

## CULTURAL ASPECT OF COMMUNICATION AND TRANSLATION

**A. A. Semeniuk**, *PhD in Philology*

*Lesya Ukrainka Eastern European National University,  
13, Prosp. Voli, Lutsk, 43025, Ukraine*

*This article illustrates the connection between culture and communication and then emphasizes the role of culture in translation. The paper has tried to review briefly the scholars' viewpoints and approaches to defining the concept of culture. To encourage further exploration and understanding of translation issues, the reasons of translation difficulties arising in the process of mediating between cultures, both source and target ones, have been analyzed.*

**Key words:** *culture, communication, translation, translation strategy, a specific language group.*

Nowadays nobody would argue that each nation possesses a great number of universal features both common and nationally biased ones which are peculiar to a definite genealogically related group of people. The distinguishing characteristics arise from common historical development and the process of evolution which are reflected in material and spiritual life, moral norms, cultural values, canons, people's behaviour and are the background for culture specific elements developing.

All these are the constituents of culture which mark the static and dynamic in norms, beliefs and rules of communication, both verbal and non-verbal, which make each nation's culture unique by itself, being different from the others, and form barriers for clear understanding and interpretation, particularly while translating from the source language into the target one. While communicating we need to distinguish between what the speaker means and what his words mean, or in other words, between utterance meaning and sentence or word meaning.

The further investigation of culture bound communication as the act or process of exchanging ideas and information between two or more persons still remains an important challenge at present. In the course of study different aspects of this issue have been highlighted, focusing mainly on drawing attention to the way the theory of congruence and equivalence is applied to communicative units [4], methods of teaching translation [13] urban sustainability [11], mythological, philosophical, religious constituents of culture [18], translation and cultural change [10] and etc.

Extensive studies on culture and translation, especially the integration of cultural elements in the translation process have witnessed an ever-growing interest and are in the focus of study. The **objective** of this paper is to contribute to these studies and discuss the cultural aspects of translation. The main **tasks** are:

- to define the concept of culture from different viewpoints,
- to consider the relationship between culture and translation while communication;
- to summarize the reasons of translation difficulties when mediating between cultures.

Communication is the act or process of exchanging ideas and information between two or more persons. In an act of communication there is usually at least one speaker or sender; a message which is transmitted; and a person or persons for whom this message is intended – the receiver. It is difficult to think of many human activities that do not involve communication.

We communicate with friends and with strangers, at work and at play, in public and in private. We communicate our knowledge and our ignorance, our anger and our pleasure, our needs and our intentions. Just as communication serves a variety of purposes it assumes a variety of forms. We may communicate by writing a book or making a speech, with a torrent of words or with just one word, with a grunt or with silence, by waving our arms or by raising

our eyebrows. In some cases the means is chosen with great deliberation and care. In others the choice is spontaneous and virtually unconscious.

Culture, being an integral part of human's communication that significantly influences each individual's behaviour as a member of a particular group of people, is closely linked with translating (interpreting). There exist various definitions and approaches to its study as culture is one of the basic notions in anthropology, cultural studies, social sciences, sociology, and the humanities.

Culture is the product of interacting human minds, and hence a science of culture will be a science of the most complex phenomenon on Earth. It will also be a science that must be built on interdisciplinary foundations including genetics, neuroscience, individual development, ecology and evolutionary biology, psychology and anthropology. In other words, a complete explanation of culture, if such a thing is ever possible, is going to comprise a synthesis of all human science. Such a synthesis poses significant conceptual and methodological problems, but also difficulties of another kind for those contributing to this science. Scholars from different disciplines are going to have to be tolerant of one another, open to ideas from other areas of knowledge [17, p.91].

One of the most widely quoted definitions was formulated by the English anthropologist E. B. Tylor: "Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" [18]. On the other hand, culture is defined as a social domain that emphasizes the practices, discourses, and material expressions, which, over time, express the continuities and discontinuities of social meaning of a life held in common [11, p. 53]. In the humanities culture is viewed as the degree to which the individual has cultivated a particular level of sophistication in the arts, sciences, education, or manners. P. Newmark defines culture as "the way of life and its manifestations that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression" [14, p. 94].

The term culture is also all-inclusive. It is understood to refer to the total pattern of human learned behaviour transmitted from generation to generation. When one talks about culture, however, the explicit mention of language is, strictly speaking, redundant because any particular language is a form (even though autonomous) of learned behaviour and therefore a part of the culture. A solution to this terminological overlap would be to distinguish between nonverbal culture and the corresponding language.

Nonverbal culture can be further divided into mental culture (worldview or value orientations), behavioral culture (accepted and expected patterns of behaviour in a social community), and material culture, that is, the material products of behavior (for example, a pull-open beer can or a radio telescope). Material culture involves the artifacts of the community, such as its pottery, its vehicles or its clothing. Items of material culture are usually the result of the application of behavior (manual skills) and mental culture (knowledge) [2, p. 94–95].

Culture is treated as socially-acquired knowledge. For R. Hudson [9], there are three kinds of knowledge: (1) *cultural knowledge*, which is learned from other people; (2) *shared non-cultural knowledge*, which is shared by people within the same community or the world over, but is not learned from each other; (3) *non-shared non-cultural knowledge*, which is unique to the individual.

Culture is often defined as the blueprint for living of a group whose members share a given territory and language, feel responsible for one another, and call themselves by the same name. The culture of such a group (or society) consists of: (1) solutions to the problems of survival; (2) the ideals and values that shape rules of conduct; and (3) tools and other human made objects (*artifacts* or material culture). People become functioning members of the group as they learn and participate in the culture.

Though the term *culture* is used differently it always refers to some characteristics shared by a community, especially those which might distinguish it from other communities. We define culture in terms of common knowledge in norms of ethics, morals, law, values as well

as traditions and customs of different groups of people and nationalities, forming the population of a particular country.

Culture functions as a cognitive basis of a particular community/society encompassing each individual's knowledge. Cultural treasure of each nationality is original, unique and determines the model of a person's behaviour. The model is a system of congruent and interrelated beliefs, values, strategies and cognitive environments which guide the shared basis of behaviour. Each aspect of culture is linked in a system to form a unifying context of culture which identifies a person and his or her culture [12, p. 17].

Cultural differences may arise from racial, gender, religious, educational, social class, and background peculiarities. Culture is an open system for changing experience linked to dominant domestic ideologies, philosophy, policy of a definite language group and govern the identity-forming process of translation. All these make the process of communication, translation and interpretation difficult.

The approaches to defining translation range from formal, structural to semantic and functional depending on their viewing what translation process looks like. While the structuralists see the source and target texts as sets of structures, the functionalists try to render function rather than form of the source text.

Translation consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style [15, p. 12]; is the expression in another language (or the target language) of what has been expressed in another, source language, preserving semantic and stylistic equivalences [7]; the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language (TL) [8].

All these definitions stress the significance of 'equivalence' while translating, whereas the following one represents the functionalists' approach to viewing translation which is considered the production of a functional target text maintaining a relationship with a given source text that is specified according to the intended or demanded function of the target text [16].

The process of translating (interpreting) described as a two-stage process follows the scheme introduced by A. Shveitser [5] and O. Cherednichenko [3] which accounts for linguistic and extralinguistic factors, the most important of which is culture both source and target ones. According to this pattern translating is a two-stage process of interlingual and cross-cultural communication, during which an interpreter, on the basis of an analysed and transformed text in the source language, creates another text in the target language, which substitutes the source text in the target language and culture [1, p. 30].

In the process of translating (interpreting) besides phonological, lexical and grammatical aspects of successful interpretation communicative one is the most relevant as the interpreter should bear in mind specific cultural background and extralinguistic factors of both the source and target languages. Translation patterns construct a domestic representation and fix stereotypes for foreign cultures, signifying respect for cultural difference and participating in the process of identity formation and geopolitical relations establishing.

The issue of a translation ethics on the relationship between two cultures arises here as translation, being open to target language cultural values, can be powerful in the hierarchy of moral norms maintaining and promoting in both source- and target-language groups cultures through choosing translation strategy.

There is a plethora of translation strategies among which is the Domestication strategy, also called normalization or naturalization strategy, employed to bridge cultural gaps and achieve intelligibility in line with the hermeneutic approach which focuses on interpretation and grants the translator the right to manipulate the text so as to make it natural, comprehensible and readable, an approach in which the original text undergoes adaptation so as to be re-created to comply with the target linguistic and cultural conventions and to fulfill the function or purpose of translation, i.e. skopos [6, p. 60–75].

In the process of communication culture helps us understand a source country better than language as it gives knowledge about the cultural variety of a society, individuality of its speakers, and the way they perceive the world. So focusing on the issue of translation from one language to another, we should say that the culture of both languages interact and influence each other.

Thus, culture is related to the time and place where it happens, is context-bound and has context communicative orientation, guides individuals' verbal / non-verbal behaviour, language choice and helps orient themselves in society as it effects linguistic, cultural, economic, ideological life of a specific language group of a definite country. The world is categorized in different ways and with the continuing globalization of English and new technologies implementation the way the reality is interpreted changes from culture to culture. Taking into consideration all these fundamental points will help avoid misunderstanding, misperception, mistranslation and misinterpretation between representatives of both the source and target cultures and achieve equivalence.

Translation deserves to occupy a much more central position in cultural history and the study of how or when cultural elements should be approached in the translation process, how to foreignize or domesticate cultural elements are the ways in which translation can be made productive in general and need further investigation.

#### КУЛЬТУРНИЙ АСПЕКТ КОМУНІКАЦІЇ ТА ПЕРЕКЛАДУ

*А. А. Семенюк, канд. філол. наук  
Східноєвропейський національний університет імені Лесі Українки,  
пр. Воли 13, м. Луцьк, 43025, Україна*

*У статті розглянуто взаємозв'язок між культурою і комунікацією та визначено роль культурного аспекту при перекладі. Коротко проаналізовано точки зору та підходи дослідників до трактування поняття культури. Для заохочення подальших досліджень і розуміння проблем, пов'язаних із перекладом, зроблено спробу дослідити причини виникнення перекладацьких труднощів у процесі взаємодії двох культур.*

*Ключові слова:* культура, комунікація, переклад, стратегія перекладу, особлива мовна група.

#### КУЛЬТУРНИЙ АСПЕКТ КОМУНІКАЦІЇ І ПЕРЕВОДА

*А. А. Семенюк, канд. філол. наук  
Восточноєвропейський національний університет імені Лесі Українки,  
пр. Воли 13, г. Луцьк, 43025, Украина*

*В статье рассматривается взаимосвязь между культурой и коммуникацией и акцентируется роль культурного аспекта при переводе. Кратко проанализированы перспективы и подходы исследователей к толкованию понятия "культура". Для привлечения дальнейших исследований и понимания проблем, связанных с переводом, предпринята попытка исследовать причины возникновения трудностей при переводе в процессе взаимодействия двух культур.*

*Ключевые слова:* культура, коммуникация, перевод, стратегия перевода, особая языковая группа.

#### LIST OF REFERENCES

1. Максимів С. Є. Усний двосторонній переклад (англійська та українська мови). Теорія та практика усного двостороннього перекладу для студентів факультету перекладачів та факультету заочного та вечірнього навчання (+ 2 компакт-диски) : навч. посібник. Вид. друге, виправлене та доповнене / С. Є. Максимів. – К. : Ленвіт, 2007. – 416 с.
2. Словник соціолінгвістичних та етнолінгвістичних термінів / М. О. Олікова, А. А. Семенюк, О. М. Тарнавська. – Луцьк : Волин. нац. ун-т ім. Лесі Українки, 2010. – 364 с.
3. Чередниченко О. І. Про мову і переклад / О. І. Чередниченко. – Київ : Либідь, 2007. – 247 с.
4. Швачко С. О. Квантитативні одиниці англійської мови: перекладацькі аспекти: посібник [Електронний ресурс] / С. О. Швачко. – Вінниця : Нова книга, 2008. – 128 с. – Режим доступу : <http://essuir.sumdu.edu.ua/handle/123456789/6099>.
5. Швейцер А. Д. Теория перевода (статус, проблемы, аспекты) / А. Д. Швейцер. – М., 1988. – С. 215.
6. As-Safi A. Naturalness in Literary Translation / A. As-Safi, I. As-Sharifi. – Babel, 1997. – Vol. 43, No. 1. – P. 60–75.
7. Bell R. T. Translation and Translating: Theory and Practice / R. T. Bell. – London and New York : Longman, 1991. – 298 p.

8. Catford J. C. A Linguistic Theory of Translation / J. C. Catford. – London : Oxford University Press, 1965. – 103 p.
9. Hudson R. A. Sociolinguistics / R. A. Hudson. – Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1980. – 234 p.
10. Hung E. Translation and Cultural change / E. Hung. – Amsterdam : John Benjamins, 2005. – 195 p.
11. Urban sustainability in theory and practice: circles of sustainability / P. James, L. Magee, A. Scerri, M. Steger. – London : Routledge, 2014. – P. 53.
12. Katan D. Translating cultures: An introduction for translators, interpreters and mediators / D. Katan. – England, Manchester : St. Jerome, 1999. – P. 17.
13. Kobyakova I. Teaching Translation: Objective and Methods / I. Kobyakova, S. Shvachko // Advanced Education. – Kyiv : Kyiv Polytechnic Institute, 2016. – No. 5. – P. 9–13.
14. Newmark P. A Text Book of Translation / P. Newmark. – Tehran : Adab, 1988. – 292 p.
15. Nida E. The Theory and Practice of Translation / E. Nida, C. Taber. – Leiden : E. J. Brill, 1969. – P. 12.
16. Nord Ch. Translating as a Purposeful Activity: Functionalist Approaches Explained / Ch. Nord. – Manchester : St. Jerome Publishing, 2007. – 160 p.
17. Plotkin H. Some Elements of a Science of Culture / H. Plotkin // Whitehouse, Harvey (ed.), The Debated Mind. Evolutionary Psychology versus Ethnography. – Oxford, New York : Berg, 2001. – P. 91–109.
18. Tylor E. B. Primitive culture: researches into the development of mythology, philosophy, religion, art, and custom / E. B. Tylor. – New York : Gordon Press, (1974) [1871]. – 453 p.

*Received: Jenuary, 25, 2017*