2, p. 112]. However, it is based on the universal language synonymy. For example, in the works of Southern writers (USA) *negro* can be translated as *негри / чернюки / темношкірі / челядники*, *field hands* as *негри / раби на плантаціях* and *white trash* as *білі голодранці / біла золота / білі злидарі / білі безземельні*. It is evident that the translator resorts to synonymic correspondences based on the context in different ways that affirms the variability of translation dispersion. The translator’s decision either to minimize translation dispersion or to apply it consciously in a larger scope depends upon the specificity of the source text and the ability of the target reader to understand properly certain elements of other cultures. Any translation variant of lexical units is recognized to be a partial equivalent because none of them can transfer the overall meaning of the translated word. At the same time, the use of partial equivalents gives the opportunity to attain the necessary naturalness of translation and make the target text readable and easy for recipients’ perception.

Another approach directed in most cases toward the target language is realized in the principle of translation convergence. The term ‘convergence’ is widely used in exact and liberal arts. Convergence is an accumulation and combination of elements. The notion of convergence is perfectly applied to the theory of literary translation, particularly to problems of reproducing ethno-culturally marked units. For example: *negroes / slaves / servants – челядь*. Thus, the application of the principle of translation convergence leads to creating specific common noun that encompasses several meanings. Such approach, on the one hand, simplifies, to a considerable extent, the task of the translator and clarifies the perception of foreign reality depicted in the original text, on the other hand, because one notion accumulates all the elements of a cultural concept. In addition, the principle of translation convergence will inevitably cause certain deformations of the original text. It can also provoke the loss of figurative components of ethno-specific units and their stylistic shift.

To sum it up, there is a close interrelation between the translator’s movement toward the source language and culture (foreignization) or to target language and culture (domestication). The chosen translation strategy, the application of translation convergence or translation dispersion can make the translated text closer to or farther from the original.

In conclusion, it is worth mentioning that the translation of a literary text is a very complicated and arduous task. It is a multiple-aspect process incorporating linguistic as well as extra-linguistic factors. One of the most important criteria of translation adequacy is the faithful reproduction of a cultural concept, which is very significant in translation studies because the concept embraces ethnocultural knowledge as well as information conveyed by the ideological and imagery parameters in works of literature. Human communication occurs in the context of culture that is manifested in language itself and texts. The translator’s success as a mediator between two cultures depends on his/her knowledge and understanding of the national identity and cultural experience realized in a language, speech acts and written texts; the comprehension

of implicitly expressed meanings known by all members of linguocultural community and based on cultural values; the ability to choose adequate linguistic means to transfer information, preserving its pragmatic influence on readers. Therefore, the elements of culture represent extralinguistic reality and constitute the cultural component of a linguo-ethnic barrier. The concept is basically a notion of

cognitive linguistics the main objective of which is finding the interrelation between thought, mind and reality. That is why cognitive translatology is constantly acquiring importance and momentum. The combination of the two approaches, cultural and cognitive, in reproducing the ethno-specific concept is a must to achieve adequate translation of the whole literary text.

#### REFERENCES

1. Komissarov V.N. Modern Translation / V.N. Komissarov. - Moscow: ETS, 2002. - 424 p.
2. Lysenkova E.L. On the law of conversion of the dispersion / E.L. Lysenkova // Vestnik Moskov. Univ. Ser. 19, Linguistics and Intercultural Communication. - 2006. - № 1. - S. 111 - 118.
3. Likhachev D.S. conceptsphere Russian language / Likhachev // Russian literature. From the Theory of Literature to the structure of the text. Anthology / [Ed. V.P. Neroznak]. - M.: Akademiya, 1997. - S. 280-287.
4. Orishak O.V. Factors cultural asymmetry in linguistic comparison and translation (based on the Russian and French military and political texts): Thesis of dis. Cand. Philol. Sc: 10.02.20 "Comparative-historical, typological and comparative linguistics" / O.V. Orishak. - Moscow, 2009. - 22 p.
5. Pavilenis R.I. The problem of meaning: a modern logical-philosophical analysis Yazikov / Ionovich Rolandas Pavilionis. - Moscow: Thought, 1983. - 286 p.
6. Khayrullin V.V. Lingvokulturologichesky and cognitive aspects of translation: Thesis of dis. ... Dr. Philol. Sc. / V.V. Khayrullin. - M., 1995. - P. 14.
7. Schweitzer A.D. Theory of Translation: status, issues, aspects / A.D. Schweitzer. - Moscow: Nauka, 1988. - 215 p.
8. Shevchenko I.S. The historical development of cognitive and pragmatic aspects of discourse / I.S. Shevchenko // Foreign philology in Millennium: Journal of Kharkiv National University named after V.N. Karazin. - Kh. Constant, 2000. - № 471. - S. 300-307.
9. Chesterman A. Communication strategies, learning strategies and translation strategies. In Kirsten Malmkjaer (ed), Translation and Language Teaching: Language Teaching and Translation. Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing. - 1998. - P. 135 - 144.
10. Halverson, S. Conceptual Work and the Translation Concept / S. Halverson // Target. - 1999. - No. 11(1). - P. 1-31.
11. Jääskeläinen, Riitta. 2000. "Focus on Methodology in Think-aloud Studies on Translating". In Tapping and Mapping the Processes of Translation and Interpreting. Outlooks of Empirical Research, edited by Riitta Jääskeläinen & Son Tirkkonen-Condit, 71-82. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
12. Kiraly, Donald. 1995. Pathways to Translation: Pedagogy and Process. Kent: Kent State University Press.
13. Krings H.P. Was in den Köpfen von Übersetzern vorgeht : Eine empirische Untersuchung zur Struktur des Übersetzungsprozesses an fortgeschrittenen Französischlernern / H. P. Krings. - Tübingen : Narr, 1986. - XI, 570 s.
14. Muñoz Martin, Ricardo. 2010. "On Paradigm and Cognitive Translatology". In Translation and Cognition, edited by Gregory Shreve & Erik Angelone, 169-187. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
15. Shreve, Gregory & Erik Angelone. 2010. "Translation and Cognition: Recent Development". In Translation and Cognition, edited by Gregory Shreve & Erik Angelone, 1-13. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
16. Toury, Gideon. "The Nature and Role of Norms in Translation". In idem, Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond. Amsterdam-Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1995, 53-69.
17. Venuti, L. The Translator's Invisibility. A History of Translation / L. Venuti. - London/New York : Routledge. - 2008.

#### **Голубенко Н.И. Подходы к воспроизведению номинативных репрезентантов культурных концептов**

**Аннотация.** Данная статья рассматривает некоторые аспекты изучения онтологических категорий языка, проблемы решения или даже частичное разъяснение которых может приблизить нас к более глубокому познанию механизму перевода. Речь идет о способах и методах отображения в переводе базовых, концептуальных представлений, которые есть результатом когнитивной деятельности человека и отражают основные лингвокультурные ценности социума. В статье изучаются разные подходы и стратегии отображения концептов, которые формируют концептуальную и языковую картину мира. Концепты – это лингвокогнитивные и лингвокультурологические механизмы, воссоздание которых в переводе требует особых знаний национальных особенностей и методов организации знаний в рамках двух культур. Современные лингвисты высказывают разные взгляды на основные подходы, которые используют переводчики для отображения этнокультурного концепта. Поэтому рассматриваются два разных подхода – культурный и когнитивный. Отмечаются расхождения лингвистов в определении и интерпретации понятия “переводческие стратегии”. Стратегия – это одна из главных терминов переводоведения. Основные переводческие стратегии, которые переводчик использует для адекватного отображения концепта – это переводческая дисперсия и переводческая конвергенция.

**Ключевые слова:** адекватный перевод, концепт, культурный и когнитивный подходы, переводческие стратегии, переводная дисперсия, переводная конвергенция