

## Indirect translation and the issue of culture specific terms rendering

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**Abstract.** Indirect translation is one of scarcely studied topics in translation studies. Translations of some Ukrainian literary works via the third language represent evidence of its prolific as well as clandestine nature. The given article considers a novel (“Tyhrolovy”) by a renown Ukrainian writer Ivan Bahriany in its English and indirect German translations from the standpoint of rendering its culture specific terms. The aim of the given article is to consider the implications of indirect translation, to analyze the correlation between indirect translation and intermediary text as well as to bring attention to the issue of indirect translation in general.

**Keywords:** translation, indirect translation, culture specific terms, realia, intermediary text, author’s style, the place factor.

Culture specific terms or realia in the novel “Tyhrolovy” (1944) by Ivan Bahriany constitute an important feature of the author’s style. Thus, the **goal** of the given article is to consider the peculiarities of their rendering in both English (“The Hunted and the Hunters”, 1954) and indirect German (“Das Gesetz der Taiga”, 1963) translations in order to establish if the correlation between indirect and intermediary (direct/source) translation is always stable. **Methods** of comparative translation analysis, contextual analysis and hermeneutics were used in order to achieve the goal of the article.

On the cover of German translation of “Tyhrolovy” (“Das Gesetz der Taiga”, Verlag Styria, Köln Graz) one can see a quote from one of the biggest and most influential American daily newspapers “New York Herald Tribune”. It’s an abstract from a review by an American writer, literary criticist and Miami university professor Walter Havinghurst. It says the following: “Dieses beredete und erregende Abenteuer ist ein ebenso erregender Ruf nach politischer Freiheit. Es ist ein Roman der Ritterlichkeit und Tapferkeit – überraschende Themen in unserer schmutzigen Literatur” („This fascinating adventure is all about achieving political freedom. That’s a novel about knighthood and bravery – totally unexpected topics for our tainted literature“). Ivan Bahriany himself took a great care of making sure that his works were translated into a vast number of languages. In one of the letters to his friend Bahriany stated that “The Hunted and the Hunters” (translated into English by George S. N. Luckyi) served as a source text for translations of the novel into other languages. Thus, “Das Gesetz der Taiga” (translated into German by Dr. Margreth von Kees) is an indirect translation. He probably wanted the world to hear all about the above mentioned topics. In May 1962 he wrote to his friend D. Zavertaylo that “things are going just fine with translation [...] I’m so anxious, I really want the translation to be a success”. In that same letter he admits that the biggest problem in translation was the realia rendering: “Translators don’t understand a lot of words and notions of Ukrainian Soviet terminology, those specifically soviet words and constructs, but my book without them would be deprived of its original flavor” (translation is our – B.P.). Precisely this statement motivated the given study of realia rendering in English and German translations of Bahriany’s novel.

In the realm of Translation studies culture specific terms rendering is acknowledged as a topical and critical

issue. English professor of translation at the University of Surrey, P. Newmark calls them “cultural words” and argues that the best way to deal with them is descriptive translation [10, p.95]. A lot of translation scholars and theorists devoted their works to the translation of realia or expressed their interest in the topic. Among them are A. Lefevere, K. Reiss, R. Zorivchak, L. Kolomiyets, M. Paluszkiwicz-Misiaczek etc. L. Kolomiyets, for instance, states that realia constitute one of the main problems in the Ukrainian-English literary translation [8, p. 119]. Realia signify ethnospecificity and add to the uniqueness and atmosphere of a literary work. Realia are defined as words and expressions used for culture-specific terms. Their main lexical meaning contains traditional complex of ethnocultural information, which is foreign to the reality of target language [13, p. 58]. R. Zorivchak states that “realia are not only words and expressions of the speech level but also a phraseologisms, which semantically can be divided into historical, every day or ethnographic” [13, p. 61]. Phraseologisms and realia tend to create a problem of choice for a translator, that is a choice of the best possible way of their rendering in target language.

The translator’s decision helps to identify what kind of translation is under consideration – academic or popular. L. Kolomiyets states that “the ideal goal of academic translation is to achieve accuracy in rendering the historical, cultural and individually author’s peculiarities of the original, thus academic translation contains transliterated realia with footnotes [...] whereas popular translation operates on the lines of adaptation, close rendering of realia and description, rarely employing transliteration with a footnote” [8, p.121]. Translations of Bahriany’s “Tyhrolovy” prove to be popular as illustrated by the following examples:

(1) ...Інженери і авіатори, ударники і літуні, партробітники і туристи, колгоспні колективізатори і радгоспні бюрократи, раціоналізатори й індустріальні авантюристи, прокурори і розтратники, потенціальні злодії й імпотентні фарисеї...[4, p. 17].

Engineers and aviators, **Stakhanovites**, airmen, **party workers and tourists**, **collectivizers of Kolhozes** and **Sovkhozes**, bureaucrats, efficiency men and industrial hucksters, directors and camouflaged adventurers, lawyers and spend thrifts, potential thieves and impotent Pharises...[3, p. 24].

Da sass der Ingenieur neben dem Flieger und dem **Stachanowarbeiter**, der **Parteimann** neben dem

*Kolchosen-Organisator* oder dem Fabrikdirektor, der Flugzeugkonstrukteur neben dem Touristen, dem Beamten, dem Rechtsanwalt, verkappte Abenteurer, Gelegenheitsdiebe und Schmuggler,

*Bürokratenseelen* und Pharisäer... [1, p. 18].

The given example represents a description of passengers of “the best and the most modern express in the Soviet Union”, which stands in contrast to the described earlier “train of death”, full of convicts (the one that the protagonist manages to escape). The account of passengers contains Soviet realia: *ударники, партробитники, колхозні колективізатори, радгоспні бюрократи, партстаж*. The Stakhanovite movement (1935) was known even outside the Soviet Union, which makes *Stakhanovite* as a correspondence to *ударник* (a worker-overachiever) an understandable concept for target culture. Merriam-Webster dictionary gives the following definition: “a Soviet industrial worker awarded recognition and special privileges for output beyond production norms” [12]. Thus, the adaptation was used here, although it’s doubtful as to the familiarity of, for instance, Austrian young people (who were recommended to read the novel) with the name of Stahanov. Realia connected to the party were mostly transliterated (*партробитники* – *party workers/ Parteimann, партстаж* – *Party status/Parteifunktion*) due to the clarity of their meaning. However, rendering of such realia as *колхозні колективізатори і радгоспні бюрократи* (“collectivizers of Kolhozes and Sovkhozes, bureaucrats” in English translation) can be a bit confusing for the reader. *Колхоз* – is a corporate union of peasants (funded by themselves), *радгосп* – is a government enterprise (with employees). Thus, there is no need to differentiate between Sovkhozes and bureaucrats (which constitute one expression in the original). Moreover, it’s again doubtful whether the target audience is familiar with the concepts. In the indirect German translation one can see *Kolchosen-Organisator* (organisers of Kolhozes) and *Bürokratenseelen* (bureaucratic souls), *радгоспу (Sovkhozes)* were omitted in translation. For the targeted (as announced on the book cover) young readership of Austria of 1960s that omission, probably, was not critical, which can’t be stated in relation to its function in the novel.

Thus, it can be concluded that translators used situational correspondences and transliterations without footnotes in order to make that translation easier to perceive for the target audience – young readers. And the choice of realia rendering depended on the target audience, which in case of German translation (Austrian publishing house) was explicitly aimed at the young readership. However, in some cases the translated text appears to be less understandable since the above mentioned realia bear no meaning for the young foreign (not Soviet) reader.

Very often culture specific terms are omitted in the translation. For example:

(2) *Зі сміхом і жартами, з частушками та з «шірака страна моя родная», а ще більше – просто з виском і галасом...* [4, p. 23].

... there was laughter and jokes, ribald singing at the tops of their voices “*Long and wide is my native land*” [3, p. 32].

...und unter Lachen und fröhlichen Spässen...sangen sie aus vollem Halse: “*Weit und gross ist mein Vaterland...*” [1, p. 24].

A culture specific term *частушки* (a popular genre of Russian folklore of the second half of the XIX-XX th century [6]) is omitted in the above mentioned English and German translations. However, the omission is not that critical for reader’s understanding of what is happening due to the detailed account of other things such as *jokes, singing* etc. Transliteration with a footnote, explaining the meaning of a “chastushka”, would only distract reader’s attention. The same can’t be stated about another culture specific term – words from a well-known patriotic Soviet song – “*Песня о Родине*” (it was written by V. Lebedev-Kumach and I. Dunayevskiy for the film “Circus”, 1936). Ivan Bahriany deliberately uses graphon in order to render Russian phonetics with the means of Ukrainian, which has effect of an irony in the original. This irony is lost in translation. A. Lefevre states that “an expedient solution, used fairly often, is to leave the foreign word or phrase untranslated and then to append a translation between brackets or even to insert a translation into the body of the text a little later, where it would be expedient to do so” [9, p.29]. If one looks at English and German translations from the example 2, one can see word for word translation without any additional explanation or footnotes. That stands to reason only in the case of German translation since a German singer and actor Ernest Bush used to perform it in German since 1936 [5, p. 6]. Thus, in some cases indirect translation can be more successful in dealing with such issue of translation as rendering the original realia due to the factor of closer connection between the source (original text) and the target culture (indirect translation text), which is preserved despite the intermediary text’s role in the translation process.

German translation theorist K. Reiss considers omission of culture specific terms to be inadmissible. She argues that realia belong to place factors – one of the extra-linguistic determinants of translation (the immediate situation, the subject matter, the time factor etc.) – and thus, “include primarily all the facts and characteristics of the country and culture of the source language” [11, p.74]. According to Reiss, one can deal with the difficulties of rendering the above-mentioned place factors by means of: “1. loan words, 2. calques or loan formations, 3. using the foreign expression and adding an explanatory footnote, 4. an explanatory translation” [11, p. 76]. In English and indirect German translations of Bahriany’s “Tyhrolovy” apart from omission translators also used calque (example 1) and explanatory translation as one can see in the following example:

(3) *До салон-вагона зайшло двоє в гумових плащах, в елегантних хромових чоботях і в узбецьких – таких модних влітку – тубетейках* [4, p. 34].

*Two men dressed in rubber coats, elegant chrome leather boots and Uzbek skullcap, so popular in summer, entered the dining car* [3, p. 40].

*Zwei Männer in Regenmänteln, Chromlederstiefeln und der im Sommer beliebten Tjubetejka*<sup>15</sup> *betraten nun den Speisenwagen. <sup>15</sup>Tjubetejka ist eine kleine Sommermütze, nicht größer als eine Untertasse, die in Mittelasien, in Usbekistan und*

*Tadschikistan, zum Schutz gegen die Sonne auf dem*

*Scheitel getragen wird. Sie würde später Mode in der ganzen Sowjet-Union.* [1, p. 31, 252].

The given example contains a culture specific term – *любемейка* (a small hat that is worn mostly in Middle Asia). *Uzbek skullcap* in the English translation represents the concept as it is whereas indirect German translation offers transliteration of the term, supplying reader with an explanatory note (Tjubetejka – is a small summer hat, not bigger than a plate, it protects people of Middle Asia, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan from the sun. It became very popular in the Soviet Union). Thus, one can clearly see that indirect translation not always follows the steps of its source (an intermediary). As to the chosen in the German text way of rendering the culture specific term under discussion, explanatory note familiarizes the reader with the unknown constructs from the source culture and at the same time offers a unique opportunity to feel the foreignness of the source culture (through transliteration). Apart from the list of explanatory footnotes, the German text “Das Gesetz der Taiga” also contains “Erläuternde Zeichnungen zum Text” (“Explanatory pictures to the text”) [1, p. 247]. There a reader can find pictures and explanations to garments, household items etc. The book also contains “Wissenswerte Anmerkungen” (“Interesting notes”) [1, p. 251] with explanations of the transliterated culture specific terms. Thus, it’s not surprising that Ivan Bahriany was very satisfied with the German translation of his novel even though it was

made through the mediating English text.

The given paper explores indirect translation in terms of culture specific terms (realia) rendering. A novel “Tyhrolovy” by a famous Ukrainian writer Ivan Bahriany and its English and indirect German translations were considered in this case study. The results of comparative translation analysis show that despite the imminent dependency of the target (indirect translation) text from the intermediary (direct translation) text, indirect translation can be far closer to the original than the direct in terms of realia rendering. Thus, although many culture specific terms of the novel “Tyhrolovy” by I. Bahriany were omitted in its English translation (“The Hunted and the Hunters”), they were preserved in its indirect German counterpart (“Das Gesetz der Taiga”) through transliteration and explanatory footnote. In some cases, there was no need for explanation due to some shared historical and cultural heritage. That occurs if there is some common historical background between the original and the source culture (of the indirect translation). Thus, indirect translation, although being an undesired phenomenon in translation, can have certain advantages over the intermediary translation because culture specific terms very often constitute an irreplaceable and unique feature either of the literary work, its authors style or both. That is why their rendering (and not omission) is so critical for the representation of a translated text in a foreign tongue and it indirect translation turns out to be capable of dealing with that task.

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#### Непрямой перевод и проблема отображения реалий в переводе

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**Аннотация.** Непрямой перевод остается малоисследованной темой в теории перевода. Переводы некоторых образцов украинской литературы посредством третьего языка представляют собой доказательства его распространенности и в то же время тайной природы этого явления. В этой статье рассмотрен роман известного украинского писателя Ивана Багряного “Тигроловы” в его английском и непрямом немецком переводах с точки зрения отображения в тексте перевода реалий оригинала. Целью этой статьи является рассмотрение последствий непрямого перевода, анализ его взаимодействия с текстом-посредником, а также привлечение внимания к проблеме непрямого перевода в целом.

**Ключевые слова:** перевод, непрямой перевод, реалии, текст-посредник, стиль автора, фактор места.