

CULTURAL ISSUES IN TRANSLATION

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Abstract: *Cultural issues in translation involve challenges with culture-specific terms, idioms, social norms, humor, symbols, and values. Effective translation requires cultural understanding and strategies like adaptation or explanation to preserve meaning across languages.*

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Cultural issues in translation refer to the challenges that arise when translating content between languages that have distinct cultural backgrounds. Language is deeply intertwined with culture, and every language reflects the values, traditions, beliefs, and societal norms of the community that speaks it. As a result, translating a text without considering its cultural context can lead to misunderstandings, misinterpretations, and the loss of important nuances. This is particularly evident when translating texts like newspapers, which often contain references to culturally specific events, symbols, and practices. **Culture-specific terms** refer to words or phrases that are deeply embedded in a particular culture and do not have direct equivalents in the target language. For example, certain foods, holidays, traditions, or institutions may be unique to a specific country or region.

Examples:

- **English:** "Thanksgiving" (a holiday in the United States)

- **Uzbek:** There is no direct equivalent for "Thanksgiving" in Uzbek culture, so a translator might need to explain the holiday or use a descriptive phrase like "AQShda minnatdorchilik bayrami" (Thanksgiving in the USA).

- **English:** "Football" (in the U.S., it refers to American football, while in many other parts of the world, it refers to what Americans call "soccer").

- **Uzbek:** In Uzbekistan, the term "football" typically refers to soccer, but a translator must clarify the difference when translating a text where "football" refers to American football.

Solution:

The translator can either use **loanwords** (foreign words used in the target language), provide a **descriptive explanation**, or replace the term with a **culturally equivalent** concept.

2. Idiomatic Expressions and Phrasal Verbs

Idiomatic expressions and phrasal verbs are often difficult to translate because their meaning is not derived from the literal meaning of the words. These expressions are deeply rooted in the culture and history of the language.

Example:

- **English:** "It's raining cats and dogs" (meaning it's raining heavily).

- **Uzbek:** In Uzbek, there is no direct equivalent for this idiom. A translator might choose to translate it as "kuchli yomg'ir yog'moqda" (heavy rain is falling) or use a similar idiom in the target culture.

Solution:

A translator must find an equivalent idiomatic expression in the target language, or paraphrase the phrase while retaining the original meaning.

3. Social Norms and Values

Social norms and values often differ from one culture to another. These differences can affect how language is used, especially in contexts involving politeness, respect, authority, and relationships.

Example:

- **English:** "I don't mind at all."
- **Uzbek:** In Uzbek, the tone and level of politeness can be very important. The translation may need to reflect the level of formality in the conversation, especially in a formal or respectful setting. Therefore, the phrase might be translated as "Hech qanday muammo yo'q" (No problem at all), but the choice of words can vary depending on the context.

Solution:

The translator must understand the cultural expectations of politeness and formality in both the source and target languages and adjust the translation accordingly.

4. Humor and Satire

Humor and satire are highly culture-specific and can be difficult to translate. A joke that is funny in one culture might not make sense in another, or it may have a different impact.

Example:

- **English:** "Why don't skeletons fight each other? They don't have the guts."
- **Uzbek:** A direct translation may not carry the same humorous effect in Uzbek. The joke may need to be modified or replaced with one that resonates better with the target audience.

Solution:

The translator may either adapt the joke to a culturally relevant one, explain the humor in context, or choose to omit it entirely if it cannot be effectively conveyed.

5. Cultural Symbols and References

Every culture has its own set of symbols, references, and historical context that may not be universally understood. Translators need to ensure that these cultural references are either explained or replaced with something that the target audience can relate to.

Example:

- **English:** "The American Dream"
- **Uzbek:** The concept of "The American Dream" may not be familiar to Uzbek speakers, so the translator may need to explain it as "AQShdagi muvaffaqiyatga erishish orzusi" (the dream of success in the U.S.).

Solution:

The translator might add a brief explanation or replace the reference with something that conveys a similar concept from the target culture.

6. Different Attitudes Toward Gender and Identity

Different cultures have varying perspectives on gender, identity, and sexuality. These attitudes can influence how certain terms or phrases are translated, especially in contexts related to family, relationships, and social roles.

Example:

- **English:** "Gender-neutral language" (language that avoids distinguishing between genders).

- **Uzbek:** In some cultures, gender-neutral language may not be commonly used, and the translation may need to be adapted or explained.

Solution:

In cases like this, the translator must be sensitive to the cultural values regarding gender and modify the translation to either reflect these values or gently introduce concepts that may not be common in the target culture.

7. Political and Legal References

Politics and law can vary greatly between cultures and countries. Legal terms, political systems, and even political ideologies can present challenges when translating between languages.

Example:

- **English:** "The First Amendment" (referring to the U.S. Constitution, which protects freedom of speech).

- **Uzbek:** The translator might need to explain what "The First Amendment" is and its significance in American law, as it may not be directly comparable to any specific law or principle in Uzbekistan.

Solution:

A translator might provide an explanation or adaptation that helps the target audience understand the context, or they may opt to use a term that is more relevant to the target culture.

8. Time and Temporal Concepts

The way different cultures perceive and organize time can influence how certain expressions are translated. For example, in some cultures, punctuality is highly valued, while in others, it might not be as emphasized.

Example:

- **English:** "On time" (meaning punctuality).
- **Uzbek:** While the concept of "on time" exists, there may be subtle cultural differences in how strictly it is adhered to. A translator may need to adjust the wording to match the target culture's attitude toward time.

Cultural issues in translation are among the most challenging but also the most rewarding aspects of the translation process. A good translator must not only be fluent in both languages but also deeply understand the cultural contexts behind the words. Effective translation involves more than just converting words from one language to another; it requires a thoughtful consideration of how cultural values, norms, and references shape the meaning of the text.

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